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MoI blocks scam websites

Army chief inspects military sites to monitor combat readiness

Kuwait seeks to add Failaka to UNESCO World Heritage List



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah observes the signing of an MoU between the NCCAL and WMF. — KUNA

NEW YORK: Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters has signed a memorandum of understanding with the World Monuments Fund (WMF) to nominate Failaka Island for inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The agreement was signed by the Council's Secretary-General Dr Mohammed Al-Jassar and WMF President Benedicte de Montlaur at the WMF's Manhattan headquarters.

The initiative aims to preserve Failaka Island's rich heritage, which spans 4,200 years and includes five successive civilizations. The council plans to conduct a comprehensive study of the island, including a survey of its heritage sites, and prepare a cultural tourism strategy before submitting the nomination to UNESCO.

Kuwait's Ambassador to the United States Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah affirmed Kuwait's continuous efforts to protect its cultural heritage, adding the process to nominate Failaka has economic, educational, cultural and environmental aspects to it. — KUNA (See Page 4)

KUWAIT: The interior ministry confirmed on Saturday that it monitors and blocks "scam websites" and takes all necessary legal measures to combat these illegal activities. The general department of security relations and media said in a press statement that the department of combating cybercrime, in cooperation with relevant authorities, removed 392 scam websites, including 52 websites that impersonated Al-Durra domestic workers company. The department also blocked more than 662 fraudulent Kuwaiti WhatsApp numbers, 65 percent of which were impersonating the company.

The ministry called on everyone to deal with trusted websites only and verify their credibility before making any purchases or authentications through the Kuwait Mobile ID application or any other sites. It stressed the importance of reading the site name and being careful in dealing with sites that are made by the free online web creator Wix to ensure the protection of their financial and personal information and not fall victim to fraudulent operations. It also called on everyone to contact the cybercrime department via WhatsApp on 97283939 or the department's account on social

media platforms @ECCCD to request assistance. Separately, Chief of Staff of the Kuwaiti Army Air Marshal Bandar Al-Muzain inspected on Friday a number of military units and sites. Muzain emphasized during his inspection visits the necessity of maintaining the highest levels of combat readiness, said the army's general staff in a statement. In addition, he expressed his appreciation for the efforts made by members of various army sectors, stressing the importance of continuing hard work to preserve the security and safety of Kuwait. — KUNA

Zionists murder dozens in Gaza as talks resume

CAIRO/JERUSALEM: Gaza ceasefire and hostage negotiators discussed new compromise proposals in Cairo on Saturday, seeking to bridge gaps between the Zionist entity and Hamas as the UN reported worsening humanitarian conditions, with malnutrition soaring and polio discovered. Zionist military strikes in Gaza killed 50 people on Saturday, Palestinian health authorities said. Victims of hostilities over the past 48 hours remain lying on roads where fighting continues or trapped under rubble, the authorities said.

A Hamas delegation arrived on Saturday to be nearer at hand to review any proposals that emerge in the main talks between the Zionist entity and the mediating countries Egypt, Qatar and the United States, two Egyptian security sources said. Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani was expected to attend.

Months of on-off talks have so far failed to produce a breakthrough to end the Zionist entity's devastating military campaign in Gaza. The Egyptian sources said the new proposals include compromises on outstanding points such as how to secure key areas and the return of people to north Gaza.

However, there was no sign of any breakthrough on key sticking points, including the Zionist entity's

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KARBALA: Devotees hold flags of Palestine and wear keffiyehs to express support for Gaza as they take part in an Arbaeen mourning ritual at the shrine of Imam Abu Al-Fadl Al-Abbas on Aug 24, 2024. — AFP

Harris' foreign policy muscular, nuanced on Gaza

WASHINGTON: Kamala Harris is making her pitch to voters as a muscular defender of US interests while aiming for nuance on the painful issue of Gaza — hoping to cover vulnerabilities and to paint Republican Donald Trump as the more risky candidate on national security. In her speech accepting the Democratic nomination for president, the vice president vowed to "not cozy up to tyrants and dictators" who can flatter Trump as he "wants to be an autocrat himself".

The message predictably was one of continuity with her current boss President Joe Biden. But it also made her a rare Democrat to seek the White House on a message of being tougher on the world stage than the Republican. Biden ran for president promising to end "forever wars" and pulled out of Afghanistan after 20 years. Barack Obama, succeeding war leader George W Bush, at his inauguration invited US adversaries to dialogue if "you unclench your fist".

Trump, while insisting that he also wants the United States out of foreign military engagements, frequently boasts of his readiness to threaten extreme force — or what he calls "peace through strength". Striking a hawkish note herself, Harris boasted

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CHICAGO: US Vice President and 2024 Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris waves during the Democratic National Convention on Aug 22, 2024. — AFP

RFK Jr suspends fringe campaign, endorses Trump

GLENDALE, Arizona: Robert F Kennedy Jr, scion of America's storied political clan, suspended his long-shot presidential bid on Friday and endorsed Donald Trump, injecting new uncertainty into the White House race. "I no longer believe that I have a realistic path of electoral victory," Kennedy, an anti-vaccine activist and conspiracy theorist who was polling in the low single digits, said at a press conference in swing state Arizona.

Kennedy, 70, condemned the selection of Vice President Kamala Harris as the Democratic standard-bearer without a primary contest and cited a long list of grievances against his former party that he said had led him to now "throw my support to president Trump". Kennedy failed to get on the ballot in even half of the 50 US states and his independent candidacy featured a number of bizarre twists — including his claim to be suffering from a parasitic

Continued on Page 6



GLENDALE: Former US President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump welcomes onstage independent presidential candidate Robert F Kennedy Jr on Aug 23, 2024. — AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kuwait weather to improve

KUWAIT: With the emergence of Suhail star in the southern horizon of the Arabian Peninsula in the small hours of Saturday, the unusually hot weather in Kuwait will start to improve and the farming season begins. Suhail, traditionally known in the region as the noble or bright star, heralds the end of summer and the start of the rainy season and date harvest. The weather will become moderate gradually in the region with longer nighttime. — KUNA

UAE accepts Taliban ambassador

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates has accepted the credentials of an ambassador from Afghanistan's Taliban government, officials said, becoming just the second country after China to do so. The Gulf state said it was committed to "building bridges" to help the Afghan people, after the Kabul foreign ministry announced on social media that new ambassador Mawlawi Badruddin Haqqani had been received in a ceremony in Abu Dhabi. The US held back from criticizing the move, saying it will not affect Washington's relations with the UAE. — AFP



Kuwait broadens access to mental health services

68 public clinics provide primary mental health care

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: With the establishment of 68 public clinics now providing primary mental health care across different areas in the country, Kuwait has broadened access to mental health services for all citizens and residents aged 18 and up, according to Dr Mariam Al-Qattan, a Family Medicine consultant and Head of the Mental Health Program in Primary Health Care. In these clinics, Dr Qattan informed Kuwait Times that healthcare providers are family doctors with additional qualifications in mental health care.

She explained that, as primary health-care centers, the clinics address common mental health issues, such as mild to moderate depression, general anxiety like panic attacks, certain phobias, burnout, and sleep disorders. Based on the diagnosis and nature of each patient's case, a treatment plan is developed that may involve drug therapy, behavioral therapy through sessions, or a combination of

both. "Typically, the treatment plan is a collaborative effort between the patient and the doctor," Qattan said.

"For severe cases requiring urgent attention or specialized psychiatric intervention, patients are promptly referred to a psychiatrist at the Kuwait Center for Mental Health," Qattan added. In some instances, patients may also be referred to Kuwait's public hospitals, which provide mental health care services through secondary care clinics for more specialized evaluation and treatment.

For patients experiencing mental health symptoms, whether simple or severe, Qattan urged them to immediately visit the nearest clinic according to the home address registered on their personal IDs. Family doctors at these clinics will assess patients' conditions by reviewing their medical history and conducting tests if needed.

They will then provide the necessary treatment, either at the same clinic, through a referral to another clinic, or by directing

patients to a hospital, depending on the nature of the case. Access to mental health services can be obtained through different ways: by getting a referral from a general practitioner or specialist and scheduling an appointment at a health center, or by booking online through the Ministry of Health's portal. Electronic appointment requests are handled by a call center where family doctors review and sort cases before directing them to the nearest mental health clinic based on the patient's home address.

According to Qattan, the integration of mental health services into public clin-



Dr Mariam Al-Qattan



ics in Kuwait was a collaborative effort starting in 2011 to increase accessibility to mental health care services across the country. The initiative began with just six clinics in 2014, providing very basic

services. Since then, both the number of clinics and the quality of services have steadily improved each year, increasing awareness among patients and medical professionals about the availability of these services.

Police arrest 114 with illegal drugs

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior (MoI) announced that 114 persons were arrested in possession of illegal drugs and wine. Within continued efforts and campaigns of the general security department aiming to enforce law and arrest outlaws, security forces arrested a number of law violators, and dealt with 2,771 complaints, the Ministry's security media and public relations department said in a statement. The security services set up 565 checkpoints which led to booking 12,219 traffic violations, 404 arrests, including 192 residency violators, and seizure of 41 vehicles, according to the statement. They also dealt with 947 emergency cases and 1,152 traffic accidents, it noted.

Last week, security personnel seized 15 kg of varied types of drugs, 60,000 psychotropic pills, and 70,000 capsules ready to be packed. The seizures also include 350 bottles of wine, three unlicensed guns, and ammunition, as well as some funds at the hands of 25 persons accused in 16 different cases, the Ministry said in a news statement. The move is part of the continued campaigns of the MoI, aiming to thwart any attempts to bring band substances into Kuwait. The Ministry has appealed to all to cooperate with security men and inform them about any negative phenomena through its emergency number (112) or the hotline of the General Directorate for Drug Control (1884141). — KUNA

AI, digital health: The main axis for developing skills

KUWAIT: President of the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences (IOMS) Dr Mohammad Al-Jarallah stressed that artificial intelligence (AI) and digital health are the main axis for developing the skills of health officials and their ability to make decisions in health institutions. This came in a press statement made by Dr Al-Jarallah on Saturday, on the sidelines of a virtual scientific symposium held by the organization via the Zoom program under the theme "Health practices.....Making health decisions at the right time".

About 500 doctors and health workers from a number of countries participated in the program. Al-Jarallah pointed to the importance of the World Health Organization's orientations towards establishing artificial intelligence in achieving the goals of sustainable development and universal health coverage, noting that continuous training programs using digital health can improve practitioners' ability to make accurate and quick decisions by up to 40 percent.



Dr Mohammad Al-Jarallah



He stressed the importance of the symposium's topic, which establishes the need to make the right decision at the right time in light of digital development, stressing the importance of making good clinical decisions in diagnosis and treatment at the right time without delay so as not to lead to a worsening of the patient's health condition.

Al-Jarallah stressed the importance of balance in the use of artificial intelligence, warning at the same time against rapid development without regulatory controls that guarantee justice, equality, and ethical and legal aspects. He referred to the "Kuwait Document for Artificial Intelligence" issued by the organization to become the nucleus of a global document to establish ethical and legal controls for the use of

artificial intelligence in health care.

He explained that the use of artificial intelligence to improve patient safety and prevent medical errors is important, considering that this is a shared responsibility that falls on all health workers, "as studies conducted by the World Health Organization have shown that medical errors cause the death of millions of people around the world annually". He pointed out that this is where the importance of digital health comes in adopting the best global practices in the field of patient safety and developing monitoring and reporting systems for medical errors, calling for the establishment of a Gulf and Arab network to develop the skills of health leaders using artificial intelligence. — KUNA

Kuwait to send Palestinian med students to Gaza

GAZA: The University College of Applied Sciences in Gaza (UCAS) launched on Saturday, a program funded by Kuwait's International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) that urgently sends senior medical students all over Palestine to hospitals in southern Gaza. UCAS's Vice Chancellor Mohammad Mushtaha said in remarks to KUNA that the program aims to send 350 students who are expected to graduate this year to the war-ravaged Strip and is set to be active for five months.

The program will provide a unique opportunity for the talented students to get real life experience on the field and will greatly improve their capabilities, in the midst of an urgent need for medical care in Gaza, Mushtaha added. He expressed his gratitude to HHI the Kuwait's Amir, government, and people for their undying moral and financial support across all fields.

Women strive to ease distresses

In spite of Zionist occupation's 10-month aggression on the Gaza Strip, Palestinian women have been resolutely determined to launch initiatives to help in alleviating bare impacts on people. Afnan Bakroon and her two daughters offered various services at a refugee camp in Al-Tuffah neighborhood in eastern Gaza City, in a bid to help displaced students.

Speaking to the Palestinian Wafa news agency, Afnan, who acquired a master's degree from the Islamic University in Gaza, said she teaches English and math to displaced students at the camp, while her daughters teach them Hebrew language and computer. Afnan added that her daughter had also opened a psychological health clinic at the camp a month ago in order to give free psychological support to the families of those martyred in Zionist aggressions on the enclave.

The occupation's continued atrocities have so far forced as many as 1.93 million people, making up roughly 85



Palestinian senior medical students attend to patients. — KUNA photos

percent of the territory's population, to leave their homes in Gaza. The UN refugee agency (UNRWA) estimated that more than 625,000 children have dropped out of schools since the occupation launched the aggression, regretting that scores of schools and colleges have been destroyed in occupation attacks.

Lobna Al-Azayza, a pediatrician and breastfeeding specialist, said she had decided to set up a makeshift clinic at the refugee camp in Deir Al-Balah in central Gaza, offering medical care to newborns and injured people. Regretting that her clinic was destroyed in the aggression, Al-Azayza said that several nurses are working with her at the newly established clinic in a bid to provide medical care to the largest possible number of refugees.

She added that she gives health lessons to women at refugee tents about the significance of breastfeeding to enhancing immunity and protecting against malnutrition, intestinal infections, and hepatitis. She noted that she had recently launched an initiative entitled: "You're Our People" to give psychological support to displaced people who had fled northern and southern Gaza, and to help old people who suffer from chronic diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure.

The health system in the Gaza Strip

has lost at least 70 percent of its bed capacity, with only 14 out of 36 hospitals in the enclave are partially operating due to a severe shortage of staff and medical supplies. More than 885 medics have been martyred, hundreds injured, at least 310 others arrested and 130 ambulances destroyed in Zionist attacks, according to Gaza health authorities.

The World Health Organization (WHO) warned that medical supplies in Gaza are not enough at all to respond to the medical needs of the blockaded Palestinian territory. In a different initiative, Rafeef Azeef, who used to work with a local news site before the launching of the Zionist aggression on October 7, seeks to help people by means of posting humanitarian calls and appeals for help on social media. She said she has used her Facebook page as a platform for people's voice and appeals, boasting that the number of her followers has recently risen to 11,000.

Azeef added that she has even started to get donations from young people and girls from Arab countries on social media platforms, using this money to buy food, water and tents for displaced people. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) reported on June 25 that 96 percent of Gaza's population are facing a high risk of severe food insecurity. Under the tough current circumstances in the enclave, half a million are facing severe hunger in the Gaza Strip



and more than 20 percent of Gazans sometimes cannot find something to eat for a whole day.

Commending on such initiatives that are mainly meant to alleviate the anguish and woes of Palestinians, Minister of Women's Affairs Mona Al-Khalili said Palestinian women play a key role in boosting their families' struggle and the Palestinian society's steadfastness since they are a key partner in defending the people's rights. Speaking to Wafa, the minister said that under the occupation's aggression on the enclave, Palestinian women are playing a notable

role in easing the suffering of people, citing the great efforts of doctors and nurses in providing medical treatment to those injured in continued attacks by occupying forces.

She said Palestinian women have launched various charitable and social initiatives in the territory, mainly including health, medical and psychological support and teaching. Since October 7, 2023, occupation forces have been launching a genocidal war against the defenseless people of Gaza, leaving more than 132,000, mostly women and children, dead or injured. — KUNA

Local

Is Kuwait ready for second wave of online learning?

Mpox outbreak brings the possibility of e-learning

By Ghadeer Ghfour

KUWAIT: Recently, news has started to discuss the spread of mpox, which was recently announced by the World Health Organization, warning about its increasing spread. Given what the world has experienced in recent years, not far from recent history, such as the COVID-19 pandemic that turned the world upside down, affecting different aspects of people's lives. One of the key aspects that witnessed a major shift in its ways is education as it turned to online learning.

Thus, the question arises: Could the spread of mpox potentially push us back to online education? Since digital transformation is not far from our current reality, whether or not mpox is present, Kuwait Times interviewed PB Coordinator at a private school in Kuwait, Abir Fares, and High School English teacher at a public school in Kuwait, Ghadeer Ghfour to gain opinions and insights into Kuwait's educational position on this shift and the possibility of moving towards online learning.

Fares reflected on her first experience with online teaching during COVID-19, saying: "The first experience with online teaching during COVID-19 was a remarkable journey of adaptation and growth for both teachers and students. While it presented challenges, it also highlighted

the incredible resilience and creativity of educators and learners alike. Teachers embraced new technologies and found innovative ways to engage students, while students demonstrated impressive adaptability and eagerness to learn in a virtual environment."

She also elaborated on the preparedness for a potential second wave of online education. "The experiences from the first wave have equipped us with valuable insights and strategies, enabling us to enhance our digital tools and teaching methods. We now have a stronger grasp on how to effectively manage online classrooms and support student learning remotely," said Fares.

Moreover, Fares spoke about the support and resources that she believes are necessary for teachers to successfully transition back to online teaching if needed. "To ensure a smooth transition back to online teaching, teachers would benefit from access to comprehensive training on digital tools, ongoing technical support, and a robust network for sharing best practices. Providing resources such as updated teaching materials, engaging online platforms, and mental health support for both educators and students will also be crucial," she added.

To enhance both teacher and students experience in the future, Fares suggested a

few improvements. "Future improvements to online education could include more interactive and personalized learning platforms, enhanced opportunities for real-time collaboration, and increased accessibility to high-quality resources. Investing in professional development for teachers and creating more engaging, student-centered activities will also contribute to a richer and more effective online learning experience," she said.

On the other hand, Ghfour shared her past experience, highlighting a number of challenges that were encountered during that time: "Online teaching lacks face-to-face interaction where students get along to engage in spontaneous conversation. This is important to build in natural and develop discussions with their classmates. It was also difficult for students to stay motivated as they have easily lost interest. When it comes to teacher, we had limited access to resources that support us to deliver our message to the students".

"Many times, teachers and students encountered technical issues, which disrupt the learning experience. Online classes require isolation where students should have a room to avoid any kind of distraction. Unfortunately, not all students may have their own



Ghadeer Ghfour

space to learn. Another major issue we were facing at that time was students' cheating. Online teaching facilitates cheating where students are more likely to cheat since they are not physically monitored by an instructor or a teacher. Therefore, I strongly believe that online teaching is not the best method of teaching as it weighs a lot of drawbacks," Ghfour explained.

Thus, the challenges of online education initially caused fear and anxiety among educators, but at the same time, they served as a foundation to identify the weaknesses in online education. Accordingly, adjustments must be done to ensure that both teachers and students could have a better educational experience. Especially since online education has become a part of our reality, even if it is not widely adopted today, it remains present and is not far from being an established method of teaching.

The future of trading: AI, robot systems in fintech

By Mohamed Aldakheel

KUWAIT: Imagine a world where your investments are managed seamlessly by intelligent systems, continuously working to optimize your financial growth. The future of trading has arrived, with fintech companies integrating artificial intelligence and robot systems to automatically trade stocks for users. This transformative technology promises to reshape the financial landscape, offering unprecedented efficiency and new opportunities for investors. As this innovation takes root, it's crucial to explore the technology behind these systems, their potential benefits, and how they are being received by the public.

Speaking to Kuwait Times, Dr Mohammed Ali, with a PhD in Banking and Finance focused on AI in financial predictions, discusses the rapid advancements in the field. "The industry grows daily, integrating more sophisticated algorithms and attracting an increasing number of users," he notes. These developments are not just technical but are broadening the accessibility and applicability of AI in trading.

Furthermore, Dr Ali emphasizes the efficiency of AI in trading, highlighting its accuracy over human calculations.

"AI is almost always more efficient when used properly. It's more accurate than human calculations," he asserts. However, he also warns of the potential pitfalls. "It's a double-edged sword. If you input incorrect data, then your outputs will be incorrect as well, which could lead to false predictions and significant financial losses," he said.

In acknowledging such a pitfall, Dr Ali points out a significant gap in the current landscape—education. "Usually, people who work with AI are computer programmers with some finance background, not pure finance students," he explained. This highlights the need for academic programs that integrate deep financial knowledge with technical programming skills to prepare graduates for the complexities of modern financial industries.

Looking forward, a significant increase in AI integration within trading platforms seems highly likely. In the next five to ten years will probably be the timeframe in which we will most definitely be seeing a lot more trading websites incorporating categories for AI expectancies, thus indicating a shift towards more AI-dependent trading environments.

Dr Ali underscored the importance of ethical trading practices, even in an AI-driven context. "Ethical considerations in AI trading are similar to those in traditional trading. If you have information obtained illegally, it should not be used in AI applications," he stated. He also highlighted several technical limitations, such as the need for fully developed AI algorithms and the high costs associated with data storage and computing power, which could prove to be solid reasons in the denial of a governmental backing (in terms of AI integra-



tion) for many low budget countries. Dr Ali suggested encouraging young investors to embrace AI trading, likening its potential impact to the advent of the internet. "AI is really the way of the future. Learning it now is the equivalent of learning how to use the internet and the computer 30 years ago," he advised.

As AI continues to transform trading, insights from experts like Dr Mohammed Ali are invaluable in navigating both the opportunities and the challenges it presents.

For Kuwait and the broader global market, embracing AI in trading could dictate the competitive edge in a rapidly evolving financial landscape. So as we stand on the brink of this digital frontier, embracing AI in trading is not just an option - it's an imperative, urging us to adapt or risk being left behind in the relentless tide of technological progress.

Kuwait Fire Force closes 20 shops



KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) announced that it closed 20 shops and administrative facilities in a number of governorates for not meeting the safety and fire prevention requirements. KFF said in a press release that it had carried out a campaign to ensure compliance with safety and fire prevention requirements, which resulted in the closure of those shops and offices. The statement explained that these shops and establishments did not obtain fire licenses and did not comply with the requirements of safety and fire prevention after being warned earlier. — KUNA



Kuwait opens medical center in Hadhramaut

ADEN: Kuwait Zakat House inaugurated the Terkait Medical Center on Thursday in the city of Tarim in the Hadhramaut governorate in eastern Yemen. The center is expected to benefit more than 30,000 people as part of the ongoing "Kuwait by Your Side" campaign, which has been running for nine consecutive years.

The Al-Tawasul Foundation for Human Development, which implemented the project, stated that the center, built and equipped with funding from the waqf of the late Mohammed Mal Hussein Terkait, includes eight clinics. These clinics cater to children, women, maternity, internal medicine, emergency services, vaccinations, malnutrition treatment, family planning and emergencies, along with a storeroom, laboratory and pharmacy.

The statement added that 30,000 residents of the Ainah area will benefit from the center, which is managed and supervised by a specialized medical and technical team. During the inauguration, Assistant Deputy Governor of Hadhramaut for the Affairs of the Valley and Desert Districts Abdulhadi Al-Tamimi praised Kuwait's humanitarian efforts in Yemen in general and in Hadhramaut in particular.

He mentioned that the Terkait Medical Center replaces the previous health center, which had deteriorated and could no longer provide medical services in the region. He noted that this project is a distinguished medical achievement in terms of construction, design, and modern medical equipment, serving a large segment of the residents of Tarim city.

Tamimi expressed his gratitude and appreciation to HH the Amir of Kuwait, its government and people for their pioneering projects and unwavering support for the Yemeni people in their most difficult times. He acknowledged the significant role and generous funding from Kuwaiti philanthropists and Kuwait Zakat House in accomplishing this major medical facility.

Raeed Ibrahim, the CEO of Al-Tawasul Foundation, said that the project was initiated in response



to the call from the local authorities and residents to build a medical center that provides primary healthcare services to the people of Ainah and the surrounding areas, in coordination with the Public Health and Population Office. "Today, we witnessed the joy of the residents with this medical achievement, which will benefit more than 30,000 people

in an area lacking medical services," he said. He expressed his deep gratitude and appreciation to Kuwait, Kuwait Zakat House and Kuwaiti philanthropists for their generous contributions, which will have a positive and significant impact on the quality of medical services provided in the region. — KUNA

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KRCS' 14th shipment of food and aid arrived in Yemen through Saudi Arabia. — KUNA photos

Kuwait sends 14th aid shipment to Yemen

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) announced that the 14th shipment of food and aid arrived in Yemen through Saudi Arabia's territories, as part of the society's efforts aiming to offer relief aid to brothers there. A KRCS field team will head to Yemen to supervise distributing aid, in addition to inspecting development projects carried out by the society that include schools, health centers, orphanage houses, and water. KRCS head Abdulrahman Al-Oun told KUNA in a statement. The society has carried out distributing food parcels, hot meals, shelter suits, and hygiene bags in Marib and Hodeida governorates over the past few days, he added.

This aid will contribute to alleviating the sufferings of needy families and creating a dignified life for them, he said. The move is part of humanitarian initiatives implemented by society to offer food support to those affected by floods, he elaborated. The needs of Yemenis are bigger than the current potential of humanitarian organizations, he pointed out. Al-Oun appealed to humanitarian partners to exert further efforts and mobilize support to respond to the needs of Yemenis, who have been suffering from the largest humanitarian crisis in the world. — KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: This aerial photo shows a partial view of the Sheikh Jaber Causeway and the Southern Island. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait eager to protect cultural heritage: Envoy

NCCAL, World Monuments Fund ink MoU on enlisting Failaka in UNESCO's list



Kuwaiti Ambassador to the US Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah attends the signing ceremony. — KUNA photos



NCCAL Secretary General Mohammad Al-Jassar and the fund's President and CEO Benedicte de Montlaur take a photo after signing the memorandum of understanding (MoU).

NEW YORK: Kuwaiti Ambassador to US Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah has affirmed Kuwait's continuous efforts to protect its cultural heritage. The remarks came in a statement to KUNA after signing a memorandum of understanding between the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) and the World Monuments Fund. The process has economic, educational, cultural and environmental aspects to it, she noted.

Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) and the World Monuments Fund signed the MoU to enlist Failaka Island in the UNESCO's world heritage list. The memorandum was signed by NCCAL Secretary General Mohammad Al-Jassar and the fund's President and CEO Benedicte de Montlaur, in the presence of Kuwaiti Ambassador to the US Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah, at the fund's headquarters in Manhattan.

In a statement to KUNA, Al-Jassar underlined the importance of Failaka Island in Kuwait, the Gulf and the world, dating back to 4,200 years. The island saw the era of five different civilizations and was last inhabited 34 years ago, when the Iraqi invasion happened, he said. The enlisting process includes scanning archeology sites in the island to determine the plan to turn them into a cultural tourism attraction in the future, Al-Jassar noted. On his part, NCCAL assistant secretary general for archeology and museums Mohammad bin Redha said the memorandum of understanding's strategy was by recommendation from the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in 2018. On her part, de Montlaur expressed her joy over signing the memorandum, adding that this is the fund's first project in Kuwait. — KUNA



Officials are pictured during the meeting. — KUNA

Kuwait to host Wildlife Day on December 30

DOHA: Abdullah Al-Zaidan, Deputy Director General of Environment Public Authority's (EPA) technical affairs sector, said on Saturday the 21st standing committee meeting on maintaining wildlife approved Kuwait's hosting of Gulf wildlife day. Speaking to KUNA in a statement, Al-Zaidan said the meeting discussed Kuwait's proposal on this day to be held on December 30. He noted that the gathering discussed several topics on means of enhancing biodiversity in the Gulf and sustainability to combat global climate. It also focused on updating the wildlife conversation convention in GCC members to boost economic, social and environmental conditions to face challenges and variables in the world, he elaborated.

The GCC standing committee on wildlife conservation discussed the coordinated framework for wildlife

protection in the GCC countries. The discussion was made during the 21st meeting of the GCC Secretariat, hosted by Qatar and chaired by the head of the wildlife department at Qatar's Ministry of Environment, Mohammad Al-Khanji, as part of preparations for the meeting of GCC ministers concerned with the environment.

The meeting dealt also with some topics, including the GCC Supreme Council's resolution regarding environment directives and updating the wildlife conversation convention in GCC states, and the strategic plan for the committee of ministers responsible for environment affairs, Qatar News Agency (QNA) said. In addition, the gathering focused on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, CITES, biodiversity, and the general framework deal for transferring ownership of falcons and others, it added.

GCC members' representatives issued some recommendations to be submitted to the committee of undersecretaries to be referred to the GCC ministerial committee responsible for environment affairs during its next meeting, it stated. The conferees discussed holding the first Gulf conference on wildlife and marking Gulf wildlife day, which includes organizing some workshops and training programs in this field. — KUNA



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Airlines fly over Afghanistan as Middle East skies become risky

Sicily opens manslaughter probe into yacht sinking

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Darkness engulfs Gaza hospitals

Patients at risk as fuel shortages cripple services, force hospitals to cancel operations

BEIT LAHIA: In the dim corridors of Kamal Adwan Hospital in the northern Gaza Strip, mobile phone torches are now as essential as stethoscopes for doctors doing rounds without functioning generators. Fuel shortages are widespread in the besieged territory after more than 10 months of war, further restricting services at those hospitals that are still open. Ayman Zaquout had a hard time even reaching the Kamal Adwan, located in Beit Lahia, because of Zionist strikes and evacuation orders.

Once admitted, he discovered he would be treated mostly in the dark. "There was no electricity and I don't know how they will be able to treat me in these circumstances," he told AFP-TV this week, grimacing from pain as he battled renal colic. He was lucky to be treated at all.

Not long after he arrived, the hospital "stopped taking in patients" altogether, Doctor Mahmoud Abu Amsha said, noting that "international organizations no longer supply it with the fuel needed for the generators". The fuel shortages could soon prove

deadly, Abu Amsha said. "Children in the incubators are threatened with cardiac arrest and death, and there are also seven cases in the intensive care unit, and they will die due to the fuel shortage," he said.

Patients 'at risk'

To respond to a major emergency — a particularly deadly air strike nearby or a sudden influx of wounded — medics at Kamal Adwan can still turn to solar energy. "But it cannot be used for patients who need electrical equipment 24 hours a day," Abu Amsha said.

The lack of fuel also makes it difficult to operate ambulances. Al-Awda Hospital, also in northern Gaza, is desperately waiting for a fuel delivery to restart its generators, the hospital's acting director, Mohammed Salha, told AFP. "Two days ago, we closed some services and postponed operations. This puts the sick and wounded at risk," Salha said. Since then, the hospital has been providing "the minimum service" only thanks to other hospitals that "donated part of their fuel stock", he said. — AFP



DEIR EL-BALAH: A patient surrounded by family members sits on a bed in a corridor lit by sunlight seeping through a window, after a partial power cut at the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in this file photo. — AFP

German police hunt festival knife attack suspect

SOLINGEN, Germany: German police on Saturday hunted a man who stabbed three people to death and wounded eight others at a street festival in the city of Solingen, with a terror motive for the attack "not excluded". The knifeman went on a rampage in the western town of Solingen late on Friday, as thousands had gathered for the first night of a "Festival of Diversity", part of a series of events to mark the town's 650th anniversary.

On Saturday, police announced they had detained a person as part of the probe, with a prosecutor later saying it was a 15-year-old who may have been in contact with the knifeman. "The author (of the attack) has not yet been identified," Markus Caspers, prosecutor of Duesseldorf that lies just west of Solingen, told a press conference. "We have not been able to identify a motive for now, but in view of all of the circumstances, we are working under the assumption that the initial suspicion of a terrorist motive cannot be excluded," Caspers said.

The people killed were men of 56 and 67 years of age and a 56-year-old woman, officials said. "The victims were completely unknown with no known ties between them, so based on this we're concluding that it could be a terror act," Caspers said, adding that "no other motive is evident at this time". — AFP

Top US general in Middle East on unannounced trip

AMMAN: The top US general began an unannounced visit to the Middle East on Saturday to discuss ways to avoid any new escalation in tensions that could spiral into a broader conflict, as the region braces for a threatened Iranian attack against the Zionist entity. Air Force General C Q Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, began his trip in Jordan and said he will also travel to Egypt and the Zionist entity in the coming days to hear the perspectives of military leaders.

His visit comes as the United States is trying to clinch an elusive Gaza ceasefire-for-hostages deal between the Zionist entity and Palestinian group Hamas, which Brown said would "help bring down the temperature," if achieved. "At the same time, as I talk to my counterparts, what are the things we can do to deter any type of broader escalation and ensure we're taking all the appropriate steps to (avoid) ... a broader conflict," Brown told Reuters before landing in Jordan.

In recent weeks, the US military has been bolstering its forces in the Middle East to guard against major new attacks by Iran or its allies, sending the Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier strike group into the region to replace the Theodore Roosevelt carrier strike group. The United States has also sent an Air Force F-22 Raptor squadron into the region and deployed a cruise missile submarine. "We brought in additional capability to send a strong message to deter a broader conflict ... but also to protect our forces should they be attacked," Brown said, saying safeguarding American forces was "paramount."

Iran has vowed a severe response to the killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, which took place as he visited Tehran late last month and which it blamed on the Zionist entity. The Zionist entity has neither confirmed or denied its involvement. Iran has not publicly indicated what would be the target of an eventual response to the Haniyeh assassination but US officials say they are closely monitoring for any signs that Iran will make good on its threats. "We stay postured, watching the (intelligence) and force movements," Brown said.

On Friday, Iran's new Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi told his French and British counterparts in telephone conversations that it was his country's right to retaliate, according to the official IRNA news agency. Brown did not speculate about what Iran and its allies might do but said he hoped to discuss different scenarios with his Zionist counterpart. — Reuters

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International

Sicily opens manslaughter probe into yacht sinking

Victims found in the same area of ship; prosecutors 'absolutely not ruling anything out'

TERMINI IMERESE, Italy: Sicilian prosecutors said Saturday they were investigating possible manslaughter after a superyacht sank killing seven people, as it emerged that trapped passengers scrambled for air pockets after it went down.

UK tech tycoon Mike Lynch, his 18-year-old daughter Hannah, four friends and the yacht's cook died when the British-flagged Bayesian sank in a storm before dawn on Monday. "The Public Prosecutor's Office of Termini Imerese has registered a file with the state against unknown persons, hypothesizing the crimes of negligent shipwreck and multiple negligent manslaughter," state prosecutor Ambrogio Cartosio told reporters on the Italian island.

But he said he was only announcing the probe due to the huge international interest in the case, stressing: "We are only in the initial phase of the investigations. At this stage, precisely because the investigation could develop in any way, we are absolutely not ruling anything out."

Lynch, 59, had invited friends and family onto the boat to celebrate his recent acquittal in a massive US fraud case. But the 56-metre (185-foot) yacht capsized during a fierce, pre-dawn storm on Monday off Porticello, near Palermo. Fifteen people survived, including Lynch's wife, whose company owned the Bayesian, and the yacht's captain. A major search operation including specialist divers subsequently identified the bodies of four of Lynch's friends on Wednesday. Lynch's body was found on Thursday and that of his daughter, who had been preparing to go to Oxford University, on Friday.

Scrambling for air

The bodies were found in two cabins on the side of the ship closest to the surface, and officials said they believed the trapped passengers had moved

there in a bid to find pockets of air. The ship sank by its stern — the back — and came to rest on its right side on the sea bed, some 50 meters down, Girolamo Bentivoglio Fiandra of the fire service said.

He told reporters the passengers inside "took refuge to seek safety in the cabins on the left side where somehow the last air bubbles formed". "We found the first five bodies in the first cabin on the left side, and the last body in the third cabin on the left side," he said. Bayesian's emergency flare had gone up at 4:38 am (0238 GMT) on Monday morning, and the coastguard immediately deployed — but when they got there, it had already sunk.

Sudden, unexpected

Contrary to previous reports, Raffaele Macaudo, from the Sicilian coastguard, said there had been no storm warning that night. "It was a sudden and unexpected event," added Raffaele Cammarano, another state prosecutor. Cammarano said the meteorological event that hit the vessel was most likely a "downburst", a very strong downward wind that is an intense but relatively frequent event at sea, rather than a waterspout which involves rotating winds like a whirlwind or tornado. He said that the passengers were all probably asleep at the time of the storm which was why they failed to escape.

The captain, James Cutfield, and the other survivors have been questioned this week by authorities. Cammarano said that when authorities questioned Cutfield he had been "extremely cooperative". The officials said the crew were free to leave Sicily during the investigation. The sinking has puzzled naval marine experts who say a boat like the Bayesian, built by Italian high-end yacht manufacturer Perini, should have withstood



PORTICELLO: Divers of the Italian Corps of Firefighters enter Porticello harbor near Palermo, with the body of Hannah Lynch, the last missing person at the back of the boat on August 23, 2024. — AFP

the storm and in any case should not have sunk as quickly as it did. Information on whether the yacht's doors were open — which might explain why it sank so fast — would not be possible to confirm until the wreck was recovered, the officials said. This could take weeks.

Lynch, once dubbed the British "Bill Gates", founded software firm Autonomy in the 1990s. Its

\$11 billion sale to Hewlett-Packard in 2011 saw him face fraud charges in the United States. A jury in San Francisco acquitted the 59-year-old and a co-defendant of all charges in June. Among those who also died in the wreck were Lynch's lawyer Chris Morvillo and Jonathan Bloomer, a Morgan Stanley banker who had appeared as a character witness in the case on his behalf. — Agencies

Indian cattle fence sparks border tension with Bangladesh

KOLKATA: Security forces from India and Bangladesh had a tense confrontation this week over the construction of a fence supposedly meant to keep cattle from straying over their shared border, officials said Saturday. Relations between both countries are fragile after the August 5 overthrow of autocratic Bangladeshi ex-premier Sheikh Hasina, who is now in exile in India after a student-led uprising toppled her.

The latest dispute arose on Thursday, when India's Border Security Force (BSF) claimed they were stopped from erecting the fence by their Bangladeshi counterparts. "Tension flared up after Bangladesh border guards sought to block the building of a cattle fence," BSF deputy inspector general A K Arya told AFP. "But there was no violence."

Bangladesh is almost entirely encircled by India and the border stretches for more than 4,000 kilometers (2,485 miles), large parts of which are unfenced. Indian officials claim the fence was being built as part of a 2012 agreement to stop cows from either side wandering over the frontier or from being stolen, according to local media reports.

Cattle smuggling has been a source of tension between the two countries but AFP could not independently verify the purpose behind the construction of the fence. India has also built fences designed to deter humans from crossing elsewhere along its shared frontier with Bangladesh. — AFP

Nearly 300,000 in shelters after Bangladesh floods

FENI: Nearly 300,000 Bangladeshis were taking refuge in emergency shelters Saturday from floods that inundated vast areas of the low-lying South Asian country, disaster officials said. The floods were triggered by heavy monsoon rains and have killed at least 42 people in Bangladesh and India since the start of the week, many in landslides. "My house is completely inundated," Lufton Nahar, 60, told AFP from a relief shelter in Feni, one of the worst-hit districts near the border with India's Tripura state. "Water is flowing above our roof. My brother brought us here by boat. If he hadn't, we would have died."

The nation of 170 million people is crisscrossed by hundreds of rivers and has seen frequent floods in recent decades. Monsoon rains cause widespread destruction every year but climate change is shifting weather patterns and increasing the number of extreme weather events.

Highways and rail lines were damaged between the capital Dhaka and the main port city of Chittagong, making access to badly flooded districts difficult and disrupting business activity. The flooding also comes just weeks after a student-led revolution toppled Bangladesh's government.

Among the worst affected areas is Cox's Bazar, a district home to around a million Rohingya refugees

from neighboring Myanmar. Tripura state disaster agency official Sarat Kumad Das told AFP that 24 people had been killed on the Indian side of the border since Monday. Another 18 had been killed in Bangladesh, according to disaster management ministry secretary Md Kamrul Hasan. "285,000 people are living in emergency shelters," he said, adding that 4.5 million people in total had been affected.

Recovering from unrest

When the floods hit, Bangladesh was recovering from weeks of civil unrest that culminated in the August 5 toppling of autocratic ex-leader Sheikh Hasina. With an interim government led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus still finding its feet, ordinary Bangladeshis have been crowdfunding relief efforts. They have been organized by the same students who led the protests that sparked the ouster of Hasina, who remains in India after fleeing Dhaka. Crowds visited Dhaka University on Friday to offer cash donations as students loaded rice sacks and crates of bottled water onto vehicles for areas affected by the deluge.

Much of Bangladesh is made up of deltas where the great Himalayan rivers, the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, wind towards the sea after coursing through India. Several tributaries of the two transnational rivers were still overflowing. However, forecasts showed rain was likely to ease in the coming days.

'Creating a flood'

India was Hasina's biggest patron and benefactor, and many Bangladeshis have since been openly critical of their bigger and more powerful neighbor for



FENI: A man carrying his livestock wades through flood waters in Feni, in south-eastern Bangladesh, on August 24, 2024. — AFP

backing her 15-year rule. Asif Mahmud, a leader of the student protests who is now in Yunus' caretaker cabinet, accused India on Wednesday of "creating a flood" by deliberately releasing water from dams.

Hundreds of people also gathered at Dhaka University on Friday to protest against India's "water aggression", featuring a banner showing Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi supposedly delighting at the sight of drowning people. India's foreign ministry has rejected the charge, saying its own catchment area this week had experienced the "heaviest rains of this year" and that the flow of water downstream was due to "automatic releases". The impact of floods remains severe in India's Tripura state, with around 65,000 people sheltering across 450 relief camps, according to local media reports. — AFP

Zionists murder dozens in Gaza...

Continued from Page 1

insistence that it must retain control of the so-called Philadelphia Corridor, on the border between Gaza and Egypt. Hamas has accused the Zionist entity of going back on things it had previously agreed to in the talks. The group says the United States is not mediating in good faith.

In the Zionist entity, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has locked horns with Zionist ceasefire negotiators over whether Zionist troops must remain all along the border between Gaza and Egypt, a person with knowledge of the talks said. A Palestinian official familiar with mediation efforts said it was too soon to predict the outcome of talks. "Hamas is there to discuss the outcome of the mediators' talks with the (Zionist) officials and whether there is enough to suggest a change in the Netanyahu stance about reaching a deal," the official said.

Continuing the war will worsen the plight of Gaza's 2.3 million people, nearly all of them homeless in tents or shelters among the ruins, with malnutrition rampant and disease spreading. The Zionist military campaign has killed

40,334 Palestinians in Gaza, mostly women and children.

Fighting raged in Gaza on Saturday, with AFP correspondents and civil defense rescue sources reporting ongoing Zionist artillery fire and air strikes across the territory. In Gaza City's Zeitun neighborhood, gunfire and explosions echoed as Palestinian fighters clashed with Zionist soldiers, an AFP correspondent added. An overnight strike on a house west of Khan Yunis in southern Gaza killed 11 people, including a woman and four children, a doctor at Nasser Hospital said.

UN humanitarian agency OCHA said in a Friday update that the amount of food aid entering Gaza in July was one of the lowest since October, when the Zionist entity imposed a full siege. OCHA said that in July the number of children with acute malnutrition in northern Gaza was four times higher than in May, while in the more accessible south, where fighting is less severe, the number more than doubled.

The World Health Organization said on Friday a 10-month-old baby had been paralyzed with polio, the first such case in the territory in 25 years, raising fears of a wider outbreak given the lack of proper sanitation for people living in ruins. More warfare also risks major new escalations, with Iran still weighing retaliation for the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh on its territory last month. — Agencies

and she needs to make up for that by being very explicit and clear about her commitment to defense," McManus said. Harris' emphasis on force, McManus said, should not be confused with a truly hawkish foreign policy.

Harris won the biggest applause lines in her foreign policy section when she spoke of the suffering of Palestinians and promised to work so they "can realize their right to dignity, security, freedom and self-determination". Biden has faced heated criticism from the left for his support of the Zionist entity in its relentless campaign in Gaza.

Harris also pledged to "always stand up for (the Zionist entity's) right to defend itself". Some pro-Palestinian activists, who rallied on the Chicago streets, voiced outrage that the Democrats gave the podium to parents of hostages held by Hamas in Gaza and not to Palestinians. Biden himself has urged Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to do more to protect civilians and to drop opposition to a Palestinian state — stances few expect from Trump. — AFP

RFK Jr suspends fringe campaign...

Continued from Page 1

brain worm and a story about dumping a dead bear cub in Central Park. It also drew the opposition of most of his famous family. "Our brother Bobby's decision to endorse Trump today is a betrayal of the values that our father and our family hold most dear," five of his siblings said in a joint statement in which they endorsed Harris. "It is a sad ending to a sad story." Kennedy's withdrawal came a day after the surging Harris gave an electrifying speech at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, accepting the party's nomination and embarking on the final 10-week sprint to election day on Nov 5.

Analysts are mixed on the effect Kennedy's exit will have on the presidential race and how much of his supporters will gravitate to Trump or Harris. However, in a very tight contest, it is possible that even a few thousand votes in a crucial swing state could determine who wins the White House, as both sides chase the sliver of undecideds. At a Trump rally in Glendale there were repeated references by speakers including Charlie Kirk and Kari Lake to a MAGA movement they said welcomes all, including disaffected Democrats.

Within minutes of taking the stage, Trump was welcoming Kennedy to the microphone, accompanied by pyrotechnics and "My Hero" by the Foo Fighters. A slightly uncomfortable-looking Kennedy told the cheering crowd he wanted to work with a future President Trump to get "the chemicals out of our food". Trump heaped praise on Kennedy, saying they would "fight together to defeat the corrupt political establishment and return control of this country to the people".

He also used Kennedy's appearance to announce the formation of what he called an "independent presidential commission on assassination attempts". "They will be tasked with releasing all of the remaining documents pertaining to the assassination of President John F Kennedy," he said. The 1963 killing of the president — Robert F Kennedy Jr's uncle

— continues to fascinate much of the country, and remains the subject of myriad conspiracy theories.

Democrats shrugged off Friday's announcement. "Donald Trump isn't earning an endorsement that's going to help build support, he's inheriting the baggage of a failed fringe candidate. Good riddance," Democratic National Committee senior adviser Mary Beth Cahill said in a statement. Drexel University political science professor William Rosenberg said the move was unlikely to have an impact on the race, given Kennedy's low poll numbers.

But Kennedy's voters are also in the sights of the Harris campaign, with campaign chair Jen O'Malley Dillon saying the Democrat "wants to earn your support". "Even if we do not agree on every issue, Kamala Harris knows there is more that unites us than divides us," she said. Harris and Trump are neck and neck in the polls less than three weeks before their Sept 10 debate in Philadelphia.

Harris, 59, a former senator from California and prosecutor, left the Democratic convention in Chicago with momentum, having outtraced Trump and erased the polling leads he enjoyed before she replaced President Joe Biden on the Democratic ticket last month. In just a month, Harris, the first black woman to top a major party ticket, has raised a record-breaking half-billion dollars. Her campaign got another potential boost Friday when Federal Reserve chair Jerome Powell said the "time has come" for an interest rate cut — a move that will lower mortgage costs.

Trump, 78, has been mobilizing his right-wing base with apocalyptic warnings about migrant criminals and painting a dark picture of a country in "decline" that only he can save. Harris and her Democrats have been reaching toward the center. Party strategists spent the week in Chicago showcasing a parade of anti-Trump Republicans, including ex-cabinet officials, a small-town mayor and a former statewide office holder.

"If you vote for Kamala Harris in 2024, you're not a Democrat, you're a patriot," former Georgia lieutenant governor Geoff Duncan said. While they previously characterized Trump as a demagogue, Democrats have instead begun making fun of the Republican nominee in a manner designed to belittle him and dent his aura of invincibility. Harris, for her part, called him an "unserious" person. — Agencies

Harris' foreign policy muscular...

Continued from Page 1

she would maintain "the strongest, most lethal fighting force in the world" and warned she would strike back at any Iranian-backed attack.

At a Chicago party convention that prominently featured veterans, Harris also vowed solidarity with Ukraine as she denounced Trump's threats not to defend NATO allies if he feels they are not paying enough. Harris is vying to be the first female US president and therefore "needs to go above and beyond what a male candidate would need to do to demonstrate that she is strong," said Allison McManus of the left-leaning Center for American Progress.

"The public will still have an impression of a woman as being inherently a weaker leader than a man,

International

Airlines fly over Afghanistan as Middle East skies become risky

Carriers route through Afghanistan despite no air traffic control, saving money but chancing safety

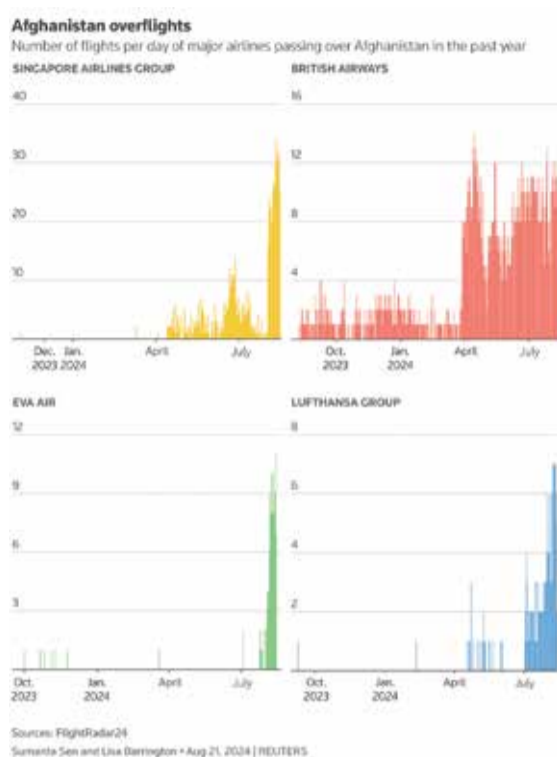
LONDON/SEOUL: Singapore Airlines, British Airways and Lufthansa have increased their flights over Afghanistan after years of largely avoiding it now the Middle East conflict has made it seem a relatively safe option. The carriers mostly stopped transiting Afghanistan, which lies on major routes between Asia and Europe, three years ago when the Taliban took over and air traffic control services stopped.

Those services have yet to resume, but airlines increasingly consider the skies between Iran and the Zionist entity are riskier than Afghan airspace. Many had started routing through Iran and the Middle East after Russian skies were closed to most western carriers when the Ukraine war began in 2022. "As conflicts have evolved, the calculus of which airspace to use has changed. Airlines are seeking to mitigate risk as much as possible and they see overflying Afghanistan as the safer option given the current tensions between Iran and (the Zionist entity)," Ian Petchenik, a spokesperson for flight tracking organization Flightradar24, said.

There were more than seven times the number of flights over Afghanistan in the second week of August than during the same period a year ago, according to a Reuters analysis of Flightradar24 data. The shift began in mid-April during reciprocal missile and drone attacks between Iran and the Zionist entity. Flight tracking data from the time shows Lufthansa, Singapore Airlines, British Airways and others began to send a few flights a day over Afghanistan.

But the main growth has been since the killing of senior members of militant groups Hamas and Hezbollah in late July raised concerns of a major escalation. Some pilots are concerned. "You're depending on the analysis of your airline. Every time I fly out there, I don't like the feeling of flying over a conflict area where you don't know, actually, what is happening," said Otjan de Bruin, a commercial pilot and head of the European Cockpit Association. "It's always safe enough, until proven otherwise."

Lufthansa Group told Reuters it decided to resume overflying Afghan airspace from early July. Other carriers that have increased overflights since April include Turkish Airlines, Thai Airways and the Air France-KLM group, data shows. "Based on actual security information, KLM and other airlines



currently safely overfly Afghanistan only on specific routes and only at high altitudes," KLM told Reuters.

British Airways, Thai Airways, Turkish Airlines and Singapore Airlines did not respond to requests for comment. Taiwan's EVA Air began from late July, flight tracking data shows. EVA told Reuters it chooses routes based on safety, the current international situation and flight advisories.

Regulation's role

The route changes have been facilitated by aviation regulators easing guidance on Afghanistan. The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in early July said planes could fly at a lower altitude over a sliver of north-eastern Afghanistan, the Wakhan Corridor, which is used to cross from Tajikistan to Pakistan - opening that path to more types of flights. A year earlier, the FAA lifted its ban on over-

'Anti-Semitic act'

Prime Minister Gabriel Attal said France's national anti-terror prosecutors had been tasked with probing the incident. "La Grande Motte's synagogue was the target of an attack this morning," Attal said in a post on X. "An anti-Semitic act. Once again, our Jewish fellow citizens are being targeted."

Earlier, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin called the incident "an obviously criminal act". He said "all means are being deployed to find the perpetrator". The police presence outside Jewish sites in France would be increased following the explosion, the minister added. Darmanin and Attal were to travel to the site of the explosion later on Saturday.

The blast occurred during Shabbat, the Jewish day of rest that runs from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday, with many attending synagogue services. There was, however, no religious service ongoing at the time of the incident, a police source said. A rabbi and four other people were inside the synagogue at the time but all were unharmed, investigators said. There was no immediate information about the gravity of the police officer's injuries.

Darmanin said this month that the government had counted 887 anti-Semitic acts in France in the first half of 2024, nearly three times as many as in the same period in 2023. France is home to the biggest Jewish population outside the Zionist entity and the United States, and also to the largest Muslim community in the European Union. The Representative Council of Jewish Institutions in France (CRIF) called the explosion "an attempt to kill Jews". The use of a gas canister "in a car at a time when worshippers are expected to arrive at the synagogue is not simply a criminal act", CRIF president Yonathan Arfi told AFP. "This shows an intention to kill." — AFP

countries. There are two key mpox shots, made by Denmark's Bavarian Nordic and Japan's KM Biologics. Bavarian Nordic's costs \$100 a dose; the price of KM Biologics' is unknown.

The long wait for WHO approval for international agencies to buy and distribute the vaccine has forced individual African governments and the continent's public health agency — the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) — to instead request donations of shots from rich countries. That cumbersome process can collapse, as it has before, if donors feel they should keep the vaccine to protect their own people.

The first 10,000 vaccines on their way to Africa — made by Bavarian Nordic — were donated by the United States, not provided by the UN system. Helen Rees, a member of the Africa CDC's mpox emergency committee, said it was "really outrageous" that, after Africa struggled to access vaccines during the COVID pandemic, the region had once again been left behind.

In 2022, after a different mpox strain spread outside Africa, smallpox shots were repurposed by governments within weeks, approved by regulators and used in roughly 70 high and middle income countries to protect those most at risk. Those vaccines have now reached 1.2 million people in the United States alone, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

But no shots have been available in Africa outside clinical trials. A key reason: Vaccines needed to be greenlit by the WHO before they could be bought by public healthcare groups including Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. Gavi helps poorer countries buy shots, supplying childhood vaccines in this way routinely. The Africa CDC has said 10 million doses may be needed across the continent. But the WHO only



Rockets fired from southern Lebanon are intercepted by the Zionist entity's Iron Dome air defense system over the Upper Galilee region on August 23, 2024. — AFP

flights for the entire country, but said planes must stay above 32,000 feet (9,753.6 m) where surface-to-air weapons are considered less effective. But few started using Afghanistan until April.

Although more traffic has been using the airspace without incident, there is no guarantee of crew or passenger safety if a plane has to land, flight safety group OPSGROUP said in July. In the absence of air traffic control, pilots crossing Afghanistan talk to nearby planes over radio according to a protocol drawn up by UN aviation body ICAO and Afghanistan's Civil Aviation Authority.

European aviation safety regulator EASA said in a conflict-zone information bulletin re-issued in July that "extremist non-state actor groups remain active and might sporadically target aviation facilities in multiple ways." The industry is haunted by the memory of Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17 from

Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, which was shot down over eastern Ukraine in 2014, as fighting raged between pro-Russian separatists and Ukrainian forces.

Cost and limited choice

Airlines are under pressure to save money after the loss since 2022 of many shorter paths through Russian airspace, and as they re-build from the pandemic. There are few international rules that dictate which areas of airspace are safe and airline safety decisions are left largely to the discretion of individual carriers. If an airline cannot fly through Russia, Ukraine or Iran, central Afghanistan offers a more direct route into southern Asia from Europe. "This route saved us a fair chunk of time and fuel," OPSGROUP reported from a pilot in July who flew from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur across central Afghanistan. — Reuters

France opens terror probe after blast near synagogue

MONTPELLIER: An explosion outside a synagogue in southern France wounded a police officer early on Saturday, in what authorities said was being treated as a potential terror attack. Security around Jewish sites was tightened following the early Saturday blast outside the Beth Yaacov synagogue in the seaside resort of La Grande Motte, near the city of Montpellier. A fire was also started at the entrance of the synagogue, but was quickly put out, with two doors damaged, investigators said.

President Emmanuel Macron called the incident "an act of terror", adding on X that "the fight against anti-Semitism is a daily fight". Two cars outside the synagogue burst into flames after a gas canister likely exploded inside one of the vehicles, police said. The blast wounded a police officer, police said, without providing any other details.

La Grande Motte's mayor, Stephan Rossignol, said that CCTV had picked up images of an individual setting fire to the cars. The potential suspect seen in the footage was brandishing a Palestinian flag, a source close to the probe added. Another source said that the man was carrying two empty bottles and had a Palestinian flag draped around his waist as left the scene on foot. One of the images also appeared to show him to be armed, possibly with a 9mm pistol, the source added. The explosion comes amid a heightened state of alert in France and other European countries because of the war in Gaza.

Why mpox vaccines are only just arriving in Africa after 2 years

LONDON: The first 10,000 mpox vaccines are finally due to arrive next week in Africa, where a dangerous new strain of the virus — which has afflicted people there for decades — has caused global alarm.

The slow arrival of the shots — which have already been made available in more than 70 countries outside Africa — showed that lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic about global healthcare inequities have been slow to bring change, half a dozen public health officials and scientists said. Among the hurdles: It took the World Health Organization (WHO) until this month to start officially the process needed to give poor countries easy access to large quantities of vaccine via international agencies.

That could have begun years ago, several of the officials and scientists told Reuters. Mpox is a potentially deadly infection that causes flu-like symptoms and pus-filled lesions and spreads through close physical contact. It was declared a global health emergency by the WHO on August 14 after the new strain, known as clade 1b, began to proliferate from Democratic Republic of Congo to neighboring African countries.

In response to Reuters questions about the delays in vaccine deployment, the UN health agency said on Friday it would relax some of its procedures on this occasion in an effort to now accelerate poor countries' access to the mpox shots. Buying the expensive vaccines directly is out of reach for many low-income



LA GRANDE-MOTTE: This CCTV image shows a potential suspect carrying two empty bottles and a Palestinian flag draped around his waist, leaving the scene of the blast. — AFP

this month asked vaccine manufacturers to submit the information needed for the mpox shots to receive an emergency license — the WHO's accelerated approval for medical products. It urged countries to donate shots until the process was finalized, in September. The WHO said it is working with the authorities in Congo to put together a vaccination plan, and on Friday said Gavi could start talks while it finalized its emergency approval.

WHO criticized

The WHO's role in approving medical products has revolutionized supply in low-income countries, which often lack the facilities to check new products themselves, but it has also faced criticism for its slow speed and complexity. The Geneva-based UN health agency said on Friday it did not have sufficient data during the last mpox emergency in 2022 to start an approval process for the vaccine, and it has been working with manufacturers since then to see if the available data warranted an approval.

Mpox has caused 99,000 confirmed cases and 208 deaths worldwide since 2022, according to the WHO. Infections have been brought under control in rich regions by a combination of vaccines and by behavior change among the highest-risk groups. With the main earlier mpox strain, men who have sex with men were most at risk, but the new clade 1b variant seems to spread more easily through other close contact, including among children, as well as through sexual contact among heterosexual people. The country currently hardest hit by mpox is Congo. Since January 2023, there have been more than 27,000 suspected cases and 1,100 deaths there, according to government figures, mainly among children.

But the first 10,000 vaccines donated by the United States are not destined for Congo but for Nigeria,

Philippines urges China to cease 'provocative' actions

MANILA: The Philippines called on Beijing on Saturday to "immediately cease all provocative and dangerous actions" after accusing it of "unjustifiably" deploying flares from China-occupied Subi Reef on August 22 while a Manila aircraft was conducting patrols. The same aircraft also "faced harassment" from a Chinese jet fighter while it was conducting a surveillance flight near Scarborough Shoal on August 19, the Philippines' South China Sea Task Force said in a statement. "Such actions undermine regional peace and security, and further erode the image of the PRC (People's Republic of China) with the international community," the task force said.

There was no immediate comment from the Chinese Embassy in Manila about the incidents, which happened the same week Manila and Beijing accused each of ramming vessels and performing dangerous maneuvers in the South China Sea. They also came less than two weeks after an air incident between the Chinese and Philippines militaries in Scarborough Shoal, even as the two nations have agreed to "restore trust" and "rebuild confidence" to better manage maritime disputes.

The United States condemned China for launching flares at the Philippine aircraft, US Ambassador to Manila MaryKay Carlson said on platform X. "With the Philippines, we call on PRC to cease provocative and dangerous actions that undermine a free and open Indo Pacific region," she said. — Reuters



BUJUMBURA: A woman infected with mpox poses for a photo at a treatment center. — AFP

as a result of several years of talks between both governments, according to a source involved in the process who was not authorized to speak to the media. Nigeria has had 786 suspected cases this year, and no deaths. The US Agency for International Development (USAID) said it has also donated 50,000 doses to Congo but the arrival date is not yet finalized.

As Congo grapples with conflict and multiple competing disease outbreaks, its government has yet to ask Gavi officially for vaccine supplies and took months to talk to donor governments. Congo's government has told reporters it hopes to receive vaccine donations next week, but three donor sources told Reuters it is not clear if that will happen. — Reuters

SUNDAY, AUGUST 25, 2024

Powell greenlights Sept easing

Fed chief says timing, pace of rate cuts depends on data

JACKSON HOLE, Wyoming: Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell on Friday endorsed an imminent start to interest rate cuts, saying further cooling in the job market would be unwelcome and expressing confidence that inflation is within reach of the US central bank's 2 percent target. "The time has come for policy to adjust," Powell said in a highly anticipated speech to the Kansas City Fed's annual economic conference in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. "The direction of travel is clear, and the timing and pace of rate cuts will depend on incoming data, the evolving outlook, and the balance of risks."

The emphatic pivot from a battle against inflation to a readiness to defend against job loss opens a new chapter for the central bank just as a consequential US presidential election nears. Powell said his "confidence has grown that inflation is on a sustainable path back to 2 percent," after rising to about 7 percent during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the upside risks have diminished.

Meanwhile, he said, a slowdown in the labor market is "unmistakable" and "the downside risks to employment have increased." And while slower hiring, rather than a more concerning rise in layoffs, has so far driven the rapid rise in the unemployment rate to 4.3 percent, Powell signaled the Fed would not countenance further erosion. "We do not seek or welcome further cooling in labor market conditions," he said. "We will do everything we can to support a strong labor market as we make further progress toward price stability."

Analysts and financial markets had already widely expected the Fed to deliver its first rate cut at its Sept 17-18 policy meeting, a view that was cemented after a readout of the central bank's July meeting said a "vast majority" of policymakers agreed the policy easing likely would begin next month. Most analysts



WASHINGTON: US Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell speaks during a news conference.

have forecast the Fed will kick off its policy easing with a quarter-percentage-point rate reduction, the central bank's usual increment.

Powell's new emphasis on protecting the job market raises the chance of a bigger cut, especially if the US government's jobs report for August, due to be released on Sept 6, shows further deterioration in what many policymakers have called a still-healthy job market. With its policy rate currently in the 5.25 percent-5.50 percent range, the Fed has "ample room" to reduce borrowing costs to cushion the economy, Powell said.

After his remarks, traders moved to price in a better than one-in-three chance that the Fed will start its easing cycle with a half-percentage-point rate cut, and are fully confident of at least one super-sized cut before the end of this year. "Chair Powell's speech made it clear that there are likely a series of rate cuts



NEW YORK: Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange during morning trading on August 23, 2024 in New York City. — AFP photos

on the way, and some could be of the 50-basis-point variety," wrote Omar Sharif, the president of Inflation Insights. "While some Fed officials may want to go in 25-basis-point increments, the Chair retained optionality ... i.e., 'we'll go 50 basis points if we feel like it is needed.'"

Markets are betting the Fed's policy rate will be in the 3.00 percent-3.25 percent range by the end of 2025, more than 2 percentage points below where it is now. The impact of Powell's remarks is rippling to other central banks as well.

US stocks jumped after the release of Powell's remarks, with the benchmark S&P 500 index gaining about 1 percent and nearing a record high. US Treasury yields dropped and the dollar weakened against a basket of currencies.

Chicago Fed Bank President Austan Goolsbee has for months signaled his support for a rate cut, and

margins," US Senator Elizabeth Warren said in an interview with CNBC on Friday.

The Harris campaign did not respond to a request for comment. But several US media organizations, including the Washington Post, reported that the Harris campaign sees the policy as an attempt to elevate existing state-level rules on price gouging to the federal level.

A global inflationary surge at the tail-end of the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to a sharp rise in the cost of everyday items across the United States. Consumer inflation has eased dramatically since peaking at more than nine percent in 2022. But Americans are still contending with an overall price increase of just over 20 percent since Joe Biden took office, according to data from the US Labor Department. However, "very little" of that increase is down to price gouging, Oxford Economics chief US economist Ryan Sweet told AFP. Instead, Sweet points to a pandemic-fueled supply shock, and an increase in demand for goods and services spurred — in part — by generous federal support for households during the pandemic. "What this gouging does is pivot the blame from the Biden administration, which Harris was part of, to corporations," said Gary Hufbauer, a nonresident senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics. "It's a pretty successful political argument," he told AFP. "It has no economic basis."

The retail business is notoriously tough, with profit margins often in the low single digits—in stark contrast to higher-margin sectors like tech. "Is there a more competitive space than retail?" Target chief executive Brian Cornell said in an interview with CNBC on Wednesday that touched on Harris's price gouging plans. "It is a penny business, and it's a very

on Friday did so again, saying policy is currently too tight, especially with the labor market flashing warning lights. Other policymakers, including Atlanta Fed President Raphael Bostic, who has previously been more hesitant on rate cuts, also joined in to back the coming policy easing.

For his part, Powell on Friday came as close as he is likely to in declaring victory over the outbreak of inflation that rattled the economy at the start of the pandemic. The fast rise in prices led the Fed to increase its benchmark policy rate from the near-zero level to the current range, which is the highest in a quarter of a century. It has been held there for more than a year even as the economy defied frequent predictions of recession, inflation fell, and economic growth continued — the makings of a textbook "soft landing," with the endgame of rate cuts now set to begin. "While the task is not complete, we have made a good deal of progress" toward restoring price stability, Powell said in his speech. The Fed defines price stability as 2 percent inflation, as measured by the personal consumption expenditures price index. The index is currently running at an annual rate of 2.5 percent.

"With an appropriate dialing back of policy restraint, there is good reason to think that the economy will get back to 2 percent inflation while maintaining a strong labor market," he said.

Powell spoke at the Jackson Lake Lodge in Wyoming's Grand Teton National Park to a gathering of central bankers and economists that has become a global platform for officials to shape views of monetary policy and the economy. Fed officials will provide updated economic projections at their meeting next month, including more details on how they expect the benchmark policy rate to evolve from here. — Reuters

Gulf Bank urges caution against digital scams

KUWAIT: In support of the Central Bank of Kuwait's "Diraya" campaign, in partnership with the Kuwait Banking Association, Gulf Bank urges customers to immediately report any suspected or actual incidents of electronic fraud. This prompt reporting enables banks and authorities to act quickly to track and stop the fraud before any funds are transferred abroad. Gulf Bank advises customers to exercise caution with emails, text messages, and phone calls from unfamiliar sources to safeguard their banking information. The bank emphasizes that legitimate institutions will never request personal information via these methods. Responding to such communications can result in fraudulent attempts to access your banking details.

The bank also warns about increasing fraud risks through fake donation pages following disasters, where fraudsters exploit people's will-



ingness to help by deceiving them and stealing their money. Gulf Bank advises customers not to store sensitive information, such as ATM or credit card numbers and PINs, on their mobile phones. Customers should also avoid writing their PIN on their credit card or sharing one-time passwords (OTPs). It is crucial to log out of the bank's app or website immediately after completing any transactions.

Customer awareness is vital for protecting banking data, especially with the growing use of digital services. Gulf Bank advises customers to verify that they are engaging with legitimate, well-known, and licensed institutions when making donations. 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.

Economists push back on Harris price gouging plan

WASHINGTON: Kamala Harris' price gouging policy has been criticized by economists and analysts, who say it is an uncompetitive proposal that could end up hurting, and not helping, US consumers. Harris, the Democratic nominee for president, announced the policy last week as part of a raft of populist proposals which included a \$6,000-a-year tax credit for families with newborn children and a \$10,000 tax credit for first-time home buyers.

If elected President, Harris would work with Congress to advance "the first-ever federal ban on price gouging on food and groceries," her campaign said in a statement.

The proposals would look to set "clear rules of the road" to stop big corporations from running up "excessive" profits on food and groceries, and beef up state and federal regulatory powers to penalize rule-breakers. While popular with the Democratic base, the price gouging plans elicited a fierce reaction from Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump, who is running against Harris in November's elections.

"Kamala will implement SOVIET Style Price Controls," he wrote in a social media post a day after the proposals were published. Supporters of the policy say it has been mischaracterized and misunderstood. "When there is more concentration in an industry, we have seen much greater increases in the profit

Chinese cars make inroads in Latin America

SANTIAGO, Chile: Chilean truck driver Claudio Perez was dubious about his first purchase of a Chinese-made family car two years ago. But the price and quick delivery time convinced him, and now he is a convert.

Perez, 47, is one of millions of car buyers in Latin America to have made the shift from US- and Brazilian-built cars to Chinese models in recent years. In 2019, the Asian economic giant sold \$2.2 billion worth of cars in the region. Last year, the figure reached \$8.5 billion, according to the International Trade Center (ITC), a UN agency. Chinese car sales represented 20 percent of the region's total in money terms — ahead of the United States with 17 percent and Brazil with 11 percent.

No other market outside Asia now has a larger share of Chinese cars, according to the ITC. "We tend to stigmatize Chinese brands, but no... this one was super good, super good. So I don't regret buying it," Perez said of his first purchase, which he said he had expected to be "plastic-like."

And his next car will be Chinese too, he said. Chinese carmakers have redoubled their efforts in recent years to offer products at competitive prices, without compromising on quality, according to analysts. In the emerging market of electric vehicles, they have taken an even bigger slice of the Latin American market, with 51 percent of all sales. Almost all electric buses in the region are made in China.

"The growth of Chinese car manufacturers in recent years has been exponential, thanks to significant improvements in quality, technology and design," said Andres Polverigiani of Nyvus, a consultancy firm that studies vehicle competitiveness. In



SAN ANTONIO, Chile: A worker checks a car following the arrival of a Chinese ship with an import of cars, at the Port of San Antonio, in Valparaiso region, Chile. — AFP

the United States and Europe, both with their own automotive industries, protective import tariffs have slowed China's advance, unlike in Latin America.

In Chile, with near-zero duties, Chinese models represented nearly 30 percent of car sales last year.

In Mexico and Brazil, Latin America's biggest car producers, China is also making inroads. Chinese giant BYD is building its largest electric car plant outside of Asia in Camacari, northeastern Brazil, with a targeted production capacity of 150,000 units every year. In Latin America, Chinese cars, which tend to be cheaper than rivals, have enabled segments of the middle- and low-income population to buy their first vehicle, said Sebastian Herreros, an economist at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). It has also allowed the introduction of cleaner engine technologies in polluted metropolises such as Santiago, Bogota and Mexico City.

"All our countries must adopt electro-mobility quickly, it is almost a question of survival," said Herreros. "China is an ideal partner: it has the necessary production capacity and offers competitive prices." — AFP



CHICAGO: US Vice President and 2024 Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris reacts as she arrives to speak at the United Center in Chicago, Illinois, on August 22, 2024. — AFP

competitive space, and we provide the value consumers are looking for," he added.

But for people struggling with the cost of living, it's a difficult argument to make.

"People see that gasoline prices are higher than they were a few years ago, food prices are going to be higher than they were a few years ago," said Sweet, from Oxford Economics. "But we're not going back down to the prices that we saw pre-pandemic," he added. That's because easing inflation does not translate into lower sticker prices at the grocery store. Instead, when wages increase faster than inflation — as they have been for well over a year now — the cost of those items relative to wages declines over time. — AFP

Canada faces new strike warning for freight rail

MONTREAL: Canada's freight rail operations partially resumed Friday after government intervention to end a crippling strike, though the restart quickly got off track as a fresh stoppage was threatened for early next week. Stoppages began Thursday morning at both Canadian National Railway (CN) and Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC), locking out nearly 10,000 workers with the Teamsters union and threatening to upend the North American economy.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government moved quickly to end the strike, sending the dispute to the Canadian Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) and seeking forced arbitration. CN's 6,500 employees returned to work Friday morning, but a few hours later the union filed a strike notice for Monday, according to a letter seen by AFP.

Meanwhile the CPKC's workers have refused to resume operations as they contest the constitutionality of the government intervention. The disputes have centered around workers' concerns over long hours and fatigue, leading to dangerous working conditions. The companies and the union had blamed each other for the work stoppage that followed months of fruitless negotiations. It is the first time Canada has faced simultaneous work stoppages at the two companies, which in the past have negotiated deals in alternate years.

Canada is the world's second-largest country by area, and relies heavily on rail transport. CN and CPKC have tracks that stretch from the Atlantic to the Pacific coasts and south into the United States. They carry an estimated Can\$1 billion (US\$730 million) worth of goods daily, including grains and potash, cars, petroleum products and timber. — AFP

Business

NBK-Egypt reports KD 24.9 million in net profit for first six months of 2024

Bank records a remarkable growth of 102 percent in H1 2024

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait - Egypt (NBK-Egypt) has reported net profits of EGP 3.17 billion (equivalent to KD 24.9 million) for the first six months of 2024, a significant increase from the EGP 1.57 billion (equivalent to KD 16.2 million) reported in the first six months of 2023, showcasing an impressive growth rate of 102 percent.

Net Operating Income stood at EGP 6.1 billion, recording a substantial increase of 56 percent from EGP 3.9 billion recorded in the corresponding period of 2023. In the meantime, Net Interest Income grew by 62 percent, reaching EGP 5.2 billion compared to EGP 3.2 billion in H1 2023.

Meanwhile, net operating income (excluding interests) increased to EGP 905.7 million in H1 2024, compared to EGP 711.4 million in H1 2023, up by 27 percent, while cost to net operating income dropped from 33.8 percent in H1 2023 to 22.9 percent in H1 2024.

Total assets reached EGP 163.2 billion in H1 2024, up by 25 percent compared to EGP 130.6 billion by the end of 2023. Furthermore, total loans and credit facilities expanded to EGP 95.40 billion in H1 2024, reflecting a growth rate of 25.43 percent compared to EGP 76.06 billion recorded at the end of 2023. The significant increase in the balance of loans and credit facilities in foreign currencies, which grew by 27.80 percent, was largely driven by the impact of the rise in the exchange rate. Additionally, customer deposits increased to EGP 129.14 billion by the end of H1 2024, up from EGP 105.93 billion at the end of 2023, representing a growth rate of 21.91 percent. The key factor driving the 45.21 percent increase in foreign currency customer deposits was the impact of the rising exchange rate. Furthermore, The Return on Average Assets (ROAA) improved to 4.3 percent in H1 2024, compared to 2.9 percent in the corresponding period of 2023, while the Return on Average Equity (ROAE) increased to 38.8 percent in H1 2024, up from 26.9 percent in the corresponding period of 2023.

Commenting on the financial results announced by NBK-Egypt, Shaikha Al-Bahar, Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer, National Bank of Kuwait, and Chairman of NBK-Egypt, said: "NBK Egypt's achievement of historic growth and record business results in the first half of 2024 clearly underscores its ongoing success in strengthening its po-



Shaikha Al-Bahar

In the first half of 2024, we recorded unprecedented profits, driven by robust operational performance across our diverse business segments.

We are committed to enhancing service quality, expanding our geographical presence, and targeting a broader range of customer segments.

Our strategic focus is on increasing market share, advancing banking transactions, and elevating their quality to meet the rising demand. Despite challenges in the Egyptian market, our long-term investment remains robust and continues to grow.



Yasser El-Tayeb

We consistently deliver strong performance, achieving growth rates that surpass expectations across all financial indicators.

Our focus is on further strengthening our position in both the corporate and retail banking sectors.

We are committed to supporting the global shift towards sustainable finance and the transition to a green economy.

Our goal is to expand our digital services and actively support the move towards digital transformation.

sition within the Egyptian market. Egypt remains a key market for NBK Group due to its promising growth potential and positive outlook. The bank's operations in Egypt continue to rank among the most profitable within the Group, showcasing the highest rates of return on equity and assets."

Al-Bahar emphasized that the continued expansion of the balance sheet and the growth of all financial indicators reflect the success of the bank's business diversification strategy and its accelerated digital transformation efforts. This strategy aims to increase the bank's market share, particularly in retail banking services, in the region's largest market by population.

"We are committed to enhancing the quality of our services, expanding our geographical footprint, and reaching a more diverse customer base. This is made possible by the significant advancements in our digital infrastructure, information technology, and digital channels. These developments have positioned NBK-Egypt as a strong competitor in the Egyptian banking market," Al-Bahar added.

"Egypt stands as a key growth market for NBK Group and a cornerstone of our long-term strategic investment. We remain steadfast in our commitment to further expansion, with our ongoing success underscoring the Group's vision for this market. Our focus is on harnessing this momentum to meet the

increasing demand for banking services and to drive financial inclusion forward," Al-Bahar concluded.

Vice Chairman, CEO, and Managing Director of National Bank of Kuwait-Egypt, Yasser El-Tayeb, said: "The strength of the bank's business results in H1 2024, which have exceeded all expectations and targets for this period of the year, reflects the resilience and adaptability of our business model. This growth continues despite the exceptional market challenges we face locally, regionally, and globally."

El-Tayeb emphasized that NBK-Egypt is experiencing consistent growth across all activities and business sectors while maintaining efficiency rates and risk ratios that align with this expansion. This approach ensures business sustainability and customer satisfaction alike, thanks to the bank's prudent policies and its robust business model capable of meeting customer needs and diversifying income sources. "A significant portion of NBK - Egypt's income is generated through a balanced approach, with strong contributions from both corporate credit operations and the rapidly growing retail banking sector. Our credit portfolio is notably diverse, covering large, medium, and small enterprises, while our retail banking portfolio serves a wide array of customer segments. This diversity is a testament to the strength and resilience of our income streams.

Looking ahead, we are dedicated to further solidifying our leadership in the retail banking sector by delivering more advanced services and products tailored to the evolving needs of our diverse customer base," El-Tayeb stated.

He also highlighted that NBK - Egypt is dedicated to advancing the global shift towards sustainable finance and the transition to a green economy. The bank is committed to supporting environmentally friendly projects that foster sustainability and enhance the use of renewable energy. Additionally, NBK - Egypt is focused on exploring solutions to mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change and reduce carbon emissions. Sustainable finance is increasingly recognized as a vital tool for ensuring and maintaining long-term financial stability. El-Tayeb concluded by underscoring the bank's firm belief in the pivotal role of technological advancements and digital channels in the banking sector. Recognizing their significance in bolstering competitive advantage, the bank has proactively enhanced its digital services and encouraged customers to broaden their use in payments. This aligns with the national policy and the Central Bank of Egypt's objectives to promote financial inclusion and integrate new customer segments into the formal banking system, ultimately contributing to a less cash-dependent society.

India silver imports to double on demand for solar, investment

BENGALURU: India's silver imports are on course to nearly double this year due to rising demand from solar panel and electronics makers, and as investors bet the metal will give better returns than gold, leading importers said on Friday. Higher imports by the world's biggest silver consumer could give further support to global prices which are close to their highest level in more than a decade. India imported 3,625 metric tons of the white metal last year.

This year's purchases could rise to between 6,500 and 7,000 tons due to the rising industrial demand, said Chirag Thakkar, CEO of Anrapali Group Gujarat, a leading silver importer.

India's silver imports in the first half of 2024 jumped to 4,554 tons from 560 tons a year ago, trade ministry data showed. "There is a traditional demand for jewelry. People are also buying for investment purposes now that the duty cut has made silver more affordable," Thakkar told Reuters on the sidelines of the India Gold Conference.

India slashed import duties on silver in July to 6 percent from 15 percent, a step aimed at tackling smuggling. Thakkar said investment demand had been "phenomenal" in the first half of the year as people bought silver anticipating that it would give them a better return than gold. — Reuters

Alibaba to upgrade Hong Kong listing amid profit drop

HONG KONG: Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba said Friday it would upgrade its Hong Kong-listed shares to primary status, opening it up to China's huge army of investors that could potentially rake in billions of dollars for the firm.

The decision by shareholders during its annual general meeting Thursday will provide a much-needed boost to the firm, which has underperformed the market in recent years owing to weak consumption and after a painful crackdown by Beijing on the tech industry. "We are pleased to announce that the voluntary conversion of our secondary listing to primary listing on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange will become effective on August 28, 2024," the company announced on Friday.

The firm, which is also listed in New York, had flagged the idea two years ago amid worries about a regulatory drive by US authorities as tensions simmered between the superpowers, though that was later put off. Alibaba has been primarily traded in New York since 2014 and remained dual-listed after its notable return to Hong Kong through a second listing in 2019.

However, the firm's shares in Hong Kong have plunged since the crackdown began and are down about 75 percent from their peak in 2020. A conversion to primary status in Hong Kong could pave the way for Alibaba to enter a cross-border scheme that allows investors in Shenzhen and Shanghai to trade Hong Kong-listed shares. That would open it up to China's more than 200 million investors and could see capital inflows of up to US\$19.5 billion in the first six months of inclusion, according to Bloomberg News.

Co-founder and chairman Joe Tsai told Hong Kong's South China Morning Post newspaper in May that "the main reason for us to proceed with the dual primary listing is because we want to tap into the southbound capital flows through the Stock Connect program". — AFP

UK energy bills to rise, sparking fuel poverty fears

LONDON: British energy bills are set to start rising again this autumn, the sector regulator announced on Friday, sparking fears that fuel poverty will worsen amid an ongoing cost of living crisis. The cost of household electricity and gas had been falling from peaks reached after Russia's invasion of Ukraine that contributed to the soaring cost of living.

But energy market regulator Ofgem said the price cap that suppliers can charge customers will increase by 10 percent from October, adding around £12 (\$15) a month to the average bill. A typical household bill will rise to about £1,717 per year, Ofgem, which sets the cap every quarter, detailed in a press release. It had issued reductions in April and July.

The regulator cited "rising prices" on international energy markets due to "increasing geopolitical tensions and extreme weather events driving competition for gas". It said that despite the rise for the October to December quarter, the cap will still be six percent lower than for the same period last year.

It will be almost half as low as at the height of the energy crisis in 2022 following Russia's invasion of its neighbor in February that year, Ofgem added. But National Energy Action, a UK fuel poverty charity, warned that the increase would "plunge 400,000 more UK households into fuel poverty this winter", taking the number to six million. The charity said the problem would be compounded by UK finance minister Rachel Reeves's recent decision to scrap winter fuel subsidies for 10 million older citizens.

ECB policymakers' views converging on Sept rate cut

JACKSON HOLE, Wyoming: A growing number of European Central Bank policymakers are lining up behind another interest rate cut in September and only major data surprises in the coming weeks could delay the move, on and off record conversations with seven sources indicate. Financial markets already overwhelmingly expect a fresh rate cut next month, but policymakers have been circumspect on their next move after the central bank was criticized by some for too overtly committing itself before its first rate cut back in June.

A raft of figures on growth, wages and prices in recent weeks has started to sway them and many are increasingly open to discussing their views, arguing that conditions laid out for a cut are being fulfilled.

The sources, who are familiar with the discussion and said they are open to another cut on Sept. 12, listed a host of arguments: price pressures are easing as projected, economic growth is falling short of expectations, wage growth is softening and the US Federal Reserve's signals about its own easing make the ECB's job easier. "We are largely where we want to be," Latvian policymaker Martins Kazaks said when asked about a cut in September.

"Our June projections assumed two more rate cuts this year and right now I don't see any reason why we shouldn't follow through," said Kazaks, just days after Finland's Olli Rehn already made



GREAT YARMOUTH, UK: UK Border Force Cutter HMC Seeker passes wind turbines at RWE's Scroby Sands Wind Farm, off the coast of Great Yarmouth, eastern England. — AFP

Energy minister Ed Miliband acknowledged that the cap rise "will be deeply worrying news for many families", pinning the blame on the Conservative government ousted by Labour in last month's election. "We will also do everything in our power to protect billpayers, including by reforming the regulator to make it a strong consumer champion," he added.

Ofgem chief executive Jonathan Brearley said

the case for a cut next month.

The other sources, who declined to be named, said private, informal conversations are showing broad support for the move, even if most are still awaiting further data before finalising their views.

ECB policymakers rarely take formal votes and most decisions are passed with a wide consensus suggesting that if policy hawks are already starting to align with a September cut, the decision is unlikely to be controversial. ECB President Christine Lagarde, whose support for the move will be vital, has yet to send any signal about the September decision and has made no public comments on ECB policy in weeks. An ECB spokesperson declined to comment. The sources added that formal discussions have yet to start and there are still important data releases before Sept 12.

The sources, many of them considered conservatives or policy hawks, said that communicating the move may be more difficult than the decision itself. Some fear that a cut could stoke expectations for a follow up move in October and they are keen to temper investor bets, keeping market pricing consistent with quarterly cuts.

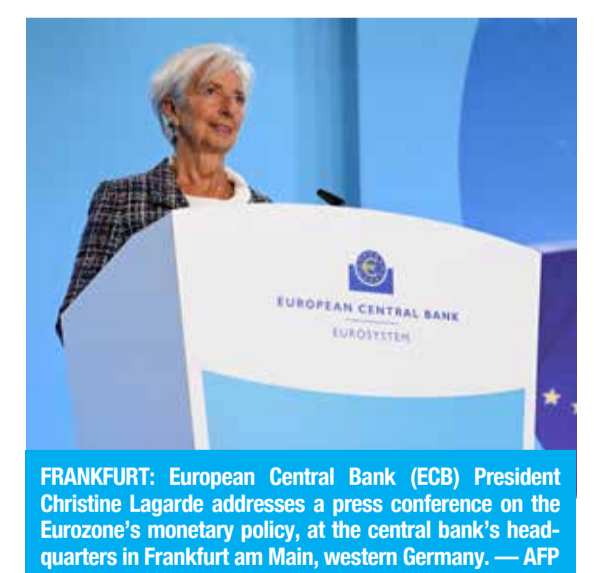
Markets currently see a more than 90 percent chance of a September cut and forecast at least another move over the rest of the year, to be followed by steady cuts in 2025. "My worry is October and not September," one of the sources said. "We need to make sure that the September cut doesn't stoke expectations too much." The chief argument in backing a cut is that easing was anticipated when inflation was on the ECB's predicted path.

While inflation has come up a bit over the summer, wage pressures are clearly softening and corporate profits are also absorbing some wage increases, so underlying price pressures are easing.

Interest rates will also remain high enough to re-

strict growth so a cut is merely easing up on the brake, the sources said. There is also an expanding camp worrying about lackluster growth.

A long-anticipated rebound is failing to materialize and Germany, the euro zone's biggest economy, is skirting a recession amid a deep downturn in industrial output. "We need to make sure we're not holding back growth more than necessary because a soft landing is not a done deal," a third source added. The sources, however, all agreed that the ECB cannot further delay getting inflation back to its 2 percent target. It now sees that being reached in late 2025 and there is no appetite in letting this slip into 2026. "It's a fairly hard deadline for me," a fourth source said. "Unless there is a shock, we need to get there next year to preserve credibility." — Reuters



FRANKFURT: European Central Bank (ECB) President Christine Lagarde addresses a press conference on the Eurozone's monetary policy, at the central bank's headquarters in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany. — AFP

Business

BoJ's Ueda flags more rate hikes if economy and inflation on track

Yen firms as BoJ suggests readiness to hike rates

TOKYO: Bank of Japan governor Kazuo Ueda indicated Friday that officials could hike interest rates again if inflation and the economy performed as expected, weeks after turmoil caused by a surprise increase earlier this month. The remarks come after markets were sent into a spin by the bank's second hike in 17 years on July 31, hours before the Federal Reserve indicated it was set to start cutting.

The decision, and hints at more to come, sparked a sharp unwind of the "yen carry trade" — in which investors use the cheaper currency to buy higher-yielding assets such as stocks — and sent equities plunging and the yen soaring.

"We will continue to adjust the degree of monetary easing if we can confirm a rising certainty that the economy and prices will stay in line with our forecasts," Ueda told parliament just as data showed core inflation edged higher in July and remained well above the bank's target.

He also warned that "financial and capital markets at home and abroad remain volatile", adding "it is necessary to monitor (the markets) with a high sense of urgency".

Ueda explained in the parliament the market turmoil was triggered as "fears of a slowdown in the US economy spread rapidly". "This caused a global depreciation of the dollar and a fall in stock prices." Ueda added that the July rate hike decision was "appropriate", citing the increase in wages. The BoJ's deputy governor earlier this month said officials would not raise interest rates when financial markets were unstable. Figures earlier Friday showed Japan's core consumer price index hit 2.7 percent last month, in line with expectations but up slightly from June. Increases in the cost of electricity and gas, processed food and car insurance premiums were among the areas contributing to the uptick, the internal affairs ministry said in a statement. While price increases at the petrol pump slowed, that was offset by rising electricity and natural gas fees, the ministry added.

Meanwhile, the yen rose on Friday as traders considered comments from Bank of Japan Governor Kazuo Ueda, who sought to calm lingering nerves after a

surprise rate hike last month, while markets braced for a speech from Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell.

With the spotlight squarely on the central bankers, Ueda appeared first in Japan's parliament to explain the rate increase that had rattled investors. The yen was 0.38 percent higher at 145.75 per dollar on Friday in choppy trading after Ueda reaffirmed his resolve to raise rates if inflation stayed on course to sustainably hit the 2 percent target, but warned financial markets remained unstable.

"His (Ueda) comments suggest that market turbulence won't deter the BoJ from considering more rate hikes in the future even if the next move isn't imminent," said Vasu Menon, managing director of investment strategy at OCBC.

Bouts of Japanese interventions and the interest rate hike in July tripped up investors who unwound the popular carry trade, in which traders borrowed yen to finance high-yielding assets, yanking the yen away from the 38-year lows touched last month. The move from the BoJ coupled with worries of US recession



TOKYO: Bank of Japan governor Kazuo Ueda (right) speaks at the House of Representatives Finance and Financial Services Committee, as Japan's Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki (left) looks on Aug 23, 2024. — AFP

triggered a massive global selloff in early August, although most markets have recovered since then. The dollar index, which measures the greenback versus six major peers, was 0.11 percent lower

at 101.35 after rising 0.34 percent in the previous session, but it remained close to the 2024 low of 100.92 it touched on Wednesday. The index is headed for fifth straight week of losses. — Agencies

Good governance and success of PPPs: A global perspective

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) have become a critical tool for governments worldwide to deliver public infrastructure and services. By leveraging private sector efficiencies, innovation, and capital, PPPs can significantly enhance public service delivery. However, the success of these partnerships hinges on good governance, a factor that determines the effectiveness, sustainability, and public acceptance of PPP projects.



This section of Visionary's Guide explores the importance of good governance in PPPs, supported by real world examples from various countries.

The role of good governance in PPPs

Good governance in the context of PPPs refers to the processes, policies, and practices that ensure accountability, transparency, fairness, and efficiency in the planning, execution, and management of PPP projects. It involves multiple stakeholders, including government entities, private partners, and the public, each playing a crucial role in ensuring that the partnership achieves its intended outcomes.

1) Accountability and Transparency

Accountability ensures that all parties involved in a PPP are held responsible for their actions and decisions. Transparency, on the other hand, allows stakeholders, including the public, to access relevant information about the project. Together, these principles build trust and legitimacy, which are essential for the success of PPPs.

Example: The London underground PPP

In the early 2000s, the London Underground entered into a PPP to modernize its infrastructure. However, the project faced significant challenges due to a lack of transparency and accountability. The private partners, Metronet and Tube Lines, were criticized for cost overruns and delays. The lack of clear accountability mechanisms made it difficult to assign responsibility for the failures, leading to the eventual collapse of the partnership in 2010. This case highlights the importance of establishing clear, transparent, and accountable governance structures in PPPs to avoid similar outcomes.

2) Stakeholder engagement and public participation

Effective governance in PPPs requires active engagement with all stakeholders, including the public, who are the ultimate beneficiaries of the project. Public participation in decision-making processes can enhance the legitimacy and acceptance of PPP projects, ensuring that they meet the needs and expectations of the community.

Example: The Hyderabad Metro Rail Project, India

The Hyderabad Metro Rail project in India is a successful example of stakeholder engagement in a PPP. The project, which is one of the largest metro rail PPPs in the world, involved extensive consultation with local communities, businesses, and other stakeholders throughout its planning and implementation phases. The government's proactive approach to public participation helped address concerns and gain public support, contributing to the project's success. The Hyderabad Metro, operational since 2017, has been praised for its efficiency, safety, and user-friendliness, demonstrating the benefits of good governance in PPPs.

3) Risk management and fair risk allocation

Good governance in PPPs also involves the careful management and allocation of risks. Both public and private partners must understand and agree on who is best suited to manage specific risks. Fair risk allocation ensures that the project remains financially viable and that the risks do not disproportionately burden any single party.

Example: The Queen Elizabeth II Bridge, United Kingdom

The construction of the Queen Elizabeth II Bridge

in the UK, which was completed in 1991, serves as a prime example of effective risk management in a PPP. The project was initially proposed to be fully financed by the government, but it was eventually delivered as a PPP, with the private partner assuming the financial risks associated with construction and operation. The government, in turn, provided guarantees and regulatory support. The fair allocation of risks contributed to the timely and cost-effective completion of the bridge, which has since played a crucial role in improving transportation in the region.

4) Effective legal and regulatory frameworks

A robust legal and regulatory framework is essential for ensuring that PPPs operate smoothly and fairly. This framework should clearly define the rights and obligations of all parties, provide mechanisms for dispute resolution, and ensure compliance with legal and contractual obligations.

Example: The Gautrain Rapid Rail Link, South Africa

Although it faced a range of challenges at the beginning, the Gautrain Rapid Rail Link in South Africa is an example of a successful PPP that benefited from a strong legal and regulatory framework. The project, which connects Johannesburg, Pretoria, and the O R Tambo International Airport, was delivered on time and within budget, largely due to the clear legal framework governing the partnership. The framework facilitated effective contract management, dispute resolution, and risk management, ensuring that the project met its objectives of reducing traffic congestion and promoting economic growth in the Gauteng region.

5) Capacity building and institutional strengthening

Good governance also involves building the capacity of government institutions to manage PPPs effectively. This includes training public officials, developing standardized processes and procedures, and establishing dedicated PPP units or agencies to oversee projects.

Example: The Chilean concession system

Chile's concession system, which has been in place since the 1990s, is often cited as a model for successful PPP governance. The country has implemented over 60 PPP projects, including highways, airports, and hospitals, with significant success. A key factor in this success is the strong institutional capacity developed by the Chilean government, including the establishment of a dedicated PPP unit within the Ministry of Public Works. This unit is responsible for project preparation, bidding, and contract management, ensuring that PPP projects are delivered efficiently and effectively. The success of Chile's PPPs has not only improved infrastructure but has also contributed to the country's economic growth and development, not to mention employment.

Lessons learned and best practices

The examples above illustrate that good governance is a critical determinant of PPP success and demonstrate that when good governance principles are applied, PPPs can deliver significant public benefits, from modernized infrastructure to enhanced public services. As more countries turn to PPPs to address their development needs, the importance of good governance cannot be overstated — it is the key to unlocking the full potential of these partnerships for the betterment of society. Based on these cases, several best practices can be identified:

Ensure transparency and accountability

Clear and transparent governance structures are essential for building trust and avoiding disputes in PPPs. Engage stakeholders: Active stakeholder engagement, including public participation, enhances the legitimacy and public acceptance of PPP projects. Fair risk allocation: Risks should be allocated to the party best able to manage them, ensuring the financial viability and sustainability of the project.

Establish a strong legal framework: A robust legal and regulatory framework provides the foundation for effective PPP governance, ensuring that all parties fulfill their obligations.

Build institutional capacity: Strengthening government institutions and establishing dedicated PPP units can significantly improve the management and oversight of PPP projects.

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



TYSONS, US: A shopper walks past a hiring sign displayed in front of Abercrombie & Fitch at the Tysons Corner Center mall on August 22, 2024 in Alexandria, Virginia. — AFP

US jobless claims tick up, existing home sales rise

WASHINGTON: The number of Americans filing new applications for unemployment benefits ticked up in the latest week, but appeared to be steadying near a level consistent with a gradual cooling of the labor market that should set the stage for the Federal Reserve to kick off interest rate cuts next month. A slowdown in overall US business activity this month as firms faced diminished ability to push through price increases added to the evidence that the economy is slowing and inflation is downshifting to a degree that should allow Fed officials to focus more attention on the job market. With a rate cut now broadly expected next month, interest rates on home loans have already begun dropping, and that helped fuel a larger-than-expected rebound in existing home sales last month.

Meanwhile, US existing home sales rose more than expected in July, reversing four consecutive monthly declines, as improving supply and declining mortgage rates offered hope that activity could rebound in the months ahead. Home sales rose 1.3 percent last month to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 3.95 million units, the National Association of Realtors said on Thursday. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast home resales would edge up to a rate of 3.93 million units.

Initial claims for state unemployment benefits rose 4,000 to a seasonally adjusted 232,000 for the week ended Aug. 17, the Labor Department said on Thursday. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast 230,000 claims for the latest week. The latest data should continue

to allay fears that the labor market is rapidly deteriorating, first raised after a sharper-than-expected slowdown in job growth in July, which also saw the unemployment rate rise to a post-pandemic high of 4.3 percent.

Indeed, the latest claims data covers the survey week for this month's employment report from the Labor Department, and the leveling off in new filings points to "a small decline in the unemployment rate in August," Nancy Vanden Houten, lead US economist at Oxford Economics, said in a client note. "Claims are leveling off on a trend basis, consistent with our view that, while the labor market is softening, it isn't weak enough to warrant anything more than a 25 (basis point) rate cut at the Fed's September meeting," she said. Fed officials have said they are keenly watching the labor market, aware that waiting too long to cut interest rates could cause serious harm.

Layoffs remain historically low, however, with much of the slowdown in the labor market coming from firms scaling back hiring, trailing an immigration-induced surge in labor supply. The Fed's 525 basis points worth of rate hikes in 2022 and 2023 are curbing demand.

The US central bank has kept its benchmark overnight interest rate in the current 5.25 percent-5.50 percent range for more than a year. With a first rate cut now widely expected at its Sept. 17-18 policy meeting, the market focus is on how large a reduction it will be — a quarter or a half percentage point. The number of people receiving benefits after an initial week of aid, a proxy for hiring, rose 4,000 to a seasonally adjusted 1.863 million during the week ending Aug 10, the claims report showed.

The report on business activity also pointed to an orderly cooling in the economy. S&P Global said on Thursday that its flash US Composite PMI Output Index, which tracks the manufacturing and services sectors, edged down to 54.1 this month, a four-month low but still healthy level among the highest measured over the past two years. — Reuters

US says software scheme to raise rent prices

NEW YORK: US prosecutors unveiled sweeping antitrust charges Friday against a property management software company that they allege employs algorithms to enable collusion among landlords, harming renters across numerous US markets. The Department of Justice, joined by eight US states, filed a civil lawsuit against Texas-based RealPage, which maintains an alleged "monopoly" over commercial revenue management software, according to a DOJ press release. RealPage vowed to "vigorously" fight the suit, which it described as groundless.

The complaint, filed in US court in North Carolina, alleges that RealPage's algorithmic software takes real-time pricing inputs and projects vacancies and other sensitive non-public data from competing landlords. The software then generates pricing recommendations, allowing landlords to charge more than they otherwise would, harming consumers.

The suit marks the first time US prosecutors have targeted anticompetitive behavior centered on computer algorithms, a US DOJ official said. Attorney General Merrick Garland described RealPage's conduct as "classic price fixing," calling competition among landlords a critical protection for renters.

"Everybody knows the rent is too damn high, and we allege this is one of the reasons why," Garland said

at a press conference. A RealPage spokeswoman called the lawsuit a "distraction" from "the fundamental" issues driving rental inflation, including a lack of housing supply and high mortgage rates. "We are disappointed that, after multiple years of education and cooperation on the antitrust matters concerning RealPage, the DOJ has chosen this moment to pursue a lawsuit that seeks to scapegoat pro-competitive technology that has been used responsibly for years," RealPage said.

"We believe the claims brought by DOJ are devoid of merit and will do nothing to make housing more affordable." The lawsuit cites internal documents, including a comment from one RealPage executive that "there is greater good in everybody succeeding versus essentially trying to compete against one another in a way that actually keeps the entire industry down." Assistant Attorney General Jonathan Kanter credited the DOJ's hiring of data science experts for allowing the department to scrutinize how technology can be used as a means to questionable ends in the rental and other markets. "Algorithms process far more information, far more rapidly than humans ever could," Kanter said. "The technical capabilities of software can enhance a competitor's ability to extract gains, tip the market in favor of monopolies and undermine the competitive process."

RealPage serves companies that account for three million housing units, with an especially strong presence in the US Sunbelt and the South, US Justice officials said during a media briefing. In the market of Raleigh, North Carolina, RealPage accounted for about 40 percent of the rental market, US officials said. The company's penetration is as high as 60 percent in some markets, officials said. — AFP

SUNDAY, AUGUST 25, 2024



The arrival of the hearse that will transport Delon's coffin from the house to the chapel for the private funeral service inside the property of late French actor Alain Delon.



A wreath of the Centre Penitenciaire de Fresnes (The Fresnes Penitentiary Center) lying in front of the entrance gate of the property of late French actor Alain Delon La Brulerie in Douchy.



Anouchka Delon (center), daughter of late French actor Alain Delon, arrives to check the bunches of flowers and messages displayed at the entrance gate of Delon's property.

FANS MOURN AS FILM LEGEND DELON IS BURIED NEAR HIS DOGS

Fans of film legend Alain Delon gathered at the entrance to his country estate Saturday ahead of his funeral to be attended only by his children and a few dozen other family members and friends. Thousands of fans were expected to pay respects outside of the gates of his La Brulerie manor south of Paris where he is to be laid to rest near his beloved dogs.

The 88-year-old star of such classics as "Le Samourai", "The Leopard" and "Purple Noon", and who was one described as "Europe's James Dean", died on Sunday. French police set up roadblocks near the manor in the village of Douchy, with the airspace overhead also closed for the whole of the weekend.

The 50 or so mourners allowed into the estate's private chapel will have to leave their mobile phones at the door. All week hundreds of fans have gathered outside the gates of La Brulerie to leave floral tributes and cards. Hours before the ceremony, a crowd had already

begun to gather. Delon's three children - who were with him when he died - told AFP that they were "extremely touched by the fervour and affection shown by his fans in France and across the world."

Rosalie van Breemen, Delon's ex-wife and mother of his children Anouchka and Alain-Fabien, will be present, as will actors Nicole Calfan, Muriel Robin and Geraldine Danon, sources close to proceedings told AFP. The ceremony is scheduled for 4:00 pm (1400 GMT). Since his death, France has been paying homage to Delon, one of the country's biggest but most divisive stars.

He was one of the last living legends of a golden era for French cinema in the 1960s. While he had legions of fans around the world, Delon's relationship with women caused controversy. His sons accused him of domestic violence, which Delon denied while admitting slapping women during quarrels.

The actor also drew criticism for supporting Jean-Marie Le Pen, co-founder



A portrait of late French actor Alain Delon on the front page of magazines left by his fans at the entrance gate.

of the far-right National Front, and his opposition to same-sex relationships.

Feminists were appalled by the lifetime achievement award the Cannes

Film Festival gave him in 2019. Delon lived his later years largely as a recluse, though his personal life kept him in the headlines. In 2023, his three children

filed a complaint against his live-in assistant Hiromi Rollin, accusing her of harassment and threatening behavior.

The siblings went on to wage a public battle in the media and the courts, arguing over his health, which worsened after a stroke in 2019. Even in death, he was still making headlines after it emerged that he asked for his favorite dog to be put down and buried with him.

But his longtime friend and fellow 1960s screen icon Brigitte Bardot said the Belgian malinois called Loubo that shared his last years would be spared.

"The family of Alain Delon have confirmed to us that they will take care of him. Loubo will of course not be euthanized," her foundation said on the X social media platform. "I have absolutely no fear of death," the actor insisted in 2011, posing for photographs outside the tomb where he intended to be buried. — AFP

South Korean pet care goes high-tech with AI diagnostics

When five-year-old goldendoodle Mozzi started walking "unnaturally", his concerned owner rushed him to the vet in South Korea, where the problem was diagnosed not by humans but by AI. South Korea, a global leader in the production of chips that power generative AI, has been quick to embrace novel uses of the technology. One such application, "X Caliber", is helping vets pinpoint X-ray abnormalities in seconds, making diagnostics both quicker and easier to explain.

The AI reading of Mozzi's X-rays showed the curly-haired goldendoodle had a 22 percent chance of knee dislocation. While not an emergency, his condition needed careful management to head off surgery. "I wouldn't have understood the results if I didn't look at the numbers," said Mo Jae-hyun, Mozzi's owner, adding that the AI program helped him understand his pet's woes. "Of course, I trust my vet, but looking at the results myself, it seems more credible." The software's developer, South Korean telecom provider SK Telecom, said X Caliber has a disease detection rate of up to 86 percent.



Oh I-se (right), vet and CEO of Sky Animal Medical Group, speaking to Mo Jae-hyun, owner of goldendoodle dog Mozzi, while using the 'X Caliber' software to help pinpoint abnormalities in Mozzi's x ray results, in Yongin.

Vets say it has transformed their ability to diagnose. "Dogs with heart disease, for example, tend to have enlarged hearts. We use a method called VHS (vertebral heart size), which used to require measuring one by one, manually," Oh I-se, CEO of Sky Animal Medical Group, told AFP. But now AI can reveal the result in 15 seconds, so it is "much more convenient," Oh said.

Global aims
SK Telecom considers X Caliber "the beginning of AI healthcare", said Joo Ye-seul, manager of the software's global team. "We plan further expansion into additional domains based on this." The service is already available in the United States, Australia and some Southeast Asian countries. In Indonesia, veterinary hospital owner Kristanya Oen says X Caliber is helping to overcome a lack of expertise and trained staff.

"There is a shortage of radiologists in Indonesian animal hospitals and it is not easy to receive radiology education in Indonesia, so we needed X Caliber to help with our diagnostics," Oen told AFP. SK Telecom is part of the same conglomerate as SK Hynix, which launched the first high-bandwidth memory chips - cutting-edge semiconductors that enable faster data processing and the more complex tasks of generative AI.

While many experts are questioning the payoff of lavish AI investments following a recent fall in technology stocks, the conglomerate's CEO Chey Tae-won remains committed. SK Group must "think

fiercely about next-generation products," he told employees this month. In June, SK Group announced plans to invest 80 trillion won (\$60 billion) in AI chips, services and data centres.

Pet nation

In South Korea, where more and more people are turning to "pet parenthood" instead of having children, it is not necessarily surprising that AI healthcare would begin with animals. In a country with one of the world's lowest birth rates, pet ownership has roughly doubled in the last decade, official figures show. One in four households now have at least one furry friend, and last year more strollers were sold for pets than for human babies on popular e-commerce platform, Gmarket.

The pet care industry was worth an estimated eight trillion won (\$6 billion) in 2022, a fourfold increase compared with five years earlier. The government aims to double the industry's value by 2027 and is helping support pet food and healthcare businesses through various loans and tax incentives. — AFP



Photo shows Justin and Hailey Bieber pose for a picture. — AFP

Justin Bieber announces birth of son - Jack Blues

Pop superstar Justin Bieber announced Friday the birth of his son - Jack Blues - with model wife Hailey in a post that quickly garnered millions of likes on Instagram. "WELCOME HOME JACK BLUES BIEBER," the Canadian singer posted with a photo of an infant's foot wrapped in a blanket, which has racked up more than eight million likes.

The celebrity couple announced in May that they were going to be parents, posting pictures of fashionista and businesswoman Hailey, 27, cradling her belly.

Justin Bieber, 30, first shot to global stardom as a teen pop sensation in 2009, since then churning out hits including the mega-selling "Baby", featuring rapper Ludacris, and "Somebody to Love."

His army of fans, known as "Beliebers," helped make him one of the best-selling artists of all time.

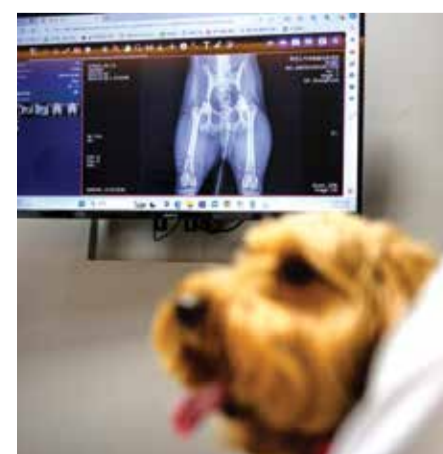
Fans were quick to congratulate the pair on Instagram, with one commenting, "Gotta play that song 'Baby' one more time." Justin's mother, Pattie Mallette, also posted congratulations to the couple on X. "I LOVE YOU FOREVER BABY JACK!!" Mallette wrote. Actor Stephen Baldwin, Hailey's father, reshared Mallette's post, adding: "Amen, Congratulations to you and may God continue to bless our family." — AFP



Oh I-se, vet and CEO of Sky Animal Medical Group, carrying goldendoodle Mozzi before using the 'X Caliber' software to help pinpoint x ray abnormalities in Yongin.



Oh I-se (right), vet and CEO of Sky Animal Medical Group, and an assistant X-raying goldendoodle dog Mozzi before using the 'X Caliber' software to help pinpoint x ray abnormalities in Yongin. - AFP photos



Mozzi, a goldendoodle dog, sitting near a monitor showing its x ray results as it is processed through the 'X Caliber' software to pinpoint x ray abnormalities in Yongin.



Saving the vanishing forests of Iraq's Kurdistan

In a plant nursery in northern Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region, hundreds of pine, eucalyptus, olive and pomegranate saplings grow under awnings protecting them from the fierce summer sun. The nursery in Sarchinar in the Kurdish city of Sulaimaniyah is part of efforts to battle the destructive effects of deforestation in the region. "Almost 50 percent of forests have been lost in Kurdistan in 70 years," said Nyaz Ibrahim of

summer droughts - as well as military operations on Iraq's northern border. In the nursery - the oldest in Iraq - workers are busy unloading young saplings from a trailer which they then line up on a patch of land.

Here, some 40 varieties are developed to later be planted in forests or given to farmers, among them pines, cypresses, junipers and oaks - the emblematic tree of the Kurdish forest. "Climate change has an impact on the development of plants," said agricultural engineer Rawa Abdulqader. "So we prioritize trees that can withstand high temperatures and which consume less water."

'Negligence'

With support from the WFP, micro-mesh nets were installed in the nursery to protect the trees from the sun, accelerating growth and minimizing evaporation. Other greenhouses have been equipped with hanging sprinklers, which are more water-efficient. The project has helped Sarchinar's annual production grow from 250,000 sprouts before it began in late 2022, to 1.5 million in 2024. Over five years, the WFP intends to support authorities and local actors to plant 38 million trees over more than 61,000 hectares in Kurdistan, and work to preserve 65,000 forested hectares. According to two official studies, between 1957 and 2015, more than 600,000 hectares were lost.

Over the last 14 years, some 290,000 hectares have been hit by fires, said Halkawt Ismail, director of the forestry office in Kurdistan's agriculture ministry. These fires "break out mainly during the summer drought... and above all because of the negligence of citizens", he said. He added that illegal logging in the 1990s by locals using the wood to warm their homes during an economic crisis had significantly contributed to the shrinking of forests.

Conflict and displacement

Elsewhere in Kurdistan, forests have been the collateral damage of fighting between the Turkish army and militants from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). This summer, Kurdish media and organizations said Ankara's bombardment of the PKK triggered several forest fires.

PAX, told AFP. "This practice has increased sharply since 2020," he said. A decrease in forest supervision resulting from conflict and displacement, and rising temperatures and drought "provide fertile ground for forest fires".

These can either be the result of "natural causes, or of bombing and fighting from the Turkey-PKK conflicts",



A Kurdish woman working with the "Million Oaks project" points to a scale model during an interview at the site of the initiative in the city of Erbil.

the UN's World Food Program (WFP).

She attributed the loss to "water scarcity, rising temperatures, irregular decreasing rainfall and also fire incidents". The loss is catastrophic, as the Kurdistan region is home to 90 percent of forests in Iraq, which has been among the hardest hit globally by climate change and desertification. Much of this comes down to illegal tree felling and forest fires - intensified by



An aerial view shows the Sarchinar tree nursery in the Kurdish city of Sulaimaniyah. - AFP photos

In late June, the Turkish defense ministry accused the PKK of lighting fires to reduce visibility and conceal its positions. "Turkey has established over 40 military outposts and bases" in Iraqi Kurdistan, "logged many dozens of kilometers of roads through forested areas, and cleared forest around their bases," Wim Zwijnenburg, a researcher with the Dutch peace-building group

he added. "With limited or absent forest management, these fires can affect larger areas and lead to forest loss," Zwijnenburg said. Kamaran Osman, human rights officer from the Community Peacemaker Teams organization, meanwhile noted that when areas are bombed, "people cannot go to... extinguish the fire, because they fear being bombed as well."



An aerial view shows young trees planted in the Hawary Shar Park in the Kurdish city of Sulaimaniyah.



A farmer works at the Sarchinar tree nursery in the Kurdish city of Sulaimaniyah.



Kurdish agricultural engineer Rawa Abdulqader inspects saplings at the Sarchinar tree nursery.



Buildings under construction at the site of a real estate project in Sulaimaniyah.

Lifestyle



A Kurdish man working with the "Million Oaks project" points to an oak sample at the site of the initiative in the city of Erbil.



A view of a valley near Sulaimaniyah, the autonomous Kurdistan region's second city.



Farmers work a sapling at the Sarchinar tree nursery in the Kurdish city of Sulaimaniyah.



A Kurdish man inspects the leaves of a plant at the site of the initiative.

1 million oaks

Authorities are working to cultivate new forests and to increase nursery production, though they lack sufficient human and financial resources. Civil society has also got involved. In Sulaimaniyah, which is encircled by hills, activists are fighting bulldozers and excavators eating away at the slopes of Mount Goizha for a real estate project. On the edges of the city, luxury housing complexes and shiny glass towers are already rising on the hillside.

In the regional capital of Arbil, a campaign launched by local orga-

nizations aims to plant 1 million oak trees. Since 2021, 300,000 trees have been planted, said Gashbin Idrees Ali, the project manager. "Climate change is happening and we cannot stop it. But we should adapt to it," he said. Oak trees were chosen because they "need less water", he said. "We supervise the tree's growth for four to five years and after... it can survive for hundreds of years." — AFP



Farmers work at the Sarchinar tree nursery.



Iraqi Kurds walk under a bridge near the site of the "Million Oaks project".

Fragile but unbroken, Afghan glassblowers refuse to quit



Seated in front of a searing furnace, Ghulam Sakhi Saifi teases forth sinews of molten blue glass — the guardian of an Afghan glassblowing trade refusing to break with tradition. "This is our art, our inheritance. It has fed us for a long time," he told AFP, resting from the work that has singed his knuckles and calloused his palms. "We are trying to make sure it is not forgotten. If we do not pass it down, it will disappear from the whole world," said Saifi, who guesses his age is around 50.

'Slow suffocation'

Saifi now lights one of the furnaces only once a month — eking out around \$30 from his stock of cups, plates and candleholders after expensive wood for fuel, dyes and other raw materials are accounted for. He attributes the dramatic downturn to the Covid-19 pandemic followed by the exodus of already low numbers of foreign customers during the Covid-19 pandemic followed by the 2021 Taliban takeover, which saw many diplomats and aid workers pack up and leave. Cheaper Chinese-made imports have also dented demand.

he pulls glowing globs of glass out of the mud furnace and inflates them into household wares. Unlike in the past, when they used quartz, the glassblowers now use easier-to-find recycled bottles shattered into shards and superheated back into their liquid state. The green and blue pieces cool into charmingly imperfect shapes, shot through with air bubbles, and are sold from clattering piles in shops in Herat and the capital Kabul for around \$3 each.

Outside the shed it is already 36 degrees Celsius (97 degrees Fahren-

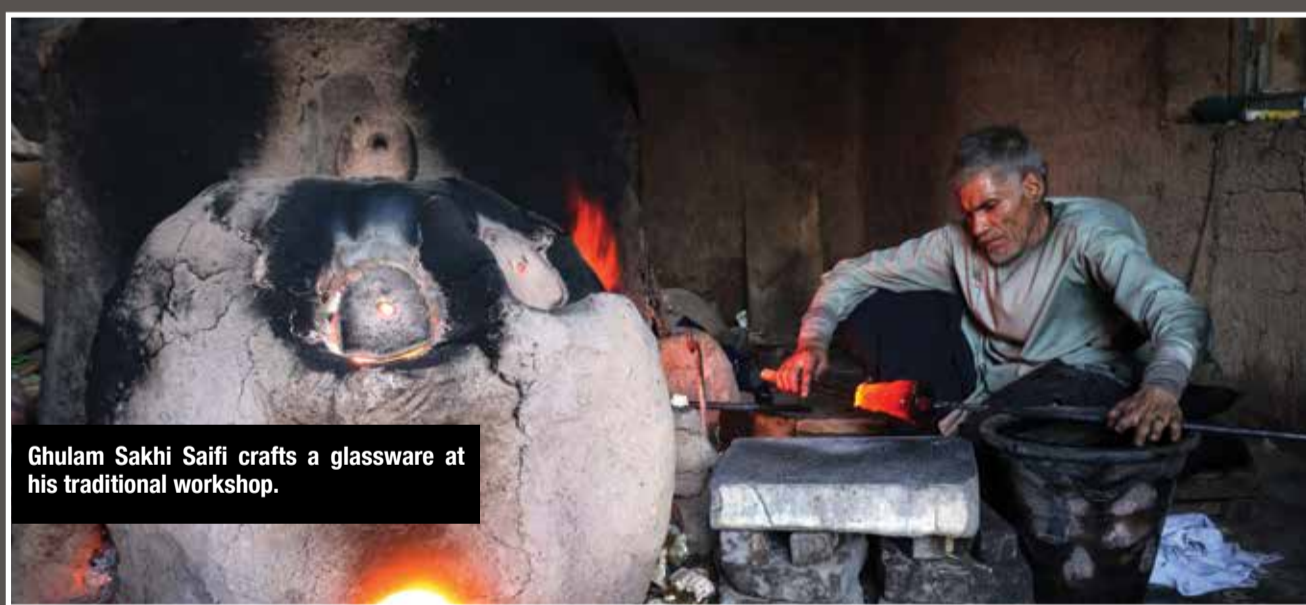


Ghulam Sakhi Saifi crafts a glassware at his traditional workshop.

'Craft needs to endure'

A gaggle of boys and teenagers assists Saifi in his work, but it is growing hard to tempt the younger generation into a trade they view as a dead end. His eldest son became an expert in the craft only to abandon it for migrant labor over the border in Iran. Two cousins who learned to blow glass also saw no future and downed their tools. His middle son, 18-year-old Naqibullah, vows he will continue the trade, though it's not clear how. Before the Taliban takeover there was still enough demand for three days of work a week — a distant prospect for the young man who shares shifts with his father on the rare occasion they light the furnaces.

"We hope that there is a future and that day by day things will get better," Naqibullah said. "Even if we're not making much money the craft needs to endure," he added. "The art of making things by hand needs to be preserved. We can't let this skill disappear." — AFP



Ghulam Sakhi Saifi crafts a glassware at his traditional workshop.

Glassblowing in Afghanistan's western city of Herat is an ancient craft. Saifi says it has run in his family for about three centuries. The last two furnaces in the windswept metropolis near the border with Iran are in his family home and a mud-and-straw shed with a holey roof in the shadow of Herat's citadel.

"There have been times when we haven't worked for three months — we sit at home forever," he said.

"Locals have no use for these products, for the price they would first think to buy two loaves of bread for their children." But when the furnace is lit, Saifi is in his element. With a crude kitchen knife and a blowpipe

heit) but stepping over the threshold is like being gripped by a sudden fever. "Sometimes we really feel the heat, I think I am being slowly suffocated," Saifi said. "But this is our inheritance, we are used to it. "Today is a bad day, but maybe it will get better in the future. Maybe the day after tomorrow, we hope to God."



Ghulam Sakhi Saifi looks on while arranging glassware at his shop.



Ghulam Sakhi Saifi, an Afghan glassblower, crafts a glassware at his traditional workshop in Afghanistan's western city of Herat. - AFP photos

House used for early Beatles gigs becomes holiday rental

A Liverpool house famous for hosting some of The Beatles' first gigs in the basement has been given a new lease of life listed on Airbnb. Mona Best, the party-loving mother of the band's original drummer Pete Best, opened the Casbah Coffee Club in the city's West Derby suburb in 1959, just before the group formed. The band went on to perform more than 40 times in the basement of the property, on a leafy residential street, after it had also hosted 13 gigs by John Lennon's first band The Quarrymen. The Casbah started with Saturday night gigs, but soon opened Friday to Sunday. It closed three years later but has remained a tourist attraction for Beatles fans from around the world.

Now the property has been transformed into suites named after members of the Fab Four — though one is named for Best rather than Ringo Starr, who became The Beatles' drummer in 1962. Stuart Sutcliffe, the band's original bass guitarist, also gets a room named in his honor. "The Beatles played here and The Beatles slept here," Pete Best told Britain's Press Association (PA) news agency, which first reported on the change to a holiday rental listing.

The 82-year-old added it was intended as a "lasting tribute" to the world's most famous band. He has been working on converting the house into rental accommodation since 2020, along with younger brother Roag, 62 - the son of The Beatles' road manager Neil Aspinall.

'Unique'

The rooms have been decorated with a "sprinkling" of The Beatles, including photos of band members, posters and guitars on the wall. The famous basement has been preserved from its 1960s heyday, with drum kits still on display and "John I'm back" scratched into the ceiling above the stage area. The five suites above have been available to book since early August, with guests from different parts of Britain and the United States already staying over.

They are yet to post any reviews. Under Airbnb's "what makes my home unique" section, the brothers have playfully entered: "The Beatles played and stayed here". Prices for next month were starting at around £125 (\$163) per night. Roag revealed to PA that he was actually born in what is now the McCartney suite while most of the band were downstairs. "So upon being born I was basically presented to The Beatles," he said. He grew up in the property and moved out aged 24.

Roag noted McCartney has previously said he loved playing in the Casbah because "it was like playing a big house party" and "it felt like a safe place" to try new things. Explaining the lack of a Starr suite, he added it was "about being authentic". "The Beatles that performed and partied here were John, Paul, George, Pete and Stuart." — AFP

Sports

Rain, violent crash, mar final practice for Dutch Grand Prix

Top contenders get little track time

ZANDVOORT: A fiery crash and driving rain marred the final practice for the Dutch Grand Prix Saturday, with many top contenders getting little track time before qualifying later in the day. Pierre Gasly from Alpine clocked the fastest lap but teams will have learned little from the session which was reduced to 16 minutes after a crash by US driver Logan Sargeant. Heavy rain had left the Zandvoort track treacherous and nearly every driver that ventured gingerly onto the track struggled to keep the car on the tarmac. Fourteen minutes into the session and with several drivers already having spun off, Sargeant nearly totally destroyed his Williams in a high-speed crash.

Sargeant skidded on wet grass coming round a corner, spun violently, and careered side-on into the fence, the rear of his car quickly bursting into flames. He jumped out and told his team he was not injured although the car was nearly completely wrecked. The session was stopped immediately as officials removed the smouldering husk. By the time the debris had been cleared and safety fences repaired, there were only two minutes remaining in the hour-long practice session. Most drivers headed out to get a feel for the track and Gasly turned in

the best lap in 1 minute 20.311 seconds.

Home hero Max Verstappen had another frustrating session, receiving the black-and-white flag warning for unsportsman-like behavior after illegally overtaking in the pit lane. Qualifying takes place at 3:00pm local time (1300 GMT) and appears to be wide open, with Mercedes and McLaren showing they have the pace to compete with Verstappen's Red Bull. George Russell went fastest in practice on Friday. In a strong showing from Mercedes his teammate and seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton was third.

Verstappen trailed in an unfamiliar fifth on Friday and complained the car was lacking pace and that "there isn't a clear answer on how to improve this." After winning 19 races on a cruise to the 2023 world championship, Verstappen took seven of the first 10 in 2024, leaving many fearing a similar procession this year. But he has suffered a lean spell by his own standards, without a win in the last four races - his longest winless stretch since 2020. He nevertheless enjoys a 78-point lead in the drivers' championship over closest rival Lando Norris, who has admitted he faces an uphill climb to overhaul the Dutchman. — AFP



ZANDVOORT: Ferrari's Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc drives during the qualifying session at The Circuit Zandvoort, western Netherlands, on August 24, 2024. — AFP

Olympic champ Zheng wants to keep winning

NEW YORK: Zheng Qinwen is determined not to let up after becoming the first Chinese player to win Olympic tennis singles gold. The 21-year-old from Shiyuan defeated Croatia's Donna Vekic to top the podium at the Paris Games earlier this month on the same Court Philippe Chatrier at Roland Garros where compatriot Li Na became China's first Grand Slam champion in 2011. There had been indicators earlier in the season, specifically her run to a first Grand Slam final at the Australian Open in January, where she fell to Aryna Sabalenka in the title match.

"Of course it's a really good result for me, but I had a lot of ups and downs after Australia, because I lost some motivations, I'm different in the practice," Zheng told reporters on Friday at Flushing Meadows, as she prepared for the start of the US Open on Monday. "And after I won Olympic gold medal, the first thing I told to myself is I want to keep the motivation on. 'I don't want to let myself slip again. I really want to improve one more time in my mental side. 'It's how to maintain the level when you become a champion and just to keep winning, winning, instead of getting relaxed and let yourself lose easy match. 'If I'm able to do that, I think I will really break through some wall that I have for myself.'"

There's been limited time to prepare for the US Open since her historic Olympic triumph. She was ailing when she arrived for the tournament in Cincinnati, spending four days without practicing. "So of course if you don't practice, the performance can't be well," she said. There have also been other, more pleasurable distractions - including a trip home to China to meet the president, a journey that also gave her a chance to see her parents.

Family time

"They are so happy to see me," said Zheng, who spoke movingly of her parents' influence in Paris. "One of the surprises, my father is just standing outside of the airplane. You know, there is a track, so they are able to come there and give me the flowers in that moment. 'It was very short. I think less than 48 hours. But I feel peace when I'm with them, and I feel my father start to put me some new target again, which I have already for myself. It was a warm family time.'"

She's also learning to balance the demands of fame, working with a manager on commercial and sponsorship opportunities. It's the kind of thing she'd like a chance to talk about with Liu Xiang, who became a superstar in China as the only man to hold the 110m hurdles world record and win both Olympic and world titles in the event.

Liu was 21 when he won 110m hurdles gold in Athens in 2004 - the first Olympic athletics gold for a Chinese man. "I think in that moment, I think if he can do it at 21 years old and this year I'm also 21 years old, why not me?" said Zheng, adding that she watched the video multiple times a day as inspiration. "If one day I have a chance in China, I would like to have some conversation with him, because I think his journey is not easy," she said. "I would like to ask him lot of questions to get more experience, and I would like to ask him how you deal with all that pressure in that moment, because everybody knows him in China. Everybody." — AFP

Torch starts journey at English home of Paralympic Games

STOKE MANDEVILLE: Four days before the Paris Paralympic Games begins, the Paralympic flame on Saturday lit up next to the English hospital where the idea for the competition was born. The Paralympic movement dates back to 1948, when German neurologist Ludwig Guttmann organized sporting events for injured veterans at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, northwest of London. The Stoke Mandeville Games were held to coincide with the 1948 London Olympics on grounds next to the hospital, which were then developed into the stadium where Saturday's ceremony will take place.

The first Paralympic Games took place in Rome in 1960, with 400 athletes competing from 23 countries. The torch-lighting ceremony will take place at midday Saturday, and will be attended by Tony Estanguet, President of the Paris 2024 organizing committee, and Andrew Parsons, President of the International Paralympic Committee.

It will be the first time since the London Olympics in 2012 that the Paralympic flame will be lit at its Stoke Mandeville home. Two British Paralympians, Helene Raynsford and Gregor Ewan, will light the famous torch. Raynsford was the first Paralympic champion in para-rowing when the sport made its debut in Beijing in 2008. Ewan has competed in wheelchair curling three times at the Winter Games.

The flame will pass through the Channel Tunnel on Sunday, with 24 British torchbearers taking it halfway, before handing it over to 24 French torchbearers, who will take it to Calais. Then 12 torches will travel across France from Sunday to Wednesday.

Amid slump, Gauff relishes US Open title defense

NEW YORK: Coco Gauff is embracing the pressure and privilege of defending her US Open title - with the help of elite Olympians and at least one encouraging TikTok commentator. "Obviously coming in as defending champion is a little bit of pressure, but also more of a privilege, because as my new motto is: If you defend, that means you won something before," Gauff said Friday at Flushing Meadows, where the final Grand Slam of the season starts on Monday.

Gauff, ranked third in world, has endured a difficult follow-up season after bagging her first major title here last year. A semi-finalist at the Australian Open and Roland Garros, she was bounced in the fourth round at Wimbledon and endured Olympic disappointment in Paris. She fell in the third round at Toronto, and crashed out of the first match of her Cincinnati title defense. But Gauff, with just one title in 2024, said she'd been inspired by athletes she

Gabrielzinho aims Paralympic treble

JUIZ DE FORA: His nickname might mean Little Gabriel, but even though he is just 1.21 metres (4 foot) tall, Gabriel dos Santos Araujo is a giant of Paralympic swimming. "My name is Gabrielzinho and I'm going for three gold medals at the Paris Paralympics," said the smiling 22-year-old Brazilian, before receiving a kiss on the forehead from Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, at an official ceremony last month in Brasilia. Gabrielzinho's objective at the Paralympics, which open on August 28, is to upgrade from the two golds and one silver he won at the Tokyo Games three years ago.

When he is not doing laps in the pool at Juiz de Fora, in the southeastern Brazilian state of Minas Gerais, Gabrielzinho is nurturing his popularity on Instagram, where he has over 50,000 followers. As he has no hands or arms, he navigates his phone screen with his toes and uses this same technique to manipulate the joystick on his video game console — his other great passion. To eat, he bends over to grab the food with his mouth, and then after meals he wedges an electric toothbrush between his toes to clean his teeth. "I can't count the number of obstacles I have to overcome ev-



STOKE MANDEVILLE: Britain's Helene Raynsford, and Britain's Gregor Ewan, light the torch of President of the International Paralympic Committee Andrew Parsons, lit from the cauldron, during the Paralympic torch-lighting ceremony at Stoke Mandeville in Aylesbury, central England on August 24, 2024. — AFP

The flame will then reach Paris and the Olympic cauldron, located in the Tuileries Gardens. A thousand torchbearers will take turns in around 50 cities. The main flame coming from Stoke Mandeville will pass through Calais, Arras, Amiens, Louviers and Chambly before arriving in the Paris region.

The Paralympic Games, making their debut in France, will begin on August 28 with an opening ceremony between the Champs-Elysees and the Place de la Concorde orchestrated, like those that signaled

the start of the Olympic Games in July, by artistic director Thomas Jolly. Some 2.5 million tickets have been put on sale for the event. As of Wednesday, just over 1.75 million had gone with around a dozen sports almost sold out, according to organizers. Around 4,400 athletes will compete in 549 events, which will take place in 18 competition sites, including 16 identical to their Olympic counterparts. These include the Grand Palais, the Chateau de Versailles and the Stade de France. — AFP



USA's Coco Gauff

met at the Olympics, including America's 200m gold medalist Gabby Thomas.

She said meeting elite athletes from other sports made her realize that "what you're feeling isn't so isolated". "The nerves, you realize nerves are normal, the pressures are all normal. It doesn't make them easier but I think it helps you know you're not carrying the weight alone. 'I think I just learned that everything I feel, other athletes are feeling it in their sports, and they're obviously undisputed best

every day, but it makes me stronger," he told AFP.

His coach Fabio Pereira Antunes said he is a marvel. "The first thing that impressed me was his dexterity outside the pool. He has great motor coordination and is very intelligent, which enables him to overcome all these obstacles on a daily basis," said Antunes. "Once I saw him in the water, I discovered all his potential. He has a champion's mentality and knows how to handle pressure." Gabrielzinho suffers from phocomelia, a condition that arrests the development of a baby's limbs during pregnancy.

'Normal childhood'

The Brazilian has shoulder stumps and his legs are atrophied, but he can walk on both feet. "I found out in the fifth month of pregnancy. Obviously, it was a shock," said his mother, Ineida Magda dos Santos, a retired teacher. "I started reading up on the subject to be ready to take the best possible care of him. 'Because we wanted him to have a normal childhood, we took him to a club where there was a swimming pool. By the age of four or five, he could already swim, even though he had no arms. I think it was a gift from God," she said.

To swim, Gabrielzinho undulates in the water like a dolphin, using pelvic movements. A technique developed during long training sessions six times a week, from Monday to Saturday. In and out of the pool, he performs strength-building exercises, particularly for

at what they've done, especially this past Olympics."

It's a buoying message in a frustrating season, as was a comment on her TikTok. "It said, 'you've won literally and figuratively. Why stress yourself out over a victory lap?' I was, like, that's actually a good perspective. No one can take that from me so why stress myself over something that I already have. 'I'm just wanting to add to that, whether it happens here in two weeks or next year here or at Australia or whatever, there's no point. 'So I think I saw that comment, like, three days ago, and I was, like, 'OK, I'm going to stick by that and use that', because it really changed my perspective coming into this.' It's a nice change from the social media "doubters," who Gauff says she still uses as motivation.

Despite her higher profile, the 20-year-old said her life hadn't changed that much since her maiden Grand Slam title last year. It was a moment she'd been preparing for since she broke through for her first WTA title at the age of 15. "I think all that time prepped me to better prepare for this moment so I wasn't such a deer in headlights and everything wasn't so crazy," she said. "So I think now, coming in, I'm going to enjoy it." Gauff will start her title defense against France's Varvara Gracheva in the first round. — AFP

'Dance a lot'

At 19, he competed at the Tokyo Games, just after learning of the death of his grandfather, nicknamed "Pratinha" (Little Silver), to whom he was very close. "I was training, I was already in the final phase, and this huge blow came," said Gabrielzinho, who was already in Japan when he received the news. As if written in the sky, he began his medal haul in Tokyo with a silver in the 100m backstroke S2 - one of the categories for the most severely handicapped swimmers. "I took it to mean that he was just watching me from the most special place, next to my grandmother too."

Gabrielzinho then reached the top of the podium twice, in the 50m backstroke and 200m freestyle S2. Each time, he celebrated with a trademark dance. The swimmer's goal in Paris is to defend his two Paralympic titles, "turn his silver medal in the 100m backstroke into gold" and "dance a lot". And he will be hoping to exhibit a new celebratory dance to his fans this summer as Gabrielzinho shared that he has come up with a new routine which he is keeping top secret, for the moment. — AFP

Sports

PSG crush Montpellier 6-0

Reigning Ligue 1 champions' future is bright without Mbappe

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain coach Luis Enrique said his side had achieved "perfection" after thrashing Montpellier 6-0 on Friday to continue their strong start to life without Kylian Mbappe. Bradley Barcola scored twice while Marco Asensio, Achraf Hakimi, Warren Zaire-Emery and Lee Kang-in were also on target at the Parc des Princes for PSG. The reigning Ligue 1 champions have now found the net 10 times in total while winning their opening two games of the season, suggesting the future is bright without departed star Mbappe.

"It was a perfect night," Luis Enrique said. "We had 16 stars tonight, all the players who took part. Sixteen stars in attack and in defense, that is perfection, and that is what we are looking for." PSG's young team, featuring two teenagers in the starting line-up and a total of eight players aged between 18 and 25, played with verve and style, albeit against limited opposition. There was a first start for 19-year-old Portugal midfielder Joao Neves, a close-season recruit from Benfica for a fee that could eventually reach 69.9 million euros (\$78.2m).

Meanwhile Desire Doue, also 19 and a member of the France team that recently won Olympic silver, came on as a second-half substitute for his debut after joining from Rennes for an initial 50 million euros. "I think in two games you can already see the profile of the players we have brought in," added PSG's Spanish coach. "They are totally suited to our way of playing and I think they will all bring us a lot." He continued: "I am enjoying every training session with a very complete and versatile squad and players who are really eager to make history."

PSG scored three late goals to win 4-1 at Le Havre last week as they began their defense of the title, but their performance here was far more accomplished and suggests they will take some beating as they chase an 11th French title in 13 seasons. That is despite losing their all-time top scorer in Mbappe, but their overwhelming superiority compared to the opposition in Ligue 1 cannot be forgotten. While PSG - backed by their Qatari owners - have spent 175 million euros in the summer transfer window, not including bonuses, on four new players, Montpellier have not signed anyone.



PARIS: Montpellier's French goalkeeper #40 Benjamin Lecomte (right) makes a save in front of Paris Saint-Germain's South Korean midfielder #19 Kang-In Lee during the French L1 football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Montpellier Hérault SC at The Parc des Princes Stadium in Paris, on August 23, 2024. - AFP

Financial gulf

Handicapped by the collapse in income following the agreement of a new, knockdown domestic broadcast deal, Montpellier will get just seven million euros from television this season, their president Laurent Nicollin told sports daily L'Equipe on Friday. "They were much stronger than us and dominated from beginning to end," said Montpellier coach Michel Der Zakarian.

The financial gulf makes it practically impossible for Montpellier to compete and they fell behind inside four minutes when Barcola, coming in from the left, scored with a first-time toe-poke finish. The second goal just past the midway point in the first half was a joy, as Barcola played a ball in from the left for Neves

and his cushioned lay-off set up Asensio to fire in. The third goal arrived eight minutes into the second half and was of similar quality, Asensio releasing Ousmane Dembele on the right before he raced away and squared for Barcola to tap in.

It was 5-0 by the hour mark, with Nuno Mendes crossing from the left to the far post where Hakimi scored with a sidefoot volley, and Zaire-Emery nutmegging Kiki Kouyate in the box before finishing. Lee, on from the bench after being dropped from the starting line-up, smacked in the sixth from the edge of the area on 82 minutes. It is the second time PSG have scored six goals in a Ligue 1 game since Luis Enrique became coach just over a year ago - the other was in a 6-2 win at Montpellier in March. - AFP

German champions Leverkusen begin season with a win

MONCHENGLADBACH: Granit Xhaka praised his side's "pure mentality" as Florian Wirtz's goal in the 11th minute of stoppage time snatched a 3-2 win for reigning champions Bayer Leverkusen at Borussia Moenchengladbach in Friday's Bundesliga opener. Leverkusen were cruising at half-time, after a Xhaka stunner and a Wirtz goal gave Xabi Alonso's side a two-goal lead. With rain teeming down at Gladbach's Borussia Park, Nico Elvedi brought the hosts closer with a 59th-minute strike before newcomer Tim Kleindienst leveled the scores with five minutes remaining.

A second-half delay when home supporters set off flares in the stands meant a lengthy period of added time. In the 10th minute of that stoppage time, Ko Itakura clipped Amine Adli's boot in the box, bringing Wirtz to the spot. Wirtz's effort was saved but the Germany midfielder hammered the ball in on the rebound as his side won late again.

Leverkusen built a reputation for saving matches with last-gasp goals during their incredible run last season and Friday's strike was officially the latest goal in league history. "We started well in the first half and were dominant. We said at half-time we don't want to let them back into it," Xhaka told DAZN. "They came back but again we showed our pure mentality and we can take the three points back to Leverkusen from a difficult away match."

Leverkusen coach Alonso was at a loss for words. "I have no explanation for that. It's football. It's happened for us a lot." Wirtz, 21, said he was "glad" to be given the responsibility of the spot-kick, saying he "wanted to decide the game". "I know that at the end it was a bit lucky, but I don't want to complain. We're happy that we won at the end. "We made it a bit hard for ourselves. There's plenty of things we need to keep working on but we can be happy we got the three points today."

Defending champions

Fresh off an unbeaten league and cup double last campaign, Leverkusen picked up another piece of silverware last Saturday by beating Stuttgart on penalties to lift the German Supercup. Gladbach, a fallen giant who narrowly avoided relegation last season, were dealt a blow shortly before kick-off, with star midfielder Manu Kone left out of the squad due to an impending move away from the club. Leverkusen midfielder Xhaka blew the lid off the game early, rocketing in a brilliant long-range effort after 13 minutes, giving Gladbach goalie Jonas Omlin no chance.

The effort was a mirror image of the Switzerland captain's goal in Leverkusen's 1-0 German Cup final win over Kaiserslautern in May. Xhaka, who spent four years at Gladbach before his move to Arsenal, held his hands in the air, refusing to celebrate the stunner against his former club. A bleach-blond Wirtz doubled Leverkusen's lead after 38 minutes, blasting in on the turn in a crowded penalty area. Kleindienst looked to have pulled one back for the hosts just before half-time but the former Heidenheim forward's effort was struck off on VAR review. Gladbach's Elvedi, who lost possession just before Xhaka's opener, redeemed himself for the hosts, heading in a rebound to cut Leverkusen's lead 14 minutes into the second-half. - AFP



MONCHENGLADBACH: Moenchengladbach's German defender #20 Luca Netz and Bayer Leverkusen's Dutch defender #30 Jeremie Frimpong vie for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match between Borussia Moenchengladbach and Bayer 04 Leverkusen on August 23, 2024. - AFP



MANCHESTER: Returning to his old club, Manchester City's German midfielder Ilkay Gundogan comes out to warm up ahead of the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Ipswich Town at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester. - AFP

Gundogan returns to City from Barcelona

MANCHESTER: Ilkay Gundogan said he had returned to the "best club in the world" after re-signing for Manchester City from Barcelona on Friday. The former German international won five Premier League titles and the Champions League among 12 major trophies during his first spell at City between 2016 and 2023. Gundogan departed the English champions just over a year ago to join Barca.

However, the 33-year-old and the Catalan giants reportedly agreed to rescind his contract after just one season to pave the way for a return to the Etihad on a one-year deal. "I'm incredibly happy," Gundogan said in a City statement. "Happy to see the team-mates, the staff, people that over seven years I had an amazing time with, a very successful time with. Many ups, a few downs, but in general, an incredible experience."

"When you leave this place like I did last year, you spend a year away, you then start to appreciate the place even more. You realize what you had. You realize how amazing that time was. "You realize how big the club is - the best club in the world."

Gundogan's return is a timely boost for City after the departure of Julian Alvarez to Atletico Madrid for a reported fee of up to 95 million euros (\$104 million). "Most of the time the managers say until the transfer window finishes anything can happen and this is the real proof," said City boss Pep Guardiola. "It was a complete surprise."

No doubts

In his sole season in Spain, Gundogan scored five goals and provided 14 assists but Barca failed to win a trophy. "We know him well, the staff, players and everyone and the quality that he played last season in Barcelona," added Guardiola. "We didn't have any doubts when the possibility was open and delighted he is back."

Gundogan was Guardiola's first signing when both joined the club in 2016. He went on to score 60 goals in 304 appearances and will provide experience and depth to Guardiola's squad as they go for a record-extending fifth consecutive Premier League title. "He doesn't come here to retire or to remember the good memories we had," added Guardiola. "We have time to have good memories in the future but now it is time to put shoes on and play your best." Gundogan is City's second signing of the transfer window after the arrival of Brazilian winger Savinho. - AFP

West Indies hammer South Africa in T20i as Pooran shines

TARUBA: Nicholas Pooran smashed an unbeaten 65 from 26 balls as the West Indies defeated an experimental South Africa side by seven wickets in their T20 international at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy Stadium on Friday. West Indies put the visitors in to bat, in the first of the three match series, and made a strong start with the bowler. The Caribbean side limited South Africa to 42-5 from the opening eight overs, with seamer Matthew Forde picking up the wickets of Ryan Rickelton (4) and skipper Aiden Markram (14). But Tristan Stubbs led the fightback with a superb 76 from 42 balls including three sixes. Stubbs was well supported by Patrick Kruger who struck 44 from 32 balls as South Africa recovered to 174-7 from their 20 overs. The game had been delayed for over an hour by heavy rain but as the game went on conditions for batting improved and the home side took full advantage. West Indies went on the attack from the outset with the opening pair of Alick Athanaze (40) and Shai Hope (51) putting on 84 from the opening wicket before Athanaze was removed in the eighth over, caught by keeper Markram off Otneil Baartman. Pooran then took the game away from the Proteas with a brilliant display of power hitting, including smashing Burger for four sixes in a row in the 12th over.

Although South Africa gave themselves some chance with the removal of Hope and skipper Rovman Powell (7) the outcome was never in doubt as the home side passed the target with 13 balls to spare. The positive note for South Africa was the sight of left-arm seamer Kwena Maphaka - the youngest man to make his international debut for the country at 18 years and 137 days - taking the wicket of Powell. "He has a lot of X-factor and is really young," said Markram. "He has hunger when you speak to him off the field and he wants to win games for South Africa," he added.

The West Indies opted to field a strong side, against the team that eliminated them from this year's T20 World Cup, with the aim of building a consistent unit ahead of the next World Cup in 2026 in India and Sri Lanka. But Powell said the focus needed to remain on the shorter term. "To be honest, a lot of talk is around the next T20 World Cup but we have to play one game at a time and see different players. - AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

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

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

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I, Husain, holder of Indian Passport No. X2745991, having permanent address Ward No. 5 Bohra Mohalla Ratangarh, Neemuch Pin: 458226, Madhya Pradesh, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: (given name) Husain and (surname) Najmi. (25/08/2024)

I, Tasneem Bohra, holder of Indian Passport No. X5355352, having permanent address Ward No. 5 Bohra Mohalla Ratangarh, Neemuch Pin: 458226, Madhya Pradesh, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby

declare that henceforth my name will be read as: (given name) Tasneem and (surname) Najmi. (25/08/2024)

I, Shabbir, holder of Indian Passport No. X5355907, having permanent address Ward No. 5 Bohra Mohalla Ratangarh, Neemuch Pin: 458226, Madhya Pradesh, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: (given name) Shabbir and (surname) Najmi. (25/08/2024)

I, Insiya, holder of Indian Passport No. V9369805, having permanent address

Ward No. 5 Bohra Mohalla Ratangarh, Neemuch Pin: 458226, Madhya Pradesh, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: (given name) Insiya and (surname) Najmi. (25/08/2024)

I, MAHAMMAD UMER, holder of Indian Passport No. U0189191 having permanent address Nayuduvaripalli Etamaripuram Rajampet Tq, YSR District Pin: 516128, Andhra Pradesh India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) MOHAMMAD UMAR. (6156#, 23/08/2024)

Manchester United crash to a last-gasp 2-1 defeat

Haaland treble fires Man City to a 4-1 win



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Norwegian striker #09 Erling Haaland (center) takes on the Ipswich defense during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Ipswich Town at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester on August 24, 2024. — AFP

Kuwait defeat Syria in West Asian volleyball championship



ABU DHABI: Kuwait's youth volleyball national team beat Syria on Friday in the 2nd West Asian Championship, currently held in Al-Ain city in the United Arab Emirates. The match was closely contested as both teams showed firm determination to win the three points. Kuwait managed to snatch the points after a three-to-two sets win. On Saturday, the Kuwaiti team will play against the Qatari team in a crucial match to determine the fifth and sixth positions in the championship. Meanwhile, Bahrain, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon will play in the semi-finals. — KUNA

LONDON: Manchester United crashed to a last-gasp 2-1 defeat against Brighton and an Erling Haaland's hat-trick fired Premier League champions Manchester City to a 4-1 win against Ipswich on Saturday. Erik ten Hag's side were left shell-shocked by Joao Pedro's winner five minutes into stoppage-time at the Amex Stadium. United fell behind to a 32nd minute goal from Danny Welbeck, who poked in Kaoru Mitoma's cross for his sixth goal in 16 appearances against his former club. Amad Diallo equalized for United after an hour, cutting inside for a shot that deflected in off Brighton defender Jan Paul van Hecke.

Joshua Zirkzee prevented Alejandro Garnacho from putting the visitors ahead in the closing stages when the United forward touched home his teammate's finish on the line. Zirkzee, a close-season signing from Bologna, was in an offside position and VAR ruled out the goal. Left completely unmarked at the far post, Brazilian striker Pedro rubbed salt into United's wounds as he headed home from Simon Adingra's cross to ensure Brighton boss Fabian Hurler maintained his 100 per cent start following last weekend's win at Everton.

The 31-year-old German is the youngest permanent manager in Premier League history after arriving from St Pauli to replace Roberto De Zerbi in the close-season. "My team deserved to win. These moments make memories and we have to enjoy it,"

Nusa strikes on debut; Leipzig win, Stuttgart lose at Freiburg

BERLIN: Norwegian teenager Antonio Nusa scored on his Bundesliga debut to take RB Leipzig past Bochum 1-0 at home on Saturday, while last season's surprise runners-up Stuttgart lost 3-1 at Freiburg. Nusa, 19, was brought in to replace Barcelona-bound Dani Olmo this summer, scored just four minutes after coming on, thumping a long-range effort through a crowded penalty box to give Leipzig the lead. Leipzig, German Cup winners in two of the past three seasons, were forced to sweat when captain Willi Orban saw red for a last-man foul on Myron Boadu with five minutes remaining.

"For his young age, he's very grown up," Leipzig sporting director Rouven Schroeder told Sky. "He was really happy he scored but don't worry, he's not letting up." Stuttgart, fellow Champions League participants alongside Leipzig, Stuttgart lost 3-1 at a Lukas Kuebler-powered Freiburg. New Stuttgart striker Ermedin Demirovic, brought in to replace the Borussia Dortmund-bound Serhou Guirassy, opened the scoring with an acrobatic effort two minutes in.

Hurler said. Ten Hag added: "Both goals are very soft. As a team, we should have done better. We have to be more clinical in both boxes." At the Etihad Stadium, City scored three times in four minutes to survive an early scare against promoted Ipswich.

Sammie Szmodics, signed from Blackburn in the close-season, gave Ipswich a shock lead in the seventh minute, running on to Omari Hutchinson's pass and squeezing his shot through Ederson's legs. City levelled when Leif Davis's 12th minute foul on Savinho conceded a penalty that Haaland dispatched with ease. Ipswich keeper Arijanet Muric spent four years with City before leaving in 2022 and he returned with a gift for his old club, dwelling in possession in the 14th minute as Kevin De Bruyne stole the ball and slotted home.

Unstoppable Haaland

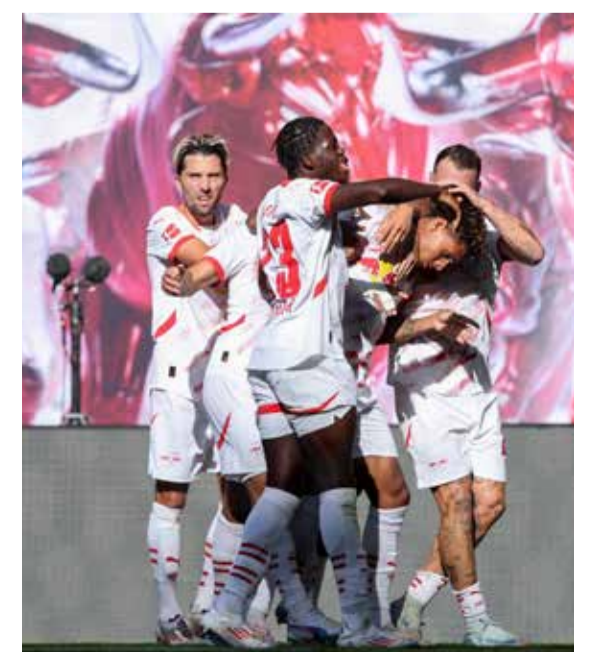
City made it three when the unstoppable Haaland flicked De Bruyne's deft pass past Muric. German midfielder Ilkay Gundogan came off the bench for City in the second half after rejoining his former club from Barcelona on a one-year contract on Friday. Haaland completed his treble in the 88th minute with a typically predatory finish for his fourth goal already this season.

Tottenham midfielder Yves Bissouma got back in favour with boss Ange Postecoglou as his superb

strike inspired a 4-0 rout of Everton in north London. Postecoglou's pick Bissouma following a one-game suspension after posting a social media video that showed him inhaling nitrous oxide. "You know what it's like when you punish your child and they do everything right for the next two days?" Postecoglou had said of Bissouma's return.

The Mali international made the most of his reprieve in the 14th minute, lashing home from the edge of the area for his first league goal for Tottenham in his 52nd appearance. Son Heung-min doubled Tottenham's lead in the 25th minute, forcing Jordan Pickford into an embarrassing mistake as the Everton keeper was robbed by the South Korean for a simple finish. Cristian Romero headed Tottenham's third in the 71st minute. Son bagged his second with a clinical finish six minutes later.

West Ham boss Julen Lopetegui earned the first win of his reign as second half goals from Tomas Soucek and Jarrod Bowen sealed a 2-0 victory at Crystal Palace. Alex Iwobi's 70th minute goal clinched Fulham's 2-1 win against Leicester at Craven Cottage after Emile Smith Rowe's first half opener for the hosts was cancelled out by Wout Faes. Nottingham Forest won 1-0 at Southampton thanks to Morgan Gibbs-White's 70th minute strike. Title contenders Arsenal traveled to Aston Villa in Saturday's late game. — AFP



LEIPZIG: Leipzig's Norwegian forward #07 Antonio Nusa (2R) celebrates with teammates scoring during the German first division Bundesliga football match between RB Leipzig and VfL Bochum in Leipzig. — AFP