

# Commerce, coop union join on prices

Memorandum signed

Iran levels accusation

## Israel accused of substitute sabotage bid

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 31, (KUNA): The Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the **Union of Consumer Cooperative** Societies signed a memorandum of understanding and cooperation for monitoring and controlling prices of products and services in cooperative stores and similar markets.

The MoU was inked in presence of the Minister of Social Affairs, Sheikh Firas Saud Al-Malik Al-Sabah and Minister of

Trade and Industry Mohammed Al-Aiban, on Wednesday. A joint press statement said the signing of the

memorandum came to achieve cooperation between the ministry and the union. Both parties will develop and support joint frameworks of understanding FOR monitoring and controlling the prices of products and services through joint coordination and cooperation.

The MoU, effective as of date of signing until 12 months, can be renewed according to a new agreement between the two parties. The spectrum of data cooperation is represented by product name, brand, size, weight, country of origin, product price and product barcode.

### **Opinion**

Court of Cassation, thank you for justice over those on a travel ban

#### **By Ahmed Al-Jarallah** Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

IT IS a victory for the Constitution and the establishment of the principle to not curtail the freedom of citizens. Therefore, the Court of Cassation's ruling on neither confiscating a citizen's passport nor preventing him from traveling is an essential pillar in preserving the freedoms of all citizens without discrimination.

However, such measures are expected in case a criminal offense is committed against State security, against oneself, forgery or others when the court restricts the offender's freedom for a certain period, not a permanent ban.

In essence, this ruling strengthens the freedoms currently threatened by parliamentary proposals on restricting citizens within the outdated frameworks. At the same time, it ends physical coercion in misdemeanor civil cases.

It is also a milestone in Kuwaiti judicial practice, which is accustomed to making rulings in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. Even if there is a setback, the Cassation Court turns the compass to the right direction.

Without a doubt; about 120,000 citizens suffer from restriction of their movement due to small debts, including the famous case of preventing a citizen from traveling because of unpaid debt of KD 10 or KD 5,000 or even KD 50,000 or KD 100,000.

### **Newswatch**

KUWAIT CITY: The ministry of finance on Thursday launched the regular draw for the "Friday market" on its website to organize the granting of stands for applicants.

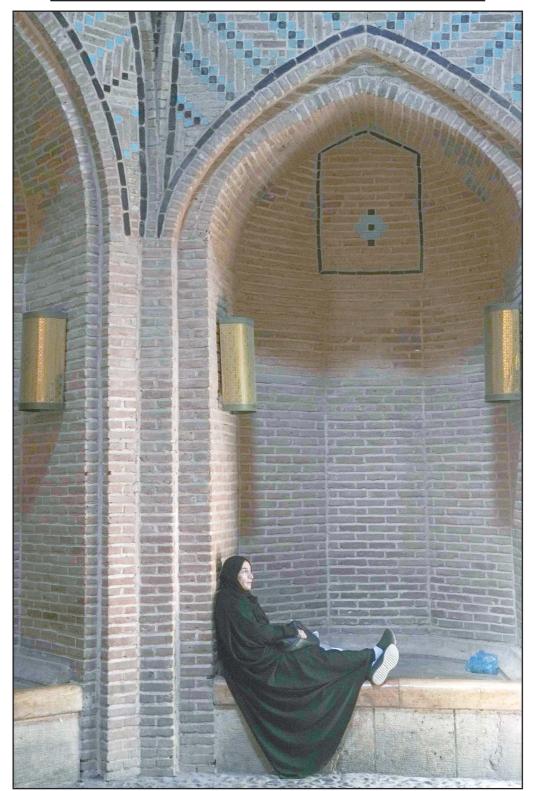
The system has been designed to respond to desire of the largest number possible of nationals, qualified to join and make business in the market -- including retirees, housewives, widows and divorcees.

Posting is on the website www.mof.gov. kw. (terms, more details available in the Arabic item). (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: Secretary-General of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) Jamal Al-Loughani praised Thursday role of the United Arab Emirates in providing support to the activities of the General Secretariat and its contribution to the development of its work.

This came in a press release issued by OAPEC during Al-Loughani's meeting in the office of the UAE Ambassador to the State of Kuwait, Dr. Matar Al-Neyadi.

Al-Loughani appreciated the efforts made by the UAE to prepare for the 28th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 28), expecting that the event will be exceptional this year, especially in light of changes and developments taking place in the energy industry globally. For his part, the UAE Ambassador praised the Secretary General's efforts to develop the organization in a way that benefits the interests of member states, wishing him success in his work and success in the upcoming 12th Arab Energy Conference to be held in the State of Qatar. The Secretary-General presented the OAPEC shield to the UAE Ambassador in appreciation of his contributions and efforts during his tenure as a member of the Executive Office representing the UAE. (KUNA)



DUBAI, Aug 31, (AP): Iran ac-cused Israel on Thursday of trying to sabotage its ballistic missile program through faulty foreign parts that could explode, damaging or destroying the weapons before they could be used.

The Israeli prime minister's office declined to comment on the allegation, though it comes amid a yearslong effort by both Israel and the U.S. to target Iran. A reporter also said the parts could be used in Iran's extensive arsenal of drones, which have grown in prominence amid their use by Russia in its war on Ukraine.

The report described the alleged Israeli operation as "one of the biggest attempts at sabotage' it had ever seen. It accused Israeli Mossad agents of supplying the faulty parts, which the state TV report described as low-price 'connectors.'

Footage aired by state TV showed the alleged parts, some of them popping up into the air, as if affected by an explosive.

The pieces shown in the television report appeared to be military-style, high-density circular electrical connectors. Such connectors can be used to attach electronic components of a missile or a drone, such as its guidance computer, and pass both electricity and signals. Video released by Iran in the past showed missile scientists working with similar connectors.

#### Explode

"This was planted in a part called the connector, which is responsible for connecting the (computer) network of Iranianmade ballistic missiles, as well as drones," state television military correspondent Younes Shadloo said in the report. "Apparently the part contained a modified explosive kit planted in it and was timed to explode at a certain time.

The state TV report did not explain why Iran sought to purchase the connectors abroad, though some Iranian websites advertisconnectors suggest that Russian-made ones were the best in the market. Russia faces international sanctions over its war on Ukraine, which has seen its own supply of electronics needed for missile systems challenged. Iranian-made drones used by Russia in the war also use circular connectors, according to reports by experts who have torn down the weapons. The TV broadcast did not say when authorities discovered the faulty parts, nor if they had been installed in any ballistic missile prior. In May 2022, an explosion at a major Iranian military and weapons development base east of Tehran called Parchin killed an engineer and wounded another. Other blasts have struck as well, including failures in Iran's space program that the U.S. has long criticized as advancing Tehran's ballistic missile program.

Given that this person has no homeland other than Kuwait and as long as the case is pending in the judiciary, no executive action should be taken, except through a final ruling. It does not entail preventing him from traveling and returning to the country.

It is said that some Kuwaitis have been banned from traveling for 30 years and others for 40 years. Without a doubt, their suffering is much greater than the misdemeanor they committed.

This procedure does not exist in any other country throughout the world, except Kuwait; because of the incomplete reading of the meaning of constitutionally guaranteed freedoms, rather the meaning of the sovereignty of the Constitution, through which the State is organized.

Today, when the Court of Cassation the highest judicial level - issues this type of ruling, it means that everyone must abide by the decision. All executive authorities in the State must make this historical text as their guide to practice in the future.

It is true that the creditor must preserve his rights, but he does not have the right to enjoy a right that is not permitted by the Constitution, because that would be a violation of the basic rules on which the State was founded.

Hence, the executive authority must not take any measure that restricts the freedom of citizens. Rather, the National Assembly must reconsider a series of legislation that contradicts the Constitution in letter and substance, as well as its explanatory memorandum, which conflicts with human rights guaranteed by the law constitutionality and internationally.

Whoever believes that the law is superior to the Constitution is delusional. One who believes that his temporary authority gives him an eternal right to practice injustice on others is ignorant.

Since time immemorial, Kuwait has been an oasis of freedom of opinion, movement and creativity. It was essentially based on these pillars that were crystallized by the constitutional texts and a series of rulings by the Court of Cassation. The greater is the boldness on the right established by the Cassation Court, the more certain we are that Kuwait is on the right path.

Therefore, the bats of backwardness lurking in the corridors of the National Assembly, the executive authority and the deep State must not be allowed to impose their vision that contradicts the Constitution.

Indeed, a big thank you to the Court of Cassation, which wrote a number of systematic rulings, restoring the true splendor and image of Kuwaitis and Kuwait - not the impurities that remained due to some people's ignorance of the Constitution.

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**IRBIL:** The Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq announced Thursday registration of ten cases of cholera in Sulaymaniyah Governorate, northern Iraq.

During a press conference, the Director General of Sulaymaniyah Health Sabah Hawrami said that test results showed that 10 people were infected with cholera, meanwhile hundreds of patients visited hospitals daily in Sulaymaniyah suffering from diarrhea and vomiting.

Hawrami stressed, "the main reason for the spread of the disease is unhealthy water, mainly the water bought from tankers.

He explained that the spread of the disease requires caution by the citizens of Sulaymaniyah and the surrounding areas, as it is easy to spread, assuring that all necessary medica-tions are available in hospitals. (KUNA) 

LONDON: Grant Shapps, one of British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's staunchest Cabinet allies, was named U.K. defense secretary on Thursday as Sunak began a Cabinet reshuffle ahead of a general election that is expected to take place next year.

The move came after Ben Wallace formally submitted his resignation earlier in the day, honoring a promise made last month. Wallace was defense secretary for four years, overseeing Britain's military response to the war in Ukraine.

Shapps, who supported Sunak during his campaign to become Conservative Party leader and prime minister last year, has been a Cabinet member since 2019, most recently serving as secretary of state for the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero.

Wallace used his resignation letter to press for increased funding for the military, long his primary issue. (AP)

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CAIRO: The head of Sudan's army warned Thursday that the northeast African country will be divided if the conflict between the military and rival paramilitary force is not resolved.

Sudan was plunged into chaos after monthslong tensions between the military, led by Gen. Abdel Fattah Burhan, and the Rapid Support Forces, commanded by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, exploded into open fighting on April 15.

"We are facing a war, and if it is not resolved quickly Sudan will be fragmented," Burhan said in a speech addressed to the country's police force in the Red Sea city of Port Sudan.

Burhan's remarks echo those he made in Egypt on Tuesday, the general's first trip abroad since the conflict broke out. (AP)

A woman sits at Saad ol-Saltaneh traditional market in the city of Qazvin, some 93 miles (150 kilometers) northwest of the capital Tehran, Iran, Wednesday, Aug 30, 2023. Saad ol-Saltaneh is a wellpreserved historical site in Iran which originally was built as a caravansarai in Qajar era and now is turned to a traditional market. (AP)

Political impasse causes delays

## Planned transport spend totals \$28bn

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 31: The MEED magazine stated that in 2014, 2015 and 2016, the contract awarding activity in the construction and transportation sectors in Kuwait increased to about \$27 billion, but the situation now has dramatically changed due to the long-standing political impasse between the legislative and executive authorities, and the disruption of the decision-making process, reports Al-Rai daily.

The sources told the magazine after the project activity witnessed positive growth for two consecutive years in 2020 and 2021, the total project activity decreased significantly indicating at the moment transportation projects worth approximately \$28 billion are being planned in Kuwait, including contracts worth \$22.9 billion that are still in the early stages, projects worth \$2.3 billion in the design stage, and contracts worth \$2.8 billion in the bidding stage.

In the construction and transportation sectors combined, there are projects worth \$4.7 billion that have passed the pre-qualification stage and are now either in the bid-submission or bid-evaluation stages and if contracts are awarded at even half of this value, 2023 could become the best year for contractors since 2018, but most of this value is collected in very large projects and will depend on the resumption of major plans that may in turn need the approval of the National Assembly

The construction and transportation projects market in 2022 witnessed a decline of about 40 percent

#### 'Spirit of inclusivity'

## Adhan broadcast in NYC

Under the new rules, Adams said, mosques will not need a special permit to publicly broadcast the Islamic call to prayer, or Adhan, on Fridays and at sundown during the holy month of Ramadan. Friday is the traditional Islamic holy day, and Muslims break their fast at sunset during Ramadan.

The police department's community affairs bureau will work with mosques to communicate the new guidelines and ensure that devices used to broadcast the Adhan are set to appropriate decibel levels, Adams said. Houses of worship can broadcast up to 10 decibels over the ambient sound level, the mayor's office said.

"For too long, there has been a feeling that our communities were not allowed to amplify their calls to prayer," Adams said. "Today, we are cutting red tape and saying clearly that mosques and houses of worship are free to amplify their call to prayer on Fridays and during Ramadan without a permit necessary.'

to settle at just under \$1.7 billion as a result of the decrease in the number of awarded projects. Since the beginning of this year so far, the country has awarded contracts worth \$1.2 billion in the construction and transportation sectors.

Construction was the second largest project sector in Kuwait last year, with contracts awarded at about \$627 million, and in 2023 and so far the volume of contracts has reached about \$440 million, which indicates that the current year is going in a similar direction, but the two numbers are much lower than the average of \$1.8 billion in awards between 2018 and 2022, or an average of the \$4 billion spent in the preceding five years.

As is the case in other project sectors in Kuwait, the construction sector is a victim of a significant reduction in public spending on projects in the country, because the plans got caught up in the internal political struggle over spending and debt.

At the same time, the volume of construction projects scheduled and awaiting award amounts to about \$22.9 billion, with projects worth \$8.7 billion under study, \$6.6 billion in the design stage, and \$7.6 billion in the bidding stage.

The transportation sector enjoyed the strongest project activity in Kuwait in 2022, with more than \$1 billion worth of contracts awarded, more than the average annual total awards of \$800 million between 2018 and 2022.



THE plane thief took off with the plane which was registered in his ex-wife's name to an unknown place and his son also fled to an African nation.

His young son and daughter have also vanished out of sight, after the thief blamed his problems on the cardiologist. The judiciary is now knocking on the door of the clinic and home of this cardiologist.

The plane thief has put the price tag of two dollars on the aircraft, as if he is buying a bird. not a plane.

Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

#### Retaliation

Meawnhile, Iran's foreign minister condemned Wednesday an Israeli airstrike on the international airport of the Syrian city of Aleppo, saying such attacks would eventually face retaliation.

Amirabdollahian Hossein made his comments during a news conference in the Syrian capital, Damascus, where he was beginning a two-day visit.

On Monday, an Israeli airstrike damaged Aleppo's airport, putting the runway out of service. The airport has been targeted several times this year, including two attacks in March that also put it out of service.

Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes on targets inside government-controlled parts of Syria in recent years but it rarely acknowledges or discusses the operations. Often the strikes target Syrian military forces or Iranianbacked groups.

Tehran has been a main backer of the Syrian government since a 2011 uprising turned into fullblown civil war. It has sent thousands of Iran-backed fighters to Syria, helping to tip the balance of power in the favor of President Bashar Assad.

Israel has targeted airports and sea ports in the government-held parts of Syria in an apparent attempt to prevent arms shipments from Iran to militant groups backed by Tehran, including Lebanon's Hezbollah.

"The criminal practices by the Zionist entity in the region will not remain without retaliation," Amirabdollahian said.

NEW YORK, Aug 31, (AP): The Muslim call to prayer will ring out more freely in New York City under guidelines announced Tuesday by Mayor Eric Adams, which he said should foster a spirit of inclusivity



Russia earns less from oil and spends more on war

## Rate patch can't hide dilemma at heart of Russian economy

The Russian ruble's wobble in value has exposed a crack in President Vladimir Putin's fortress economy, a vulnerability quickly plastered over by the Kremlin's economic team in a move that allowed the currency to regain its footing, at least for now.

Yet the patch - an emergency interest rate increase - cannot hide the dilemma at the heart of the Russian economy: how to fund the military while not undermining the national currency and overheating the economy with corrosive and politically embarrassing inflation.

Life in Moscow presents a facade of normality despite sweeping sanctions tied to the war in Ukraine and the departure of hundreds of namebrand Western companies.

Outdoor seating at restaurants and bars on the popular Bolshaya Nikitskaya street were packed on a recent evening with well-dressed residents enjoying balmy August weather. Loud music from DJs boomed from a nearby courtyard eatery. Malls haven't changed at first glance, but where Zara and H&M once stood, shoppers find new clothing brands Maag and Vilet.

And doughnut seller Krunchy Dream could easily be mistaken for the

Krispy Kreme that once stood in its place in Evropeisky mall, even the branding is similar. In the absence of Apple Pay, banks provide stickers with a chip that enables mobile payment.

Key economic gauges are also in normal ranges. Unemployment is low, economic growth is better than many had expected and inflation is moderate by Russian standards - at 4% in July - though hard on those with limited incomes.

People in Moscow - where criticism of the military can bring jail time and some only provided their first names - expressed a mix of unease and resignation.

Retiree Vladimir Cheremesyev, 68, recalled that the troubles after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 were delayed by several years.

"I think that although I am a pensioner, and there is not much income, I don't feel much yet," Cheremesyev said, "but there is anxiety - some-

times my blood pressure rises."

Others noted how prices constantly changed.

Yuliana, a 38-year-old entrepreneur, was more concerned: "Our condition has deteriorated sharply, it's no good. ... It won't end today or tomorrow, and not the day after tomorrow. I think more than one generation will pay for this story.

For businesses in need of supplies, they're turning to alternatives.

Andrei Lavrov, owner of the Smile Atelier dental clinic, said he's had to get sutures and silicone from Asia because he uses "quite a lot" of imported materials.

'But, by the way, no disaster happened," he said. "If something is no longer supplied, then it is easily replaced through parallel channels. Some Russian-made sutures are "very high-quality material," he said, as local industry picks up the slack: "A certain substitution is taking place."

Still, imports to Russia are rebounding as goods come through nearby countries such as Kazakhstan and Armenia, avoiding sanctions. Govern-

ment spending on the military and social programs is spreading cash to people and companies, who are using some of it on imported products. Labor shortages, stemming from people leaving the country, also are supporting salaries, while government-subsidized mortgages help maintain real estate activity.

**Continued on Page 3** 



company, right, sits inside a military vehicle posing for a photo with a local civilian prior to leaving an area of the HQ of the Southern Military District in a street in Rostov-on-Don, Russia, on June 24, 2023. Prigozhin

In this image taken from video, smoke and flames rise from a crashed private jet near the village of Kuzhen-kino, Tver region, Russia, Wednesday, Aug 23, 2023. Russian mercenary leader Yevgeny V. Prigozhin, the founder of the Wagner Group, reportedly died when a private jet he was said to be on crashed on Aug 23, 2023, killing all 10 people on board. Inset: Yevgeny Prigozhin, the owner of the Wagner Group military

made his name as the profane and brutal mercenary boss who mounted an armed rebellion that was the most severe and shocking challenge to Russian President Vladimir Putin's rule. (AP)

#### Mystery shrouds Prigozhin's final days

## You 'rock' ... you rise ... you fall

Yevgeny Prigozhin smiled as a crowd of adoring fans surrounded his black SUV on June 24 in Russia's southern city of Rostov-on-Don and cheered him on.

"You rock!" fans shouted while taking selfies with the chief of the Wagner mercenary group, who was sitting in the vehicle after nightfall. "You're a lion! Hang in there!"

Prigozhin and his masked, camouflage-clad fighters were leaving the city after a daylong mutiny against the country's military leadership. President Vladimir Putin decried it as "treason" and vowed punishment, but then cut a deal not to prosecute Prigozhin. Beyond that, his fate looked uncertain.

Two months later, on Aug. 23, Prigozhin's business jet plummeted from the sky and crashed in a field halfway between Moscow and St. Petersburg. All 10 people on board the plane were killed, Russian authorities said. Russia's Investigative Committee said Sunday that forensic testing confirmed Prigozhin was one of them.

The two scenes, which unfolded just two months apart, provide bookends to the mystery-shrouded final days of the outspoken, brutal mercenary leader who initially appeared to have escaped any retribution for the rebellion that posed the greatest challenge to Putin's authority in his 23-year rule.

Suspicions immediately arose that the crash of the plane, which also carried some of the Wagner founder's top lieutenants, was a Kremlin act of vengeance. The Kremlin denied it.

In on-camera remarks eulogizing Prigozhin, the Russian president sought to show that there was no bad blood between them. He described the head of Wagner as "a talented man" whom he had known for a long time and who made "serious mistakes" but was still apparently doing business with the government.

The last weeks of Prigozhin's life were overshadowed by questions about what the Kremlin really had in store for him. Had he already dodged a bullet? Or was his comeuppance just further down the road?

Shortly before footage emerged of Prigozhin driving off into the night in Rostov-on-Don, the Kremlin announced a deal to end the mutiny. Prigozhin would "retreat to Belarus," Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said, without elaborating on whether that meant a permanent exile.

Prigozhin himself went silent, which was unusual for a man who used to release multiple written and spoken statements every day. Responding to an email from The Associated Press on June 25, the day after the mutiny, Prigozhin's press service said only that he "says hi to everyone" and would respond to all questions once he gets "proper connection."

An elaborate 11-minute statement from Prigozhin appeared the next day, but it contained nothing about where he was or what was next for him and his forces. Instead, he defended himself and the mutiny in his usual defiant and bullish manner.

He said his march on Moscow started because of an injustice - an alleged attack on his fighters in Ukraine by the Russian military. He taunted the military, calling Wagner's march a "master class" in how government soldiers should have carried out the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. He pointed out security breaches that allowed Wagner to advance 780 kilometers (500 miles) without resistance and to block all military units on its way.

The following morning, on June 27, Russian authorities announced they were dropping the criminal investigation into the revolt, with no charges for the Wagner leader nor any other participants - even though about a dozen Russian troops were killed in clashes and several military aircraft were shot down.

Later in the day, Putin hinted that there might be a new probe - this time into Prigozhin's finances. The Russian leader told a military gathering that the state paid Wagner almost \$1 billion in just one year, while Prigozhin's other company earned about the same from government contracts. Putin wondered aloud whether any of it was stolen and promised to "figure it out."

On the day the charges were dropped, Prigozhin's plane was spotted in Belarus, and Belarus' authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko, who helped broker the deal to end the mutiny, said the Wagner chief had arrived. Belarusian activists soon reported that a camp was being erected there for fighters who decided to follow him.

In Russia, Prigozhin's major business asset - a media company called Patriot - shut down, and many of the news outlets it owned were blocked by authorities. Prigozhin's media operations included the infamous "troll factory" that led to his indictment in the U.S. for meddling in the 2016 presidential election.

Wagner also announced a halt to recruitment of new mercenaries "due to the move to Belarus.'

On July 6, however, Lukashenko told reporters that Prigozhin was in St. Petersburg - or "maybe he went to Moscow, or maybe somewhere else, but he is not in Belarus." The remarks came amid media reports that cash and equipment seized during police searches of Prigozhin's property were returned to him.

"What will happen to him next? Well, anything can happen in a lifetime. But if you think that Putin is so malicious and vindictive that he will be offed somewhere tomorrow. ... No, this will not happen," Lukashenko assured.

As it turned out, Putin met with Prigozhin several days after the revolt.

Peskov, Putin's spokesperson, told reporters on July 10 that the meeting took place in the Kremlin and involved more than 30 Wagner commanders in addition to Prigozhin. The revelation came after Peskov repeatedly said the Kremlin knew nothing about Prigozhin's whereabouts including on the day of the meeting with Putin, June 29.

Putin's spokesperson wouldn't offer any details about the meeting, saying only that the commanders pledged their loyalty to the Russian president.

Putin later echoed that idea, saying in a July 13 interview that "many were nodding" when he offered to let them continue serving under one of the Wagner commanders. But a defiant Prigozhin spoke for them and said they didn't like the proposal, according to the Russian president.

Comments from the Wagner chief himself became rare. Nothing more was posted by his spokespeople beyond the 11-minute audio message issued two days after the mutiny.

Words or visuals of Prigozhin instead appeared in one of several Telegram channels believed to be linked to Wagner. The relative quiet raised questions over whether keeping a low public profile was part of his deal with the Kremlin.

One such video on July 19 reportedly came from Belarus. Blurry footage showed a silhouette of a man looking like Prigozhin against the sky at dusk, and his distinctive gravelly voice was heard addressing rows of men in fatigues

"Welcome guys! I am happy to greet you all. Welcome to Belarusian land!" he said.

Prigozhin repeated his criticism of the conduct of the fighting in Ukraine. "What is going on the frontline today is a shame in which we shouldn't take part," he said, adding that Wagner forces could return to Ukraine in the future.

In the meantime, Prigozhin said, Wagner would train in Belarus and then set off on a new journey to Africa, where his mercenaries have been active in several countries.

Another video, posted on Aug. 21 in a different Telegram channel, showed a close-up of Prigozhin toting a rifle while standing on a dusty plain. Prigozhin didn't say where the video was recorded, but he referenced the temperature being 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit).

"Just the way we like it," he boasted. He said Wagner was "making Russia even greater on all continents and Africa even more free."

Two days later came the plane crash - exactly two months after Priogzhin first announced his revolt.

Although the Kremlin rejected allegations that it was behind the crash, the reality of those two months likely didn't sit well with Putin, political analyst Abbas Gallyamov said.

The mutiny "showcased Putin's weakness to everyone," said Gallyamov, who once worked as a Kremlin speechwriter. After that, Prigozhin "was feeling normal." He was working on projects in Belarus and in Africa, and the case against him was closed.

That reality "completely dissatisfied Putin because it was an open invitation for potential mutineers," Gallyamov said. (AP)

editor's choice

### Prayer Timings

Fajr	. 04:03	Asr 15:22
Sunrise	05:25	Maghrib 18:12
Zohr	11:48	lsha 19:31



Expected weather for the next 24 hours:

By Day: Hot with light to moderate freshening at times north-westerly wind with speeds of 15-45 km/h with a chance for rising dust over open areas.

#### Weather

By Night: H light to mode wind to light	erate nor	thwesterly	Abdaly Jahra Salmiyah	44 48 38	27 31 33
speeds of 08-3		wind with	Salmiyah Ahmadi	39	35
	Max Exp	Min Rec	Nuwaisib	41	31
Kuwait City	43	33	Wafra	43	28
Kuwait Airport	44	30			

#### BIOMETRIC/FINGERPRINT APPOINTMENT: https://meta.e.gov.kw/En/

#### Indemnity for expats

**Embassy marks Victory Day** 

## 'Kuwait-Turkiye relations distinguished'

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 31: A govern-mental report revealed that the State spent KD31.475 million on the endof-service benefits of non-Kuwaiti employees in several government agen-cies during fiscal 2022/2023, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The report affirmed that the bonuses were paid in accordance with the employment contracts, relevant decisions, executive regulations of Civil Service Law No. 15/1979 and regulations governing subsidiaries approved by the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Official figures showed the amount that Kuwait spent on workers' compensation for fiscal 2022/2023 reached KD8.502 billion or 99.6 percent of the approved budget for this item, amounting to KD8.537 billion.

In addition, the State's expenditure on health insurance for non-Kuwaitis reached KD4.6 million in the last fiscal year.

#### Rate patch

#### **Continued from Page 2**

Victory Day.

viewpoints.

in operational scenarios.

Some blows to the economy are obvious, particularly the auto industry after Western manufacturers abandoned their Russian businesses. But Chinese vehicle imports are gaining ground.

Foreign travel is painfully expensive and limited by visa and airline bans, though the rich manage as always and those with modest incomes couldn't afford it to begin with.

When it comes to the pressure on the ruble, Russia, one of the world's biggest oil suppliers, is earning less from selling its oil because of Western sanctions. That's narrowing the country's trade surplus with the rest of the world because Russian people and companies also are buying more products from abroad.

Earning more from exports than what is spent on imports typically supports the ruble. While the shrinking trade surplus has led the currency to steadily decline, Moscow has benefited because a weaker exchange rate actually helps the government pay its bills.

That's because dollars earned from oil can be exchanged for a larger amount of rubles to spend on government agencies, workers' wages and pensions.

But Russia's currency dipped too far for the Kremlin's liking - below 100 rubles to the dollar on Aug. 14, a psychologically important level. It prompted the central bank to carry out a large emergency interest rate hike of 3.5 percentage points aimed at cooling local demand for imports. The currency rose to 92 to the dollar in the days following the rate hike but has steadily slipped since; it traded at 95.5 to the dollar on Tuesday.

While weaker than last year's levels of about 60 rubles to the dollar, the lower exchange rate isn't a crisis yet, if a freefall can be avoided.

The Kremlin has worked to sanctionsproof the economy following the annex-

#### KUWAIT CITY, Aug 31, (KUNA): On Wednes-Turkey's Ambassador to Kuwait, Tuba Nur day, a Kuwaiti military official praised the strong Sonmez, echoed similar sentiments in her speech. and excellent relations between Kuwait and Tur-She emphasized that the bilateral relations between kive, particularly in the realm of defense. Brigadier Turkey and Kuwait have reached an exemplary lev-General Muhammad Al-Jassar, the head of the Nael and continue to flourish across various domains, tional Military Service, highlighted these relations especially in the realm of defense industries. She during a speech at the celebration held by the Turklauded the Kuwaiti army's utilization of the "Bayish embassy in Kuwait on the occasion of the 101st raktar" drone, noting its remarkable achievement of flying for 27 consecutive hours. General Al-Jassar emphasized the shared values between Kuwait and Turkey, including a commit-

Sonmez underscored the mutual understanding between Turkey and Kuwait about the significance of establishing peace, security, and stability in their region to foster comprehensive prosperity. She highlighted their shared vision for dialogue, peaceful conflict resolutions, and amicable relations with neighboring countries.

Furthermore, Sonmez praised Turkey's defense industry, which has seen substantial success with over 75 percent of defense equipment now being locally manufactured. Additionally, she mentioned that Turkish defense exports reached \$4.4 billion in 2022. She emphasized the advanced, battle-tested, and competitively priced nature of Turkish defense technologies, along with their track record of maintaining secure supply lines during crises.

## 'Lockdown' plan in new wave **COVID; shut WHO office: MP**

#### Expat jobs in PAAAFR queried

#### **PAHW cites violations**

ment to peace, common defense principles, and a

cooperative approach to achieving global security and stability. He pointed out that the defense co-

operation between the two nations is continuously

expanding across various sectors. He highlighted

the ongoing meetings between defense officials

from both countries, which serve to explore new

avenues of cooperation, exchange ideas, and share

outlined by General Al-Jassar, is the reinforcement

of Kuwaiti army's defense capabilities through the

deployment of the Turkish-made Bayraktar drone.

He praised the drone's reliability and effectiveness

The tangible outcome of this collaboration, as

'30,000 applications canceled from 1985'

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 31: The Public Au-thority for Housing Welfare announced the removal and cancellation of 30,000 housing applications from the waiting list within 38 years, for several reasons, most notably violating the concept of the family according to the care regulation, and obtaining a real estate loan from the Credit Bank, at a time when the head of the Al-Mutla'a Families Committee, Khaled Al-Enezi, revealed that 100,000 people will live in the new city during the next

two years, reports Al-Qabas daily. The PAHW said in a recent statistic, of which the daily obtained a copy, that the 30,000 applications were canceled from 1985 until now, explaining that it relies on the procedures for canceling and removing housing applications from the waiting list for the housing role for reasons related to the existence of real estate ownership of the applicant or a violation of the regulations. institution and its laws.

#### **By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh** Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 31: MP Fayez Al-Jomhour has submitted a proposal to continue the payment of rent allowance and suspend the collection of housing loan installments for the beneficiaries of Mutla'a housing project, considering the public facilities and infrastructure works in the area have yet to be completed.

He point out it is too difficult to reside in the area under such circumstances; hence, the beneficiaries have no recourse but to stay in rented houses until completion of public facilities and infrastructure works.

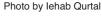
MP Fares Al-Otaibi has proposed the establishment of a shareholding company for storing imported commodities. His proposal stipulates dividing the shares of the company as follows: 50 percent for the government and 50 percent for public subscription. He said the warehouses will be located in the northern, central and southern parts of the country with a minimum area of 500,000 square meters.

He also recommended that citizens should constitute 80 percent of the company's workforce; indicating his proposal is aimed at supporting the owners of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), controlling prices and combating monopoly.

On the other hand, MP Adel Al-Damkhi forwarded queries to Minister of Electricity. Water and Renewable Energy and acting Minister of Education Jassem Al-Ostad about the shortage of veterinarians in the country in general, and particularly at the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR). He asked who took the decision to refer Kuwaiti veterinarians for retirement and replace them with expatriates. He asserted this is a violation of Decision No. 11/2017 on the Kuwaitization of jobs and Law No. 103/2013, which stipulates 75 years old as the retirement age for doctors. He wants to know the rationale behind referring Kuwaiti veterinarians for retirement, list of expatriate veterinarians at PAAAFR, list of Kuwaiti veterinaries appointed in PAAAFR in the last five years, number of veterinarians that the authority needs in the next five years, list of committees at the Animal Department in PAAAFR including the members' qualifications and nationalities, and reasons for rejecting Kuwaiti veterinarians with masteral and doctorate degrees as members of the Medical License Committee; being content with an expatriate veterinarian and a veterinary observer who holds a certificate for completing a two-year training course. He wants to know the reasons for closing Kuwait Zoo since 2019 till date. He requested for a detailed report on the budget allocated for the zoo including salaries, organization of conferences, food and healthcare, list of veterinarians assigned in the zoo including their nationalities, and list of animals that died in the last five years including the cause of death. He inquired why the import of



The cake-cutting ceremony.





Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chairs the Border Committee meeting.

#### Border panel holds meeting

Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Thursday chaired the border committee meeting, held at the ministry's head-

quarters

The meeting, attended by all members of the commission, addressed issues within its jurisdictions. (KUNA)



500

### Disasters ... worst yet to come

#### **By Ahmad alsarraf**

I am committed to consistently ad-dressing the topic of education, and I will persistently raise concerns. While I generally avoid subscribing to conspiracy theories, my growing conviction is that a specific entity is actively undermining Kuwait's

stature, and this conviction becomes more resolute with each passing day. It appears this entity is targetis troubling, extending to households and manifesting as a pervasive issue.

According to the report, a concerning 70,000 students have registered files with the General Directorate of Social and Psychological Services, representing 18 percent of the total student population.

The documented figures also en-compass 1,340 incidents of verbal and physical assaults on teachers by students, 13,868 instances of similar attacks among students, 19 cases of harassment, 1,357 students who smoke, 8 cases of alcohol and drug usage, 2,567 students leaving classrooms without permission, 521 students absconding 3

ation of Ukraine's Crimea Peninsula in 2014. It also shifted food production to local companies by banning EU imports and pushed manufacturers to source parts locally.

Thanks to oil earnings, the government has negligible debt and robust reserves, though about half of that stockpile has been frozen by sanctions.

Longer term, however, Russia's economy is facing a "slow burn" under pressure from sanctions and Putin's war spending, said Robin Brooks, chief economist with the Institute of International Finance.

"The dilemma is, on the one hand, he has to spend a lot of money - fighting a war is super expensive," Brooks said. "How do you square the circle between needing cash and hiking interest rates to keep the picture from spiraling out of control? In my view, there is no good solution.'

Russian oil faces Western bans and a price cap that the Group of Seven democracies imposed on sales to other nations. The G7 could "make this tradeoff much harder for Putin" by lowering the price cap from \$60 to \$50, reducing Russia's oil earnings, Brooks said.

That "would put even more pressure on the ruble, it would put more pressure on Russia's central bank to raise interest rates, and it would make that tradeoff much harder," he said.

In the short term, the ruble's decline is "not a sign that Russia is about to run into a major financial crisis," says Chris Weafer, CEO and Russian economy analyst at consulting firm Macro Advisory Partners.

With no foreign investment in the currency, the Kremlin can influence the exchange rate simply by telling statecontrolled exporters when to sell foreign currency for rubles, Weafer said On top of that, prices for Russian oil have risen recently, shrinking the discounts it had to give customers in India and China.

Hiking interest rates to boost the ruble "throttles the private economy - or the part of the economy that is not related to the war and the defense industries so that enough resources are left over for the war to continue," said Janis Kluge, a Russian economy expert at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs in Berlin.

"It's a clear prioritization of the government of this war over the welfare of households," he said.

Longer term, Putin's choices will erode economic growth and put more long-term stress on the ruble, Kluge said. Without foreign investment needed to make complex goods, Russia will produce less of what it needs on its own and import more.

"And this will mean that going forward, Russian citizens will not be able to afford the same level, the same lifestyle as in past years," Kluge said. (AP)

It indicated that the expected number of applications, according to the natural increase until 2033, compared to previous years, housing applications will reach about 60,000, to be added to the list of expected housing applications until that time.

The sources stated that the solution to reducing the waiting list for housing applications will be to accelerate the implementation of projects, and to involve the private sector through the issuance of the Housing Cities Law and its entry into force, with the need to expedite the issuance of legislation for the real estate developer and real estate financing law.

The authority said that the obstacles that prevent meeting all citizens' requests for housing are providing the necessary budgets to implement projects and the availability of the necessary financing for construction loans and subsidies for citizens.

The PAHW added that the steps to implement housing projects for the next ten years have not begun, due to their not being included in the corporation's plan and the lack of the necessary budgets for them, explaining that the future projects are the cities of Sabriva, the expansion of South Saad Al-Abdullah, Nawaf Al-Ahmad, and Al-Khiran.

On the other hand, the head of the Al-Mutla'a Residents' Committee, Khaled Al-Anazi, revealed that the city of Al-Mutla'a will contribute to supporting housing care in the country, as about 100,000 people will live in the city during the next two years after the infrastructure is completed and citizens finish building housing units.

Al-Enezi added in a press statement that, despite the magnitude of the project, "the PAHW", through its contract with the Chinese company "Jizhouba Group", was able to complete the project in record time through the efforts made by the work teams to complete what was required of them within the specified time period.

#### 'Get emergency docus online if passport lost'

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 31: The Ministry of Interior, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has launched the service to issue an emergency travel document for Kuwaitis who lost their passports while outside the country through the Sahel application, reports Al-Jarida daily

The ministry explained in an official statement that this procedure is for citizens aged 16 years and above, provided the citizen who lost his or her passport has not been out of the country for more than six months.

The ministry said a citizen, who lost his passport, can log in to Sahel application, follow the procedures for obtaining an emergency travel document, print the document and use it to return to the country.

According to the ministry, once the emergency travel document is issued, the lost passport is canceled immediately in order to prevent other people from using it.

Al-Muwaizri



Al-Jomhour

to reduce the global population to one billion, and then instigate disputes between the peoples and governments.

marine birds is allowed even if they

He alleged some organizations are setting fire to farms to kill as many animals as possible in order to force the people to buy manufactured and industrialized foods. He stated that the next scenario is the promotion of a big lie about global warming. He added there have been attempts to control the people and invade their privacy by imposing the use of electronic identification cards and electronic banking.

MP Fayez Al-Jomhour forwarded queries to Minister of Justice and State Minister for Housing Affairs Faleh Eid Al-Raqabah about the Information spread through various media platforms on referring Minister of Commerce and Industry and State Minister for Youth Affairs Muhammad Othman Al-Aiban to the Public Prosecution due to accusations of illegal acquisitions and financial violations estimated at millions of Kuwaiti dinars for the company where he served as Board of Directors chairman prior to his ministerial appointment.

He asked if Al-Eiban has been investigated, if the prosecution informed the Council of Ministers about that issue, and if the prosecution officially requested for lifting the immunity of Al-Eiban in order to refer him for investigation.

Lastly, National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Sa'adoun sent a cable to Speaker of Parliament in Kyrgyzstan (Supreme Council) Nurlanbek Shakiev to greet him on the National Day of his country.

ing education as a means to achieve its objectives. The intention seems clear: alsarraf

by impeding our

education system, they gain greater control over our nation. A populace lacking education or possessing subpar educational quality is more susceptible to manipulation and the adoption of extremist ideologies.

Official statistics have recently highlighted alarming issues that signify grave afflictions within Kuwait's education system. The annual report published by the Directorate General of Social and Psychological Services at the Ministry of Education for the 2021/2022 academic year has revealed a range of concerning problems.

Among these are the staggering numbers of 28,000 students experiencing academic failure, 7,000 students being persistently absent, 20,000 students grappling with health concerns, 676 students facing psychiatric disorders, and 343 cases of cheating.

While the count of cheating cases might appear modest, it's crucial to note that these instances are limited to elementary schools alone. This factor is deeply unsettling and could potentially make Kuwait's elementary schools among the highest in the world when compared to the total number of schools. The normalization of cheating

from schools, 4 cases of gender identity issues, and 3 cases involving ideological disorders.

These alarming statistics appear even more perilous when factoring in that religious studies are included in the curriculum. This serves as a recurring indication that religion studies are distinct from ethical teachings, as the latter continues to deteriorate within schools alongside the increasing influence of religious factions.

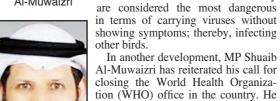
These groups are allowed a free presence in schools, while advocates of civil and liberal ideologies are targeted. This phenomenon permeates all schools, including private institutions, particularly in Farwaniya, Ahmadi, and Jahra, followed by Hawally, Kuwait City, and Mubarak Al Kabeer.

Perhaps the most unsettling aspect is the near parity in the number of academic failures between boys and girls (11,876 boys and 11,818 girls).

The report concludes with a set of recommendations, though my skepticism remains regarding their serious consideration by relevant institutions. I acknowledge that addressing this issue requires the cooperation of students and their parents, which is undoubtedly a challenging endeavor. Furthermore, I am aware that the actual situation might be even graver than the report suggests.

e-mail: a.alsarraf@alqabas.com.kw





## LOCAL

#### Al-Masayel Cooperative Society's marketplace inaugurated

MoSA keen to support coops that contribute to their development

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 31, (KUNA): Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Child Affairs, Sheikh Firas Saud Al-Malik Al-Sabah, reaffirmed his commitment on Wednesday to support and oversee cooperative societies in a manner that contributes to their growth. This affirmation was made during his presence at the inauguration of the Al-Masayel Cooperative Society's marketplace. He commended the remarkable dedication of the association's board of directors and all those who played a role in bringing this project to fruition

Sheikh Firas Al-Sabah expressed optimism for a brighter future for the Al-Masayel Association and other similar organizations, as they continue on the path of successful cooperation.

#### Commitment

In a press statement, Mubarak Al-Qahtani, the Chairman of the Purchasing Committee at the Al-Masayel Cooperative Society, emphasized their commitment to enhancing public services using the latest automated systems. He highlighted that the market has been designed with contemporary aesthetics, drawing inspiration from renowned international retail markets. The layout of goods and products has been thoughtfully arranged to ensure a visually pleasing display. He extended his congratulations to the local community on the opening of this marketplace, which will primarily serve them and neighboring areas like Al-Funaitees.

Furthermore, he added, "We anticipate that the attached mall will become a popular destination for residents from various other regions.'



Minister of Social Affairs during his attendance at the opening of Al-Masayel **Cooperative Society Market** 





#### KUNA photos

Top & above: The Minister of Social Affairs inspects the market of Al-Masayel Cooperative Society.

## **Kuwait households to spend** KD 3.2 billion on food by '27

Domestic food production relatively weak

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 31: The Fitch Solutions expects that household food spending in Kuwait will be dominated by meat, fish and dairy products, and expects that households in Kuwait will spend about 18% of their budgets on food by 2027, down slightly from 18.6% in 2007, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The daily quoting the agency pointed out that the high levels of income among families Kuwaiti food will support increased spending in other categories, however, spending on food will be supported by de-mand for imported food with higher prices, given the relative weakness of Kuwaiti domestic food produc-

The agency said in its report that these factors will lead to the growth of household spending in Kuwait on food by 4.6% annually between 2008 and 2027, which exceeds the average annual inflation in the country of 3% recently.

#### **Household spending**

Fitch predicted an increase in household spending in Kuwait on food from 1.5 billion dinars in 2008 to 3.2 billion dinars by 2027, noting that when dividing total spending on food, the average family in Kuwait will spend an average of 57% of its food budget on 3 categories until 2027, which are meat and poultry (32.6% of total food expenditure), fish (13.5% of total food expenditure), and dairy products (about 11% of total food expenditure).

Other basic items, according to the agency, will constitute the other 43% of household spending in Kuwait on food, and fresh and preserved fruits and vegetables will represent 9.6%, and bread, rice and cereals will represent 9.4%.

Fitch also said the household spending in Kuwait on meat and poultry will grow at an annual rate of 5.2% between 2007 and 2027, to rise from 451 million dinars

in 2007 to one billion dinars by 2027, pointing out that supporting growth in spending on meat and poultry will be achieved through relatively high levels of income in the country.

Fitch Solutions stated that fish will constitute one of the fastest growing food categories in Kuwait, with an annual average of 6.2% between 2012 and 2027, and spending on fish will witness an increase in the share of household spending from 12% in 2007 to 13.5% by 2027, expecting total spending to reach on fish and seafood from 182 million dinars in 2012 to 427.3 million dinars in 2027.

The agency went on to say, that despite the coastal geographical location of Kuwait, which is supposed to support the fishing sector, the local production, which represents 30% of the market's supply, is not sufficient to meet the demand and added that support for food spending in Kuwait will increase through the increasing numbers of foreigners working in the country saying the number of the workforce in Kuwait increased by 63 thousand people, bringing the total workforce in the country to 2.9 million people.

The agency expects that sugar and its products will constitute the fastest growing category of spending on food in Kuwait, as consumer spending on sugar and its products will grow at a rate of 6.5% annually until 2027, to increase spending on it from 44.3 million dinars in 2012 to 113.2 million dinars by 2027

Fitch explained that the fluctuation of prices of imported sugar will pose risks to the growth of household spending in Kuwait in the future. Noting that the price of a kilo of sugar imported to Kuwait amounted to 0.8 dollars, and reached 1.5 dollars in 2021, after rising to 2.5 dollars in 2015, and declining again in 2018 to 0.9 dollars.

The agency said that labor shortages and environmental pollution pose risks to the fish sector in Kuwait, leading to pressure on fish and seafood prices. Poor production will increase the demand for imported fish. Turkey, Iran, India and Pakistan are major markets for fresh fish in Kuwait.





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The Kuwaiti Office for Charitable Projects in Cairo.



KUN photos

Kuwait Mosque is part of the project plan of the Kuwaiti office in Cairo

#### Kuwait, Egypt continue to strengthen ties

## Kuwait Office for Charity Projects in Cairo... 36 yrs of humanitarian work

CAIRO, Aug 31, (KUNA): Kuwait Office for Charity Projects in Cairo continued to strengthen the bilateral relations between Kuwait and Egypt over the course of 36 years in the fields of charitable and humanitarian work.

Kuwait has always been a pioneer in unlimited humanitarian work to alleviate the suffering of countries in need without regard to political or ideological matters, with

the Gulf country's annual celebration of the anniversary of naming the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah humanitarian leader. In an interview

with KUNA, Acting

Director of Kuwait's Office for Charity Projects in Cairo, Al-Mutairi Sarah expressed her appre-

ciation of Kuwait's honorable stances with suffering countries over the decades.

She said that the office has carried out nearly 430,000 projects, since 1987 until the first half of 2023, including construction projects, social and health assistance, and food baskets in all parts of Egypt.

She indicated that the office's main projects include building hospitals and medical centers, reconstructing old mosques, and turning them into integrated Islamic complexes in harmony with the Egyptian waqf (endowments) plans.



She added that the office also provides urgent relief on behalf of the Kuwaiti people during times of disasters, in addition to orphans and students' sponsorship, social and medical assistance, and seasonal projects. Al-Mutairi stated the office also aims to

assist Kuwaitis living in Egypt and other people who require assistance, in coordination with the Kuwaiti embassy.

#### Cooperation

She praised the cooperation and coordination between Kuwait and Egypt, and their keenness in facilitating the arrival of aid and personnel to implement projects, noting that this cooperation takes place in more than

one Egyptian ministry. Member of the Islamic Research Academy, and former Al-Azhar Deputy Dr. Abbas Shouman, said in a statement to KUNA that Kuwaiti Zakat (alms) House is a pioneer in the fields of charity and helping people in need.

Shouman praised Kuwait's role, which is not limited to providing financial support but through sustainable projects not consumed by spending, making their benefit invaluable.

He added that Kuwait's Office for Charity Projects in Cairo is one of the most active charitable offices in the Islamic world, as it includes many activities such as sponsoring scholars in Al-Azhar and construction of many mosques.

Kuwait's Office for Charity Projects was established in 1987 under the name "Kuwait Zakat House" an independent government body, and it officially opened in December 1992

## LOCAL

# diwaniya 🕝 جيوانية

## A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## 'Business environment competitive in Kuwait'

"DESPITE the numerous press statements issued by past and present governments in support of cultivating a favorable business environment for both small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and significant developmental initiatives, the reality paints a different picture. The current state of affairs remains uninviting for foreign investors, arduous for Kuwaiti entrepreneurs and business proprietors, and challenging for the private sector. Countless commercial licenses have been suspended, making their acquisition an intricate endeavor," columnist Fawaz Al-Hamad wrote for Al-Qabas daily.

"Efforts to encourage the growth of SMEs and substantial projects have been stifled by various factors. The National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises Development ceased financing small

ventures in the wake of the pandemic.

"Furthermore, the Kuwait Industrial Bank does not allocate industrial lands anymore; instead, it only finances select industrial projects.

"Entrepreneurs are compelled to rent industrial land, costing no less than 5,000 dinars per month, to establish their ventures. The inability to secure land hinders project continuity and often results in cancellations.

"The Public Authority for Industry no longer distributes industrial plots, only oversees the existing ones. This cessation, dating back over two

Al-Hamad

decades, has brought the industrial sector to a standstill. Crucial industries, such as pharmaceutical, petrochemical, and food, are hampered by the lack of land availability.

"Recreational spaces face similar constraints. All spaces designated for recreational activities have been monopolized by the Tourism Projects Company along the Arabian Gulf Street. Without intermediaries, securing an investment space for children's entertainment or other recreational activities from tourism projects is exceedingly challenging.

"Alternately, obtaining such spaces in commercial complexes drives rental costs beyond reason. Notably, globally, the price of rental space for entertainment activities rarely surpasses two dollars per square meter.

"Adding to the obstacles, the current Build-Operate-Transfer (B.O.T.) Law No. 7 of 2008 deters foreign investors and the private sector while failing to incentivize investment within Kuwait.

"The challenge of attracting specialized foreign professionals is exacerbated by restrictions on the entry of workers from specific nationalities. The issuance of temporary commercial visas has also been curtailed due to pre- and post-pandemic regulations.

"Before Kuwait can aspire to become a hub for commerce and finance, the government must prioritize the revision of existing laws. Streamlining business procedures, simplifying the issuance of commercial licenses, dismantling the monopoly on certain licenses, facilitating foreign workers' entry, providing solutions for industrial land allocation, offering financing for SMEs, simplifying foreign investor entry processes, and amending the B.O.T. Law should be at the forefront of these reform efforts.'

#### Also:

"Following the passing of the late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem, a comprehensive long-term initiative has shaped discussions, focusing on dismantling the established framework he crafted in substance while maintaining its façade," columnist Nasser Al-Abdali wrote for Al-Qabas daily.

"This approach avoids riling the existing forces and allows the government to wield it when deemed appropriate. This project has indeed succeeded, but its efficacy hinges on prevailing circumstances. If the public sentiment remains feeble, as is currently observed, the project exploits this weakness. Conversely, if public sentiment re-surges strongly, its endeavors are postponed accordingly. "The reintroduction of the "old" new media regulation law is a compo-

nent of this initiative. This law has been tabled on numerous occasions in varying forms. The government appears to have discerned that the timing is opportune for its revival.

If not fully embraced, the government anticipates securing partial approval while deferring other aspects for a more suitable juncture. Such opportunities arise repeatedly, particularly since public sentiment seems to have conveyed a message in the recent elections, inadvertently signal-"Regrettably, the current Bu Fahd Council and its leadership, aside

from a few members, seem unprepared to challenge this law. Notwithstanding, a handful of honorable voices within Parliament, including MPs Marzouq Al-Ghanim, Muhalhal Al-Mudhaf, Ahmed Lari, and Hani Shams, have raised concerns.

"It would not be astonishing if some Bu Fahd representatives in Parliament express their opposition. The government, however, does not seek to endorse this law in its existing configuration, as prior negotiations have defined a cap that the law must not surpass. This course is unlikely to be in the citizens' best interest.

"Curiously, amidst this context, the absence of civil society's voice is notable. From newspapers to public welfare organizations and unions, these institutions historically played a pivotal role in confronting any efforts to erode citizens' rights as enshrined in the Constitution since its establishment in 1962

"However, a significant dearth of activity is evident, save for the progressive movement, which appears to be the sole entity still advocating opposition. Other political forces and institutions, some of which previously made noise on various occasions, seem dormant. Have these forces surrendered or been compromised? Alternatively, could the proposed law, in its current iteration, have negligible impact on citizens' freedoms? The silence of these once-vocal entities remains puzzling."

#### 

"Thanks to the wise leadership of His Majesty King Salman bin Ab-dulaziz and the Crown Prince, His Royal Highness Prince Muhammad bin Salman, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia opened the way for establishing friendly relations with neighboring countries, the latest of which was with Iran," columnist Abdulmohsen Al-Hussaini wrote for Al-Anba daily.

"Last week, Saudi Arabia received the Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister. Before that, it embarked on a fraternal relationship with Iraq. Several meetings took place between Saudi and Iraqi officials, and such contacts succeeded in removing all outstanding differences between the two brotherly countries. "Also, Saudi Arabia has good and intimate relations with other Gulf

Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Through this political move, it is keen on establishing good direct relations, commercial and economic cooperation, and common markets with neighboring countries.

"Kuwait's relations with Iran still need more diplomatic work to solve the Durra oilfield problem and the border disputes. Kuwait has the ability to start deepening bilateral relations with neighboring countries. Although Kuwait is a small country, it has the capability to protect its interests.

"At this point, I would like to remind you that Kuwait passed through the ordeal of the Iraqi occupation. With its political ability, it succeeded in convincing the world about its just cause.

"What did Kuwait achieve in resisting the occupation? I want to make it clear that this comes from its political ability to form and maintain good relations with other countries. This is in addition to its important and remarkable role in the humanitarian field. The Kuwaiti contributions are a testimony in several areas through the implementation of many development projects in various countries. It also provides aid to many poor countries around the world.

"We hope that the Kuwaiti foreign policy will continue consolidating what was established during the era of HH the late Amirs Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad and Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, may God have mercy on them. In this manner, other countries will continue to respect Kuwait's position in the international community."

- Compiled by Mai Elsoukary

## HH Amir congratulates Kyrgyzstan, Trinidad and Tobago on nat'l days

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 31, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ah-mad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, on Thursday, sent a congratulatory cable to Kyrgyzstan President Sadyr Japarov, on the occasion of his country's National Day, wishing Kyrgyz president health and wellness, and his people progress and prosperity.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also sent a congratulatory cable to President Sadyr Japarov, on the occasion of his country's National Day.

Also, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a congratulatory cable to President Sadyr Japarov, on the occasion of his country's National Day.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad sent Thursday a congratulatory cable to President of Trinidad and Tobago Christine Kangaloo, on the occasion of her country's National Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished the president good health, and progress and prosperity for her country and people.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad sent a congratulatory cable to President Christine Kangaloo, on the occasion of her country's National Day.

Also, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf sent a congratulatory cable to President Christine Kangaloo, on occasion of her country's National Day.

### PAM transfers KD50 labor subsidy to bank

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 31: The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) has confirmed the transfer of the KD50 labor subsidy to the bank accounts of citizens working in the private sector, reports Al-Qabas daily.

## CONDOLENCES

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#### Mol unit follows up developments on video on fights



KU: The 'we make a smile' medical campaign examined and treated more than 900 humanitarian cases in Nepal

#### **Over 900 poor people aided**

## Kuwaiti dentistry students visit remote Nepal villages

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 31, (KUNA): Kuwaiti students have carried out a humanitarian mission in remote villages in Nepal, aiding more than 900 people in need.

Kuwait University, in a statement on Thursday, said the medical campaign was organized by the society of KU dentistry students, themed, "we make a smile" -- in collaboration with Mercy and Mission organization.

Dr. Rashed Al-Azmi, the acting rector of the dentistry faculty, said in a press release on Thursday that the Kuwaiti students examined and treated these cases in just three days, noting that the help included surgeries, teeth picking, other dentistry treatments, conducting blood tests to examine blood pressure and diabetes.

The humanitarian trip was successful for the students relieved the poor locals. Moreover, they had given medical advice, distributed toys and gifts to children in these remote villages.

The 17-member student team was accompanied by Dr. Fawaz Al-Zuabi, the acting rector assistant, and Dr. Kawthar Ali, an assistant professor.

#### KD 740.969m set aside for compensation

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 31: The Ministry of Electricity and Water has earmarked KD 740.969 million for the compensation of its employees for fiscal 2023/2024 - an increase of KD142.043 million or 24 percent compared to the amount allocated for this item in the last fiscal year – KD 598.926 million, reports Al-Rai daily quoting sources.

Sources revealed the workers compensation item in the budget of the ministry or any government agency includes salaries, allowances, incentive and bonuses; in addition to appointments during the budget preparation months through the Civil Service Commission (CSČ), which is responsible for organizing appointments in government agencies according to the latter's actual manpower needs.

In another context, sources indicated that the Ministry of Finance specified KD 719 million as its estimated revenues for the current fiscal year, which is KD163 million or 29 percent higher than the previous year's estimate of KD 555.693 million. Sources revealed these revenues include water and electricity bills, connection of electricity to new homes and other fees.

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 31: As part of its investigations into the case of a bill fraud network in which 7 people are arrested, the Public Prosecution has summoned technicians from the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy to explain the mechanism for issuing electricity bills to consumers, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The sources told the daily that customer service systems, the mechanism for issuing invoices, how to calculate consumer debt, and the mechanism used to access and deal with those systems are downloaded on the laptops and the technicians explained in detail that mechanism how manipulators access it and issue invoices to those with big debts and how they drop them.

He added that the investigations led to the identification of some of those involved in the tampering, pointing to two real estate dealers, one of whom is said to be outside the country, noting that Al-Jarida had pointed out a few days ago that a travel ban had been issued against another who is proven to be involved in tampering with invoices and withholding large sums of money from his real estate.

About a month ago, detectives arrested 7 people accused of tampering with electricity bills, and they were sent to prison to complete investigations into this file.

#### 

Follow-up on fights video: The Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate Research and Investigation Unit, which is under the Criminal Investigation General Department in the Interior Ministry, is closely following up developments regarding the video uploaded on social media; showing some Egyptians engaged in a fistfight inside a commercial establishment in Qurain, reports Al-Qabas daily.

A security source told the daily that the instruction to the securitymen is clear - take all the necessary measures against anyone who violates the law and instigates chaos.

The source confirmed that all those involved in the fight have been identified and legal action will be taken against them soon. He added the results of preliminary investigations revealed that 10 Egyptians were involved in the fight and the action plan is to deport them.

2- Send "Start" WhatsApp message to the number you saved.

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What's On

#### **The Conversation**

#### 'Longing for something seems to shrink its duration in mind's eye'

## Why vacations feel like they're over before they even start

The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.

When a vacation approaches, do you ever get the feeling that it's almost over before it starts?

If so, you're not alone.

In studies Gabriela Tonietto, Sam Maglio, Eric VanEpps and I conducted, we found that about half of the people we surveyed indicated that their upcoming weekend trip felt like it would end as soon as it started.

This feeling can have a ripple effect. It can change the way trips are planned - you might, for example, be less likely to schedule extra activities. At the same time, you might be more likely to splurge on an expensive dinner because you want to make the best of the little time you think you have.

Where does this tendency come from? And can it be avoided?

When people look forward to something, they usually want it to happen as soon as possible and last as long as possible.

We first explored the effect of this attitude in the context of Thanksgiving. We chose Thanksgiving because almost everyone in the US celebrates it, but not everyone looks forward to it. Some people love the annual family get-together. Others - whether it's the stress of cooking, the tedium of cleaning or the anxiety of dealing with family drama - dread it.

So on the Monday before Thanksgiving in 2019, we surveyed 510 people online and asked them to tell us whether they were looking forward to the holiday. Then we asked them how far away it seemed, and how long they felt it would last. We

#### By Selin Malkoc

The Ohio State University

had them move a 100-point slider - 0 meaning very short and 100 meaning very long - to a location that reflected their feelings.

As we suspected, the more participants looked forward to their Thanksgiving festivities, the farther away it seemed and shorter it felt. Ironically, longing for something seems to shrink its duration in the mind's eye.

Most people believe the idiom "time flies when you're having fun," and research has, indeed, shown that when time seems to pass by quickly, people assume the task must have been engaging and enjoyable.

We reasoned that people might be over-applying their assumption about the relationship between time and fun when judging the duration of events yet to happen.

#### Study

As a result, people tend to reflexively assume that fun events - like vacations - will go by really quickly. Meanwhile, pining for something can make the time leading up to the event seem to drag. The combination of its beginning pushed farther away in their minds - with its end pulled closer - resulted in our participants' anticipating that something they looked forward would feel as if it had almost no duration at all.

In another study, we asked participants to imagine going on a weekend trip that they either expected to be fun or terrible. We then asked them how far away the start and end of this trip felt like using a similar 0 to 100 scale. 46% of participants evaluated the positive weekend as feeling like it had no duration at all: They marked the beginning and the end of the vacation virtually at the same location when using the slider scale.

Our goal was to show how these two judgments of an event - the fact that it simultaneously seems farther away and is assumed to last for less time - can nearly eliminate the event's duration in the mind's eye.

We reasoned that if we didn't explicitly highlight these two separate pieces - and instead directly asked them about the duration of the event - a smaller portion of people would indicate virtually no duration for something they looked forward to.

We tested this theory in another study, in which we told participants that they would watch two five-minute-long videos back-to-back. We described the second video as either humorous or boring, and then asked them how long they thought each video would feel like it lasted.

We found that the participants predicted that the funny video would still feel shorter and was farther away than the boring one. But we also found that participants believed it would last a bit longer than the responses we received in the earlier studies.

This finding gives us a way to overcome this biased perception: focus on the actual duration. Because in this study, participants directly reported how long the funny video would last - and not the perceived distance of its beginning and its end - they were far less likely to assume it would be over just as it started.

While it sounds trivial and obvious, we often rely on our subjective feelings not objective measures of time - when deciding how long a period of time will feel and how to best use it.

So when looking forward to much-anticipated events like vacations, it's important to remind yourself just how many days it will last.

You'll get more out of the experience - and, hopefully, put yourself in a better position to take advantage of the time you do have. (AP)

#### **The Conversation**

#### 'Wrinkled skin adds grip'

# Why do fingers, toes get wrinkly in water?

#### **By Guy German**

Binghamton University, State University of New York

The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commen-

tary from academic experts.

Curious Kids is a series for children of all ages. If you have a question you'd like an expert to answer, send it to curiouskidsus@theconversation. com.

Why do fingers and toes get wrinkly and change color after a dip in a pool or a bath? - Raymond Y., age 12, Bothell, Washington

Skin is an awesome and weird organ. As the body's biggest organ, it does a lot to look after you, protecting you from the outside world of sunlight, harsh come into contact with water for more than a few minutes, the sweat ducts in your skin open, allowing water to flow into the skin tissue. This added water decreases the proportion of salt inside the skin. Nerve fibers send a message about lower salt levels to your brain, and the autonomic nervous system responds by constricting the blood vessels. The narrowing of the blood

The narrowing of the blood vessels causes the overall volume of skin to reduce, puckering the skin into these distinct wrinkle patterns. It's like how a dried-out grape becomes a wrinkled raisin - it's lost more volume than surface area.

This constriction of blood essels also causes the skin





vere cold. And it does all this while keeping water inside your body and enabling the sense of touch.

I'm a biomedical engineer. My research team and I try to better understand the mechanics and function of soft biological tissues.

#### Absorbs

We know skin wrinkles as you get older or when you pinch it between two fingers. But it's been somewhat of a mystery why skin gets wrinkly and even sometimes changes color after you take a leisurely bath or spend too long in the swimming pool.

Often people assume that these wrinkles form because the skin absorbs water, which makes it swell up and buckle. To be honest, I did too for a long time.

But researchers back in the 1930s discovered that in people with nerve damage in their fingers, the post-bath wrinkles didn't form. Wrinkly fingers can't just be due to water absorption then, or this would be a universal phenomenon, no matter how well your nerves are or aren't working.

So, if it isn't swelling due to water, then what is behind pruny fingers and toes after a long swim? Scientists have recently discovered what they think is the answer.

To explain what is happening, first you need to know a bit about the autonomic nervous system - the involuntary part of how your body works. Functions like breathing, blinking, your heart pumping or your pupils constricting in the sun all happen without your needing to consciously control them, thanks to the autonomic nervous system.

It also automatically controls the expansion and contraction of your blood vessels. Typically, temperature, medications or what you eat or drink can cause your blood vessels to expand or contract. Think of how your skin may flush of its own accord when you go out into a hot day, exercise or even blush.

This contraction of your blood vessels is also what causes the skin to wrinkle after a lengthy swim.

When your hands and feet but we will do our best. (ÅP)

to become paler - it's the opposite of what happens when your skin gets redder when you get into a really hot bath, due to your blood vessels dilating. The color change is a little more obvious in people with lighter complexions.

With nerve damage, this constriction doesn't occur. The blood vessels never get a message to narrow, so the wrinkles never happen even if you stay in the bath for a really long time.

But does this skin wrinklingwhen-wet serve any purpose?

Researchers have found that wrinkled skin has added grip underwater in comparison to unwrinkled skin. Better grip lets you grasp objects more firmly. It makes walking along an underwater surface easier, with less likelihood of slipping. I think this is a fantastic feature to have evolved over time.

#### Function

My research team and I have performed studies to look at changes in skin structure and function with prolonged immersion in water, but not to study wrinkles. We're interested in skin analyses that can be done to help forensic investigators after a crime or disaster. We also want to learn more about immersion foot syndromes - skin injuries caused by working in wet environments for long periods. They tend to affect military personal, or farmers whose crops grow in flooded fields, such as rice paddies.

Prolonged immersion in water makes skin more likely to break, but this weakening can take weeks to occur. Just don't stay in the swimming pool too long and your pruny digits will go back to normal once you've dried off.

Hello, curious kids! Do you have a question you'd like an expert to answer? Ask an adult to send your question to CuriousKidsUS@theconversation.com. Please tell us your name, age and the city where you live.

And since curiosity has no age limit - adults, let us know what you're wondering, too. We won't be able to answer every question, but we will do our best. (AP)

Group photos from the event.



Philippine Ambassador H.E. Jose A. Cabrera III addresses audience



Photos by Erwin Rommel Teope Philippine Embassy Vice Consul Josel N. Mostajo (center) leads the induction of officers

#### Philippine Ambassador Cabrera graces event

## **UAP Kuwait celebrates 8th Founding Anniversary**

#### By Marlon Aquino Malinao Arab Times Staff

TV Aug 21: The United /

KUWAIT CITY, Aug 31: The United Architects of the Philippines (UAP) - Kuwait Chapter 139 held its 1st General Membership Meeting, Induction of New Set of Officers, and 8th Founding Anniversary celebration on Aug 25, 2023, at City Tower Hotel in Sharq, Kuwait City.

The event marked a significant milestone for the organization, as it recognized the achievements of the past year and welcomed a new leadership team. The highlight of the event was the presence of esteemed guest speaker, H. E. Jose A. Cabrera III, the Philippine Ambassador to the State of Kuwait, who graced the occasion with his insights and perspectives.

The event commenced with a sense of unity as members assembled for registration and camaraderie. The program started with invocations and the rendition of both the Kuwaiti and Philippine national anthems, followed by the UAP March and the recitation of the Architect's Credo.

The opening remarks were delivered by Ar. Christopher Martinez, the Chapter VP - Operations, who extended a heartfelt welcome to all attendees. Subsequently, the acknowledgment of distinguished guests and chapter members was carried out by Ar. Seraida M. Baiddin, the Chapter Secretary.

The event's distinguished guest, H. E. Jose A. Cabrera III, the Philippine Ambassador to Kuwait, was introduced by Vice Consul Josel N. Mostajo, representing the Philippine Embassy in Kuwait. Ambassador Cabrera's presence added a layer of prestige to the event, highlighting the strong ties between the architectural community and diplomatic circles.

#### Duties

A pivotal moment of the gathering was the induction of the new chapter officers. Ar. Christopher P. Sanan, Immediate Chapter Past President, proudly presented the new officers, and President Hernando G. Advento, UAP Area A Vice President, instilled a sense of responsibility by charging them with their duties. Vice Consul



A photo from the induction of officers ceremony.

Josel N. Mostajo conducted the induction rites, symbolizing the official assumption of their roles.

As a tribute to the chapter's progress, Ar. Rachel Joy S. Barela, the Chapter Past President, acknowledged the outgoing officers, while Ar. Christopher P. Sanan, the Immediate Chapter Past President, delivered a poignant valedictory address. The ceremonial act of passing on the gavel took place with Ar. Geraldin Garcia-Suede, UAP A6 District Director, signifying the transition of leadership.

In his inaugural address, År. Wilher John M. Bassig, the newly inducted Chapter President, shared his vision for the organization and articulated the goals for his tenure, emphasizing unity and progress.

The festivities continued with the recognition of new passers and the introduction of the 8th Founding Anniversary celebration. The event concluded on a celebratory note with wine toasting, cake cutting, pictorial sessions, award presentations, and raffle draws.

Closing remarks and announcements were expertly managed by Ar. Jannette B. Cruz, the Chapter VP - Programs, ensuring the event concluded with a sense of fulfillment and inspiration.

The UAP Kuwait Chapter's 8th Founding Anniversary and Officers Induction event not only celebrated the organization's achievements but also showcased the dedication and commitment of architects to their profession and community. The event served as a platform to reinforce the bonds among members and set a positive trajectory for the coming year.



#### 'Warba' announces winners of weekly draw

Warba Bank - the best bank in corporate banking services and investment banking services in Kuwait - announced the winners of the Sunbula weekly draws. Warba Bank will continue to hold draws for ten weekly winners for Al Sunbula account, in the presence of a representative of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Warba Bank employees.

As for the lucky clients of the Sunbula weekly draw, each of the 10 lucky winners received KD 1,000, and the winners are: Ibrahim Saad Eid Al-Ghareeb, Hoda

#### Market Movements 31-08-2023

			Change	Closing pts				Change	Closing pts
UAE	-	DFM	+0.39	4,082.87	PAKISTAN	-	KSE 100	-2.40	45,081.28
JAPAN	-	Nikkei	+0.88	32,619.34	PHILIPPINES	-	PSEi	-1.91	6,175.25
EGYPT	-	EGX 30	+0.30	18,873.82	SAUDI	-	Tadawul	-0.72	11,491.20

Farhan Salal Al-Anezi, Khaled Abdullah Shbikan Azeiran, Saleh Sanhat Ardini Al-Otaibi, Mubarak Abdullah Al-Ajmi, Ahmed Hani Khalil Al-Hamar, Jarrah Lafi Hlees Al-Husseini, Abdullah Adis Al-Husseini, Hammoud Saad Abdul Aziz Al-Mir, and Majed Awaid Saleh Al-Shalahi. The Sunbula account is the ideal choice

for all those wishing to save money and achieve appropriate financial returns on their balances at the same time, in addition to the opportunity to win cash prizes throughout the year.

#### US jobless claims inch back down

U.S. applications for unemployment benefits fell slightly last week as companies held on to employees in an economy that has largely withstood rapidly rising interest rates, intended to cool hiring and spending, for more than a year. The number of Ameri-cans applying for jobless benefits last fell week by 4,000, to 228,000 the week ending August 26, the Labor Department reported Thursday. The four-week moving average of claims, which evens out some of the weekly volatility, rose by 250 to 237,500. Jobless claim applications are seen as representative of the number of layoffs in

Business

a given week. The Federal Reserve, in its now year-and-a-half battle against inflation, the raised interest rates 11 times to 5.4%, the

highest level in 22 years. Part of the Fed's intent was to cool the job market and bring down wages, which many economists believe suppresses price growth. Though some measures of inflation have come down significantly - from as much as 9% down closer to 3% - since the Fed starting raising interest rates, the job market has held up better than many anticipated. (AP)

## Latest sign of slowing price increases

## Fed's preferred inflation gauge shows a modest rise

WASHINGTON, Aug 31, (AP): An inflation gauge closely tracked by the Federal Reserve remained low last month, adding to signs of cooling price increases and raising the likelihood that the Fed will leave interest rates unchanged when it next meets in late September.

Thursday's report from the Commerce Department showed that prices rose just 0.2% from June to July, the third straight modest increase. Compared with a year earlier, prices rose 3.3% in July, up from a 3% annual increase in June. The yearover-year figure, though, is down sharply from the 7% peak it reached a year ago, though still above the Fed's 2% inflation target. It rose partly because of much smaller price increases a year ago.

Among individual items, the cost of groceries rose just 0.2% from June to July, though they're up 3.5% over the past year. Gas prices increased 0.3% in July but are still 22.3% lower than they were a year earlier. Among autos, new-car prices edged down 0.1%; they're still up 3.6% from July

of last year. Used car prices fell 1.4% from June to July and are down 5.5% compared with 12 months earlier.

The latest data follows other recent reports that suggest the economy and the job

market may be slowing enough to cool inflation pressures. The number of advertised job openings, for example, tumbled in July, and fewer Americans are quitting their jobs to seek better opportunities. Both trends ease the pressure on companies to raise pay to find and keep workers - a move that tends to perpetuate inflation as employers raise prices to offset their higher labor costs.

Excluding volatile food and energy prices, "core" inflation ticked up just 0.2% from June to July, the same as from May to June. Compared with a year earlier, core prices rose 4.2%, up slightly from 4.1% the previous month. The Fed's policymakers closely monitor core prices as a telltale signal of where inflation might be headed.

"It is becoming harder to dismiss the improvement in the inflation numbers as mere noise," said Ian Shepherdson, chief economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics. Annualized core inflation in the past three months, compared with the previous three months, increased at the slowest pace since March 2021, Shepherdson said.

Some economists noted that the increase in year-over-year inflation rates underscored Fed Chair Jerome Powell's message in a high-profile speech last week at an annual conference of central bankers in Jackson Hole, Wyoming: That inflation remained too high and the central bank had to remain vigilant. Still, policymakers

typically pay closer attention to monthly and quarterly inflation data than to yearly figures, which can be lagging indicators.

The inflation gauge that was issued Thursday, called the personal consumption expenditures price index, is separate from the better-known consumer price index. Earlier this month, the government reported that the CPI rose 3.2% in July from a year earlier, down from a peak of 9.1% in June 2022.

Thursday's report also showed that Americans spent more in July, with consumer spending rising a healthy 0.8% from June to July, up from a 0.5% gain from May to June. The increase suggests that the U.S. economy is growing at a solid pace in the current July-September quarter.

Though consumer spending drives most of the U.S. economy, the Fed is seeking to slow it down as a way to restrain inflation. Too fast an acceleration of spending could lead the central bank to raise rates even further. At the same time, the Fed is trying to avoid slowing the economy so much as to cause a deep recession.

Powell referred to the tricky dynamics surrounding the economy and inflation in his Jackson Hole speech. He stressed that the Fed would "proceed carefully" as it considers its next moves.

# Wall St wavers on its way to a 'loss' in Aug

Asian mkts lower after Japanese factory activity and China services weaken

NEW YORK, Aug 31, (AP): Stocks turned mixed in afternoon trading on Wall Street Thursday, on their way to closing out what has been a mostly miserable August.

The S&P 500 gave up an early gain and fell 0.1%. The benchmark index is on track for its first monthly loss since February, though gains earlier this week helped chip away at the severity of the decline. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 63 points, or 0.2%, to 34,821 as of 12:51 p.m. Eastern. The Nasdaq rose 0.1% Technology and communications stocks notched some of the biggest gains. Software company Salesforce jumped 3.3% after raising its profit forecast for the year. Cloud-based security company CrowdStrike rose 8.8% after reporting strong financial results. Dollar General was among several retailers slipping after reporting weak earnings and forecasts. It slumped 12.9% after cutting its profit forecast for the year. The government reported that a measure of inflation closely tracked by the Federal Reserve remained low in July. The latest update for personal consumption and expenditures, or the PCE report, is the latest sign that price increases are cooling. Investors are hoping the Fed may be close to done raising interest rates. The central bank has raised its main interest rate aggressively since 2022 to the highest level since 2001. The goal has been to rein inflation back to the Fed's target of 2%. PCE measured 3.3% in July, matching economists expectations. That's down from 7% a year ago. The latest inflation data follows updates on jobs and consumer confidence this week that also supports hopes for the Fed to pause interest rate hikes. The central bank held rates steady at its last meeting and is expected to do the same in September. Investors are expecting rates to hold steady for the remainder of



Wall Street's benchmark S&P 500 index rose 0.4% on Wednesday after the U.S. government cut its estimate of economic growth for the second quarter to a still-robust level.

Traders hope that and this week's updates on hiring and consumer inflation will convince the Federal Reserve prices are under control and no more interest rate hikes are needed.

Official data showed Japanese factory activity shrank by  $2^{\circ}$ % from the previous month in July. A survey of Chinese service industries showed activity weakened in July but still was expanding.

#### Cbank keeps an open mind on rates

Europe's inflation held steady in Aug

FRANKFURT, Germany, Aug 31, (AP): Annual inflation held steady in Europe in August as food prices raced ahead of falling fuel costs, but there was no clarity about whether the European Central Bank will pause its record series of interest rate ĥikes.

The consumer price index for the 20 countries that use the euro currency was unchanged at 5.3% from the July reading, supported by food, alcohol and tobacco prices that increased a painful 9.8% since last August, according to official figures Thursday from EU statistics agency Eurostat.

Another key inflation number so-called core inflation that leaves out volatile fuel and food - also eased in August, falling to 5.3% from 5.5%. That figure will be a key consideration for the ECB in deciding whether interest rates need to go higher or can remain unchanged while bank officials assess the impact of higher rates on growth.

Fuel prices fell 3.3% amid flat global oil prices and diminished summer demand for heating fuel.

decisively towards a hike or a hold," said Jack Allen-Reynolds, deputy chief eurozone economist at Capital Economics.

Inflation is expected to resume its decline in coming weeks, but with unemployment at records lows and wage growth strong in the laborintensive services sector, "we think that it will be a long time before services inflation falls to a level consistent with the ECB hitting its inflation target."

Inflation has fallen to lower levels in the U.S. at 3.2%, but U.S. Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell has said more rate increases may be needed to return inflation to 2%. The Fed next meets on Sept. 19-20.

In Europe, recent growth indicators have been weak, while inflation has been steadily falling. Market indicators have suggested that participants are not convinced the ECB will hike again at the September meeting.

The eurozone economy stagnated with zero growth at the start of 2023 and saw a modest rebound in the second quarter, growing 0.3% over the quarter before. In August, the European Commission's economic sentiment indicator combining measures of business and consumer confidence fell to its lowest reading in 10 years excluding the pandemic, while purchasing managers' surveys indicate activity is slowing.

A visitor looks at an electronic stock board at Tokyo Stock Exchange, Friday, Aug. 18, 2023 in Tokyo, Japan. Asian stock markets were mostly low-er Thursday, Aug. 31, after Japanese factory activity and Chinese service industry growth weakened. (AP)

2023, according to CME's FedWatch complish taming interest rates withtool

The Fed has maintained that it is ready to keep raising interest rates if it has to, but will base its next moves on the latest economic data.

"The last hike they made potentially could be the last for the year," said Chris Zaccarelli, chief investment officer for Independent Advisor Alliance. "As long as inflation remains controlled and contained, I think the Fed is done raising interest rates.'

Bond yields edged lower. The yield on the 10-year Treasury slipped to 4.08% from 4.11% late Wednesday. The yield on the 2-year Treasury, which tracks expectations for the Fed, edged lower to 4.86% from 4.88% late Wednesday.

Wall Street has one more big economic update to look forward to this week. On Friday, the government will report employment data for August. The strong job market, along with consumer spending, has so far helped thwart a recession that analysts expected at some point in 2023. But, they also made the Fed's task of taming inflation more difficult by fueling wage and price increases. The Fed is hoping that it can ac-

out sending the economy into a recession. The likelihood of a recession, or at least a severe one, has seemingly been fading and in turn fueling confidence in the market in 2023, despite the recent August slump. Markets in Europe mostly fell.

Annual inflation there held steady in August as food prices raced ahead of falling fuel costs, but there was no clarity about whether the European Central Bank will pause its record series of interest rate hikes. Asian markets were mixed.

#### Europe

In early trading, the FTSE 100 in London gained less than 0.1% to 7,475.07. The CAC 40 in Paris rose 0.2% to 7,378.61 and the DAX in Frankfurt advanced 0.6% to 15,984.44.

#### Asia

Asian stock markets were mostly lower Thursday after Japanese factory activity and Chinese service industry growth weakened.

Shanghai, Hong Kong and Seoul declined. Tokyo gained. Oil prices edged lower.

"Things could be worse. But markets are not likely to take too much comfort from this set of data," said Rob Carnell of ING in a report.

The Shanghai Composite Index lost 0.6% to 3,119.06 while the Nikkei 225 in Tokyo advanced 1% to 32,669.98. The Hang Seng in Hong Kong declined 0.3% to 18,419.98.

The Kospi in Seoul was 0.4% lower at 2,550.40 and Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 gained 0.1% to 7,305.00.

India's Sensex opened down less than 0.1% at 65.071.31. New Zealand and Singapore advanced while Bangkok and Jakarta declined.

A monthly index of Chinese service industries declined to 51 from June's 51.2 on a 100-point scale on which numbers above 50 show activity growing. A separate manufacturing index improved to 49.7 but still showed activity contracting.

In energy markets, benchmark U.S. crude oil lost 1 cent to \$81.62 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It rose 47 cents on Wednesday to \$81.63. Brent crude, the price basis for international oil trading, shed 1 cent to \$85.23 per barrel in London. It gained 37 cents the previous session to \$85.86.

#### Currencies

The dollar declined to 145.97 yen from Wednesday's 146.20 yen. The euro edged down to \$1.0919 from

Electric vehicles in Dubai... Increasing trend towards sustainable environ

#### **By Salem Al-Methen**

DUBAI, Aug 31, (KUNA): In an effort to decrease carbon emissions and reduce pollution, the Emirate of Dubai in the UAE has witnessed an increased Electric Vehicles (EV) trend aimed at creating a more sustainable environment for future generations.

In recent years, Dubai has witnessed an increase in EVs in accordance with the EV Green Charger Initiative, which caused a rapid increase in users from 14 in 2015 to 11,000 until May of 2023.

The EV Green Charger Initiative is -- launched by the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA) -- to promote green transportation.

According to the DEWA, the

first public charging infrastructure for electric vehicles was developed in the region.

In 2015, the authority developed and installed 100 EV Green Chargers in highly frequented areas across the city, to encourage electric vehicle adoption in Dubai.

Dubai aims at achieving its green economy and sustainable development strategy to meet the city's carbon neutrality goals of 2050.

In Dubai, there are around 1,000 EV charging stations to encourage the use of environment-friendly transportation, an effort, which managed to reduce carbon emissions by about 237,7000 tons by April of 2023.

To view the impact of the initiative on the ground, KUNA met with several users and EV clients to see their views on the issue.

Omair Al-Sayed, a consumer, indicated that EVs used less energy than fuel-based cars, adding that maintenance was also reasonable

Fellow consumer Ghazi Faisal touted the use of EVs, saying that it was quieter than using regular vehicles, which in turn reduced noise pollution.

Lina Ahmad and Marhaf Mir, fellow EV enthusiasts, also commended the use of EVs in Dubai, noting that air quality had improved tremendously in Dubai.

Mir, on his part, indicated that EVs are the way of those who care about the environment mostly, saying that the expansion of the charger stations in the city was a positive step.

The UAE had a great interest in achieving the global 2050 climate neutrality initiative, announcing that 2023 would be the year for sustainability.

This announcement comes, as the UAE will be hosting later this year the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference or Conference of the Parties of the UN-FCCC COP28 Summit.

Electrical Vehicles were first invented in the 19th century but became more prominent in recent years with global estimates from the International Energy Agency (IEA) showing that 26 million EVs were in use in 2022.

European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde has said that the interest rate decision at the Sept. 14 policy meeting will depend on incoming data, a shift from a yearlong series of meetings where rate increases had been announced ahead of time. The ECB must juggle fighting inflation with higher rates against the impact of costlier credit for consumers and business-

Inflation has declined after hitting its peak in October at 10.6%, but the decrease has slowed in recent months and economists say the "last mile" toward returning inflation to the bank's 2% target may be the most difficult. One reason: unemployment remained at 6.4% in July, the lowest since the launch of the shared euro currency in 1999.

"We don't think these data will tip the balance of opinion at the  $EC\hat{B}$ 

A key weakness in the eurozone has been its largest economy, Germany, which the International Monetary Fund forecasts to be the only major economy to shrink this year, down 0.3%.

The ECB's benchmark deposit rate stands at 3.75%, up from minus 0.5% in July 2022. The rapid series of increases is the fastest since the introduction of the euro as the bank combats inflation unleashed by higher oil and gas pries due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and by the rebound from the pandemic.

## 122-yr US Steel reviewing **'numerous' buyout offers**

A fter receiving two buyout offers in the past month, U.S. Steel Tuesday that it is in the process of reviewing multiple offers for the storied company and symbol of American industrialization.

U.S. Steel rejected a \$7.3 billion buyout proposal from rival Cleveland-Cliffs two weeks ago, and that offer was followed by \$7.8 billion bid from the industrial conglomerate Esmark. Shares of the Pittsburgh steelmaker soared more than 30% on speculation that a deal was imminent.

In a letter to shareholders Tuesday, U.S. Steel said it had entered into confidentiality agreements with "numerous" third parties and was beginning to share due diligence information with potential buyers.

"Our number one obligation is to uphold our fiduciary duties," the company wrote in the letter. "This means that we are focused on the path forward for our Company that drives the most value for you - our stockholders."

Shares climbed another 2% Tuesday.

The proposal by Cleveland-Cliffs, first made on July 28, would create a company that would be among the 10 biggest steelmakers in the world and one of the top four outside of China, which dominates global steel production today. Cleveland-Cliffs CEO Lourenco Goncalves said a tieup between the two U.S. steelmakers would create "lower-cost, more innovative and stronger domestic supplier for our customers.<sup>3</sup>

Goncalves has said that he's ready to continue talks with 122-year-old U.S. Steel despite the rejection of its initial offer.

Soaring prices have helped fuel consolidation in the steel industry this decade. Steel prices more than quadrupled near the start of the pandemic to near \$2,000 per metric ton by the summer of 2021 as supply chains experienced gridlock, a symptom of surging demand for goods and the lack of anticipation of that demand.

Cleveland Cliffs acquired AK Steel in 2019 right before steel prices began to spike and within a year, it acquired ArcelorMittal USA in 2020 for \$1.4 billion. U.S. Steel bought Big River Steel the following year.

Prices have settled back to around \$800 per metric ton, but that remains at the top end of the spectrum for steel prices over the past six years.

U.S. Steel has been a symbol of industrialization since it was founded in 1901 by J.P. Morgan, Andrew Carnegie and others, and the domestic steel industry dominated globally before Japan, then China, became the preeminent steelmakers over the past 40 years. (AP)

## \$1.0923.

Oil

## **BUSINESS**

#### VP: UAE's non-oil foreign trade hits \$337 bln in H1 '23

Vice President, Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktum announced an increase in non-oil foreign trade by 14.4 percent reaching 1.293 trillion dirhams (USD 337 billion) in the first half of 2023, setting new records for the country.

The media office of the UAE government Wednesday quoted him as saying their non-oil foreign trade will exceed 2.5 trillion dirhams (USD 680 billion) this year, and they will achieve the target that they announced of 4 trillion dirhams (USD 1 trillion) in 2031. UAE will remain a major player in international trade to consolidate its position as one of the most important global centers, he mentioned.

The country's non-oil exports with the top 10 trading partners increased by 22 percent this year, and intra-regional trade with Turkey, for example, grew 87 percent in just one year, he added, indicating the effectiveness of UAE's balanced, proactive and positive foreign policies. Re-exports also witnessed a similar increase in H1 of 2023, recording 341 billion dirhams (USD 92 billion), up 9.9 percent, as imports increased by 17.5 percent to 693 billion dirhams (188 billion dollars), he pointed out. (KUNA) Austrian govt plans cap on rent increases

The government of Austria presented a series of measures Wednesday to counter the impact of inflation, including a three-year cap on rent increases for many apartments and a freeze on fees to use bighways

highways. The package foresees a 5% cap on annual rent increases in 2024-2026 even if inflation is higher than that. According to the government, the cap will prevent hikes of some 15% next year in some public housing.

ing. Vice Chancellor Werner Kogler said the limit would benefit 1.2 million housing contracts in the country of some 9 million people, the Austria Press Agency reported. Kogler's Green party said that number represents three-quarters of all rental contracts, according to the news agency. Austria's annual inflation rate stood at 7% in July.

The government's package also caps the cost of the sticker that cars must have to use Austria's highways at 96 euros (\$104) per year, rather than increasing it with inflation. The price for a "climate ticket" that allows the use of public transportation across the country will top out at 1,095 euros (\$1,192) per year. (AP)

## US commerce secretary warns China will be 'uninvestable' without action on raids, fines

#### Raimondo's comments add to pressure on Chinese leader

SHANGHAI, Aug 31, (AP): Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo on Wednesday said she warned Chinese leaders that U.S. businesses might stop investing in their country without prompt action to address complaints about worsening conditions due to raids on firms, unexplained fines and unpredictable official behavior.

Raimondo's comments add to pressure on Chinese leader Xi Jinping's government, which is trying to revive investor interest and reverse an economic slump. Business groups say confidence among foreign companies is at an all-time low. Official figures show foreign investment plunged in the latest quarter.

Raimondo visited Beijing as part of U.S. efforts to restore relations that plummeted to their lowest level in decades due to disputes about technology, security, Taiwan and other issues. She called her meetings with China's No. 2 leader, Premier Li Qiang, and other officials "very productive" but said she "didn't pull any punches" in conveying business complaints.

Raimondo said CEOs ahead of her trip told her they face increased pressure from Beijing's expansion of an anti-spying law this year, raids on some firms, tighter controls on data and lack of information about rule changes.

"My point was U.S. business needs to see some action taken to address these issues. Otherwise, they will deem it as just too risky and, as I said, uninvestable," Raimondo told reporters at a Boeing Co. joint venture in Shanghai's eastern district of Pudong.

Foreign direct investment in China fell 89% from a year earlier in the three months ending in June, according to official data. Most investment is believed to be brought into the country by Chinese companies disguised as foreign money to get tax breaks and other incentives, but business groups have warned foreign

companies are withholding new spending until their status is clearer. "Patience is wearing thin," Raimondo said. She said conditions for companies that have complained for wears about technology that and official fouritiem to

that have complained for years about technology theft and official favoritism toward Chinese competitors are "becoming in some ways even tougher." Economic growth slid to 0.8% compared with the previous quarter in the three

months ending in June from the January-March period's 2.2%. That is equal to an annual rate of 3.2%, which would be among China's weakest in decades.

Despite that, Li, the premier, has expressed confidence the economy can hit the ruling party's annual growth target of "about 5%."

Raimondo said she welcomed moves such as the ruling party's announcement of a 24-point plan to improve conditions for entrepreneurs. She said the party secretary for Shanghai, Chen Jining, told her Wednesday the city was considering creating a hotline to receive business complaints.

"We have to see the situation on the ground match the rhetoric," Raimondo said. Raimondo's visit produced the most substantial results of a series of trips to Beijing over the past three months by U.S. officials including Secretary of State Antony Blinken in June and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen last month.

The two governments announced Monday they would form two groups to reduce trade tension by sharing information about U.S. export controls on technology that irritate Beijing and discuss other commercial disputes. They also agreed to have officials meet to discuss protection of trade secrets and to hold a "travel and tourism summit." Beijing broke off dialogue with Washington over military, climate and other issues in August 2020 in retaliation for a visit to Taiwan by then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. The ruling party claims the self-ruled island democracy as part of its territory and objects to foreign official contacts.

Relations already were strained by a tariff war launched by then-President Donald Trump over complaints including that Beijing steals or pressures companies to hand over technology.

Li appealed to Raimondo on Tuesday for "concrete actions" by Washington to improve relations, a reference to Chinese pressure for changes in U.S. policy on Taiwan, technology and other issues.

Washington has blocked Chinese access to processor chips and other technology on security grounds. That threatens to hamper the ruling party's ambitions to create artificial intelligence and other industries. Xi accused Washington in March of trying to block China's development.

The group held its first meeting Tuesday. Raimondo said it would meet several more times. She said the meetings are intended to provide information and won't result in changes to U.S. export controls.

"We were able to clarify in the first meeting that we're not targeting China," Raimondo said. "We're targeting action and behavior which undermine U.S. national security, and we sought to begin clarifying our procedures."

Export controls "will continue to be the area of the most disagreement, but communication can only help," Raimondo said.

Conditions for foreign companies have worsened following the expansion of an anti-spying law that some say leaves them unclear about what consumer and other information they can gather. A research firm, Mintz Group, was fined \$1.5 million this month on charges it improperly gathered data. China ordered makers of some data equipment to stop using products from the biggest U.S. maker of memory chips, Micron Inc., on security grounds.

The secretary said she raised the status of Visa and Mastercard as an example of the need to treat each other's companies the same way. The credit card issuers have waited for years for approval of applications to operate in China, while Chinese payment services Alipay and UnionPay operate freely in the United States.

nese payment services Alipay and UnionPay operate freely in the United States. "We did not resolve anything, but I thought that it was important to put the issue on the table," Raimondo said. "And I did feel heard."

In a phone call later with reporters, Raimondo said she mentioned to Chinese officials that her own emails were stolen by computer hackers. She said nothing about the source, but The Washington Post reported in July that she and Blinken were targets of state-backed Chinese hackers.

"I mentioned that as an action that erodes trust," she said.

The Conversation

#### Bid to make ends meet during strike

## Hollywood's working class turns to nonprofit funds

NEW YORK, Aug 31, (AP): Shawn Batey was sweating in the August sun on the 100th day of the writers strike, carrying her "IATSE Solidarity" sign on the picket line outside Netflix's New York offices, but she was glad to be there.

A props assistant and documentary filmmaker, Batey is a member of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, the union that represents most Hollywood crew members, and has recently worked on "Pose" and "Russian Doll." But since the writers strike began in May and the actors joined them on July 14, Batey has had



## Workers like it when their bosses talk about diversity and inclusion

#### By Rita Men

University of Florida

The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.

Many companies have made commitments toward diversity, equity and inclusion inicase for inclusion and diversity is stronger than ever." Its analysis showed that in 2019

companies in the top quartile in terms of ethnic and cultural diversity were 36% more likely to report above-average profits than those at the bottom, slightly better than in 2014. And companies with the most gender diversity among executives were 25% more likely to outperform the market, up from 15% in 2014. A 2019 study that analyzed workforce diversity in the U.S. federal government found that racial diversity is significantly and positively related to organizational performance. One of the reasons DEI initiatives have a positive impact is because workers appreciate them. For example, a survey conducted in early 2023 found that most employees - 56% - think it's a good thing if their company is focused on DEI. But my own work suggests that getting many of these benefits from DEI initiatives may depend on how well employers are communicating their efforts to workers. In 2021, colleagues Sunny Qin, Renee Mitson, Patrick Thelen and I conducted an online survey with 657 full-time employees across 27 industries in the U.S. We published the findings in June 2023. We asked respondents how well they thought their employers communicated around the topic of diversity, including efforts to promote a diverse workforce. We also assessed participants' engagement in their companies as well as the employees' cultural intelligence, or the ability to interact and adapt across cultures. We then used a statistical technique called structural equation modeling analysis to spot relationships between all their answers. We found that the employees who worked for companies that talked more about their commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive environment were also more engaged in their work. This was also correlated with higher levels of cultural intelligence, and together they contributed to a more inclusive work environment. Importantly, we found that this effect was strongest for racial minorities, whose level of engagement was more highly correlated with how well their employer created an inclusive climate than for white people in our survey.

trouble covering her expenses - so she applied to the emergency fund from the Entertainment Community Fund for help.

"They say apply when you're at a critical point," said Batey, adding that she needed to show her union card, her wages and, in her case, that she'd worked as a member of the union for a certain number of years. The application is lengthy, but she said, "It is definitely worth for people to apply. Just be patient."

Batey - who used her grant to pay her rent, phone bill and electric bill, and other expenses - is one of 2,600 film or television workers that the Entertainment Community Fund has helped during these strikes, granting \$5.4 million as of Aug. 25. The fund, formerly known as The Actors Fund, is one of several nonprofits that have long supported workers who make the entertainment industry run, but who were essentially gig workers long before the term was coined. That includes both unionized and nonunionized workers, and those on strike as well as those who've lost work because of it.

#### Requests

The fund has received the most requests for help from people in California, followed by Atlanta and New York. It's raised \$7.6 million so far and is granting about \$500,000 a week. For now, it's issuing one-time grants of up to \$2,000 for individuals or \$3,000 for families.

"It's a lot of the crafts people, the wardrobe people, the makeup people, the carpenters that build the sets, the painters, the electricians," said Tom Exton, chief advancement officer for the Entertainment Community Fund. He said the fund has supported industry members through many previous crises, including the AIDS epidemic and financial crisis, and would continue to fundraise to provide help as needed.

Another charity created more than 100 years ago to help entertainment workers get through through tough periods, the Motion Picture & Tel-

Aaron Paul, left, and Bryan Cranston, fellow cast members of the television series 'Breaking Bad', walk on a picket line outside Sony Pictures studios on Tuesday, Aug. 29, 2023, in Culver City, Calif. The film and television industries remain paralyzed by Hollywood's dual actors and screenwriters strikes. (AP)

evision Fund, helps administer funds from some of the unions to provide emergency assistance specifically for their members. It declined to disclose the amount of financial support its received from those unions. The fund also provides financial and counseling support to unaffiliated workers and offers housing to industry veterans over the age of 70.

Bob Beitcher, its president and CEO, said many of the lowest-paid entertainment workers have little savings or reserves coming out of the pandemic. The federal programs and protections, like eviction moratoriums that helped keep entertainment workers and many others afloat during COVID-19 shutdowns, also aren't around now.

"They are losing their homes. They're losing their cars and trucks. They're losing their health insurance," Beitcher said. "And it's pretty awful."

Striking actors and writers have accused the studios of purposefully prolonging the strike so that they lose their homes.

MPTF has been getting 200 calls a day as opposed to 20 a day before the strike. Over 80% of callers are "below-the-line" workers, meaning not the actors, writers, directors or producers. They've processed 1,000 requests for financial assistance through the end of July, the fund said, with applicants

waiting an average of two weeks for the money to be dispersed.

Beitcher called for greater support from industry members, in an open letter on Aug. 17, saying, "As a community, we are not doing enough to support the tens of thousands of crew members and others who live paycheck to paycheck and depend on this industry for their livelihood. They have become the forgotten casualties during these strikes, overlooked by the media."

MPTF said it has raised \$1.5 million since the letter was published.

The SAG-AFTRA Foundation, a nonprofit with a mission to support the members of the actors union, quickly raised \$15 million with \$1 million donations from Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck, Oprah Winfrey and Julia Roberts in the first three weeks of the actors strike. Other \$1 million donations came from George and Amal Clooney, Luciana and Matt Damon, Leonardo DiCaprio, Hugh Jackman and Deborra-Lee Furness, Dwayne Johnson, Nicole Kidman, Ryan Reynolds and Blake Lively, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Meryl Streep. Cyd Wilson, the foundation's ex-

Cyd Wilson, the foundation's executive director, said her pitch to the top talent is that even the biggest stars need the army of smaller actors, many of whom live paycheck to paycheck,

to make their movies and television shows.

shows. "Those are the people that we're going to be helping the most, because those are the people that are going to be hurting the most," she said.

The foundation exclusively supports the 160,000 members of the union and 86% of those performers don't make enough work in a year to qualify for health insurance, Wilson said.

"They waitress, they bartend, they work catering, they drive Uber, they babysit, they dog walk, they housesit. They have all these secondary jobs in order to be able to survive," she said.

As the strike goes on, the funds expect more and more union members will lose their health insurance because they will not have worked enough hours to remain eligible. A small group of mostly showrunners decided they wanted to specifically fundraise to cover health care for crew members, and set up a fund with the MPTF.

"It's one thing for us to be sacrificing our own day-to-day for our greater good, but to watch our brother and sister union stand beside us?" said actor and writer Andrea Savage. "We just got together and said, 'How can we show that we're there for them? And also really put our money where our mouth is and actually do something concrete?"" tiatives in recent years, particularly since the murder of George Floyd sparked weeks of racial justice riots in 2020.

But some of those efforts, such as hiring diversity leaders and creating policies to address racial inequality, have stalled or reversed at the same time as a growing conservative backlash is threatening to further undermine such initiatives.

Most recently, a June 2023 Supreme Court ruling tossing out affirmative action policies at several universities has prompted businesses and advocates to worry that similar corporate efforts to improve the diversity of their workforces may be next.

That would be bad news for companies, because research has shown that diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives improve creativity, innovation, productivity and organizational performance.

What's more, a majority of workers say they want their employers to do DEI. My own research in corporate communications suggests how employees communicate their efforts is just as important as having them.

Diversity, equity and inclusion are three related values that companies and other organizations use to guide their efforts to create workplaces that are welcoming to people from all walks of life. These values emphasize the respect of individual differences and fair treatment of all people, regardless of race, gender, age, sexual orientation or other factors.

The implementation of DEI measures varies across organizations, with strategies ranging from policies that ensure the fair treatment of workers of color to training and the establishment of employee resource groups, which are internal communities built around workers' shared identities or interests. Examples include networks for women, people of color or veterans.

While strategies may vary, DEI is in wide use across corporate America. Every Fortune 100 company listed some kind of DEI initiative on its website as of July 2022, and a 2021 survey found that 82% of chief human resource officers said DEI was their foremost concern.

Numerous studies on diversity, equity and inclusion policies have found them to have many positive impacts on corporate performance.

Consulting company McKinsey in May 2020 reviewed data on over 1,000 companies in 15 countries and found that the "business Overall, our study supports the notion that employees still value and appreciate their companies' focus on diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.

And as we found, a more diverse and inclusive work environment leads to a more engaged workforce when companies continually communicate about their stance, values and commitment to DEL (AP)

### COP28 Presidency urges adaptation efforts at Korea Global Adaptation Week

INCHEON, South Korea, Aug 31, (PR Newswire): The COP28 Presidency has called for urgent action to strengthen global adaptation action at all levels to reduce vulnerability and strengthen resilience for vulnerable communities, ecosystems and economic sectors at the Korea Global Adaptation Week 2023.

During the opening session of the Global Adaptation Dialogue, Ambassador Majid Al Suwaidi, Director-General and Special Representative of COP28, reiterated the Presidency's commitment to prioritize adaptation and resilience.

"The COP28 Presidency has positioned adaptation and resilience firmly in our Presidential Action Agenda," said Ambassador Al Suwaidi. "Under the focus of putting people and communities back the heart of climate action, we are working to deliver on the Global Goal on Adaptation, and to elevate issues across food, health, water, nature and relief and recovery."

He added the forthcoming Global Stocktake at COP28 will enable a thorough assessment of successes and gaps, representing a significant moment to raise ambition and action for adaptation. The COP28 Director-General said there is an urgent need to "adopt a framework on the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), ensuring that it is complemented by a robust, differentiated, and actionable agenda for building resilience."

The GGA framework "must help reduce vulnerability, build adaptative capacities, and strengthen resilience for the most vulnerable populations, ecosystems, and economic sectors. And it must be both comprehensive in outlook, but also flexible in details to reflect the diversity of challenges and capacities inherent to our global community," said Ambassador Al Suwaidi.

Ambassador Al Suwaidi called on developed countries to uphold their commitment to doubling adaptation finance by 2025, a pledge made at COP26. Multilateral development banks (MDBs) and development finance institutions (DFIs) were also urged to scale up adaptation finance.

## **BUSINESS**

#### 'it's probably not going to work out'

Amazon employees have been pushing back against the company's return-to-office policy for months and it seems CEO Ándy Jassy has had enough. During a pre-recorded internal Q&A session earlier this month, Jassy told employees it was "past the time to disagree and commit" with the policy, which requires corporate employees to be in the office three days a week.

The phrase "disagree and commit" is one of Amazon's leadership principles, and was used often by the company's founder and current executive chairman, Jeff Bezos. "If you can't disagree and commit, it's probably not going to work out for you at Amazon," Jassy said, adding it wasn't right for some employees to be in the office three days a week while others refuse to do so. His comments were first report-

ed by Business Insider, and later shared by Amazon.

The current office attendance mandate, which was announced in February and went into effect in May, is a shift from Amazon's previous policy that allowed leaders to determine how their teams worked. But the company said Tuesday it rejects the notion that the prior policy was supposed to be the norm, and pointed to a blog post from 2021 where Jassy noted Amazon would "continue to adjust" things as more information rolled in. (AP)

#### Japan's Sogo & Seibu being sold to US fund

Japanese retailer Seven & i Holdings Co. is selling department store chain Sogo & Seibu Co. to a US investment fund, even as the labor union went on strike ahead of the announcement Thursday.

The transfer to Fortress Investment Group will be completed Friday, according to Seven & i Holdings. The decision came at a board of directors meeting. The proposed sales price is 220 billion yen (\$1.5 billion) but won't be final until the

transfer's completion set for Friday. Separately, some of Sogo & Seibu's debts, or nearly 92 billion yen (\$630 million), will be forgiven, the company said in a statement. Some 900 striking employees were marching, holding signs and handing out leaflets on the streets near the main Seibu department store in Tokyo, where the shutters were closed.

Disorderly strikes and protests are rare in Japan, and the strik-

ers apologized on camera in Japanese TV news reports, for any inconvenience they may be causing the public. Some train strikes have been largely symbolic because the trains still run, given that so many urban workers depend on public transport to get to and from work.

The Seibu deal was postponed since it was first announced in November because of such opposition. (AP)

#### **US regulators have guestions**

## Tesla allowing no-hands driving with Autopilot for longer periods

DETROIT, Aug 31, (AP): Tesla is allowing some drivers to use its Autopilot driver-assist system for extended periods without making them put their hands on the steering wheel, a development that has drawn concern from U.S. safety regulators.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has ordered Tesla to tell the agency how many vehicles have received a software update making that possible and it's seeking more information on what the electric vehicle maker's plans are for wider distribution.

"NHTSA is concerned that this feature was introduced to consumer vehicles, and now that the existence of this feature is known to the public, more drivers may attempt to activate it," John Donaldson, the agency's acting chief counsel, wrote in a July 26 letter to Tesla that was posted on the agency's website. "The resulting relaxation of controls designed to ensure that the driver remain engaged in the dynamic driving task could lead to greater driver inattention and failure of the driver to properly supervise Autopilot.'

A message was left early Wednesday seeking comment from Tesla. "If you haven't tried Tesla Autopilot, you don't know how awesome it is." Tesla CEO Elon Musk wrote Wednesday on X, formerly Twitter.

The government has been investigating Autopilot for crashing into emergency vehicles parked on freeways, as well as hitting motorcycles and crossing tractor-trailers. It opened a formal probe in 2021 and since 2016 has sent investigators to 35 Tesla crashes that may involve partially automated driving systems. At least 17 people have died.

#### Intervene

Tesla says Autopilot and a more sophisticated "Full Self-Driving"

system cannot drive themselves and that drivers must be ready to intervene at all times. Autopilot generally can keep a car in its lane and a distance away from objects in front of it.

The special order tells Tesla to describe differences in the software update that reduces or eliminates instances where Autopilot tells drivers to apply pressure on the steering wheel, "including the amount of time that Autopilot is allowed to operate without prompting torque, and any warnings or chimes that are presented to the driver.'

The letter to Tesla Senior Legal Director Dinna Eskin orders the Austin, Texas, company to say why it installed the software update and how it justifies which consumers got it.

It also seeks reports of crashes and near misses involving vehicles with the software update. "Your response should include any plans to enable the subject software in consumer ve-

hicles within the next calendar year," Donaldson wrote in the letter. A Tesla officer has to respond to

the letter under oath by Aug. 25 or the agency will refer the matter to the Justice Department, which can seek a maximum penalty of more than \$131 million

Tesla's system of monitoring drivers has been criticized by safety advocates and the National Transportation Safety Board for letting drivers check out when Autopilot is operating

After investigating three crashes involving Autopilot, the NTSB recommended in 2017 that Tesla and five other automakers limit where the partially automated systems can be used to limited-access divided highways, and to bolster their systems that monitor drivers.

All of the automakers but Tesla responded. In 2021 NTSB Chairwoman Jennifer Homendy wrote a

letter to Musk calling on him to act on the recommendations. The NTSB said Musk never responded.

The NTSB investigates crashes but has no regulatory authority. It can only make recommendations to automakers or other federal agencies such as NHTSA.

#### Attention

Most other automakers use an infrared camera to make sure a driver is paving attention. Some Teslas lately have been equipped with cameras that watch drivers.

Jake Fisher, who heads auto testing for Consumer Reports, said Tesla may have activated the cameras to monitor drivers, and that may be the reason for relaxing the steering wheel notifications.

But during its last test of Autopilot in 2022, the cameras didn't do anything, and older Teslas aren't equipped with the cameras, Fisher said. However, the cameras did monitor drivers when using "Full Self-Driving," Fisher said.

Cameras, he said, are better at ensuring that drivers pay attention than steering wheel monitors. Tesla owners refer to alerts about hands on the steering wheel as "nags.

When Autopilot was first introduced in 2015, it warned drivers to pay attention if it didn't feel torque on the steering wheel for about three minutes, Fisher said. Later that was reduced to 30 seconds, but it changes between software updates, he said. "It always seems to be jumping around," he said.

Consumer Reports also has found that it's easy to bypass Tesla's steering wheel monitoring system.

Earlier this month NHTSA sent investigators to a crash in Virginia in which a Tesla apparently on Autopilot ran underneath a tractor-trailer, killing the driver.

**Benefits drive up EV sales** 

India is one of the world's fast-growing EV markets

BENGALURU, India, Aug 31, (AP): Groceries stashed in the back of an electric delivery scooter are an increasingly familiar sight in the Indian city of Bengaluru. In crowded markets, electric rickshaws drop off and pick up passengers. And the number of tech startups focused on electric transport has shot up as the city - and country embrace electric vehicles.

India is one of the fastest-growing electric vehicle markets in the world and now has millions of EV owners. More than 90% of its 2.3 million electric vehicles are the cheaper and more popular two- or three-wheelers - that's motorbikes, scooters and rickshaws and over half of India's three-wheeler registrations in 2022 were electric, according to an IEA report released in April.

A \$1.3 billion federal plan to encourage EV manufacturing and provide discounts for customers, along with the past decade's rising fuel costs and consumer awareness of the long-

#### Law violated

#### Adani allies secretly 'purchased' shares

NEW DELHI, Aug 31, (AP): Two people closely linked to India's Adani Group, one of the country's largest conglomerates, secretly purchased millions of dollars of stocks in the group's companies, possibly violating Indian law, according to a report Thursday by a network of investigative journalists.

Market rules require that at least 25% of a company's shares be available for public purchase. The report by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project said the two men used "opaque investment funds based in the island nation of Mauritius" to obscure their involvement in controlling up to nearly 14% of the public shares.

## **UBS reports 'huge' 2Q profit** skewed by Credit Suisse deal

Swiss banking giant foresees \$10b in cost cuts

GENEVA, Aug 31, (AP): Swiss banking giant UBS on Thursday announced plans to save \$10 billion in costs, including through 3,000 staff reductions in Switzerland in the coming years, as it moves ahead with "full integration" of longtime rival Credit Suisse's domestic operations following a takeo-

The announcement came as the Zurich-based bank reported \$29 billion in net and pre-tax profit in the second quarter, its first earnings release since the government-orchestrated merger to help stave off a possible global financial meltdown.

Underlying profit before taxes came in at \$1.1 billion, which excludes some \$29 billion in negative goodwill, integration costs and other impacts of the takeover. Goodwill is an accounting technique, and the figure stems from the difference between the \$3.25 billion that UBS paid for Credit Suisse and the underlying value of its assets. In a separate statement, Credit Suisse, calling itself a UBS subsidiary following the completion of the deal on June 12, announced a loss of 8.9 billion Swiss francs (\$10.1 billion) as it wrapped up its accounting for all of 2023. In a conference call with analysts, UBS chief executive Sergio Ermotti addressed one of the major outstanding questions: how many of Credit Suisse's tens of thousands of employees would be retained. He said about 3,000 jobs would be eliminated, but not before late next year. He pointed to "a quite healthy Swiss job market" including in finance.

#### Focus on core middle-income shoppers

## JCPenney spending \$1b on store, online upgrades in latest bid to revive business

NEW YORK, Aug 31: (AP): JCPenney said Thursday it plans to spend more than \$1 billion by the end of 2025 in a bid to revive the storied but troubled 121-year-old department store chain.

The money is going toward remodeling JCPenney stores, upgrading its online shopping site and app, and making its supply network more efficient so that online orders are delivered more quickly.

derscoring the challenges faced by the retailer based in Plano, Texas.

JCPenney, which emerged from Chapter 11 reorganization in December 2020 with new owners, not only has grappled with years of internal issues but also faces an uncertain economy that has challenged healthier department stores.

As part of the latest remodeling push, Rosen said 100 stores have been refurbished. The plan is to remodel anywhere from 50 to 100 per year, he said.

The retailer has been rebuilding its beauty business after Sephora announced a deal to leave the chain for rival Kohl's three years ago. As part of its overhaul it has been highlighting beauty products that cover a wider range of skin tones. One third of its customers are of color. The company said that more than 50% of its beauty brands are either owned by females or people of color. The retailer launched new store label brands like Mutual Weave men's clothing and reintroduced some national brands like Adidas. It launched national labels such as Forever 21, owned by Authentic Brands Group LLC, which has a minority stake in JCPenney. It also teamed up with celebrity stylist Jason Bolden to recreate collections for two of its store label brands, J. Ferrar and Worthington, a long-time brand it brought back. Most importantly, Rosen said JCPenney has worked hard to keep the basics like jeans, white-T-shirts, and sheet sets in stock with the full size range or full color assortment, a problem that has plagued the chain and frustrated shoppers. Rosen said the changes have helped increase the number of repeat visits of existing customers to both stores and online. More than 50 million customers have visited JCPenney in the past three years, he said. After about five years of declines, it's now seeing customers coming to JCPenney more frequently - a 5% increase. As for its beauty departments,25% are new customers, he noted.

term cost benefits are combining to drive up sales, analysts say.

#### Emissions

Electric vehicles are one solution to bring down planet-warming emissions and improve air quality - with road transport contributing significantly to global emissions. For the electric vehicles market to successfully slash carbon, experts say moving electricity generation away from fossil fuels, managing critical mineral supply chains and boosting EV sales across different socioeconomic backgrounds in the country will be key.

Balaji Premkumar, a 25-year-old rickshaw delivery driver, switched to an EV earlier this year. At most traffic stops he's surrounded by gas-powered three-wheelers that rumble and rattle, spewing thick smoke into the air something that his used to do, too, before he went electric.

Premkumar said the new vehicle is easier and more comfortable to drive and he can already see a cost difference. "If I spend 60 rupees (0.72 cents) to charge the vehicle for three hours, I get 80 kilometers (50 miles). In a diesel vehicle I'll be spending at least 300 rupees (\$3.60) to get the same mileage," he said.

Santhosh Kumar, 23, a rickshaw delivery driver for Bengaluru-based logistics company City Link, can also feel the benefits since he switched to electric.

"The vehicle never breaks down and there are a lot of charging points all around so I never run out of charge,' said Kumar. Charging points in India have increased tenfold, according to Elizabeth Connolly, an energy technology and transport analyst at the IEA.

While Kumar doesn't have his own electric vehicle yet - the one he drives belongs to the company - he dreams of buying his own, or even several that he can rent out.

The findings by the non-profit project were reported by The Guardian and The Financial Times. The project said they were based on files from multiple tax havens, bank records and internal Adani Group emails.

It identified the two investors as Nasser Ali Shaban Ahli and Chang Chung-Ling, and said they have longtime business ties to the Adani family and have served as directors and shareholders in the group's companies.

The two investors traded large amounts of shares in four Adani companies between 2013 and 2018, the report said.

The Adani Group rejected the report, saying all of its publicly listed entities were in compliance with the law. Stocks in all 10 of the Adani

Group's listed companies fell by up to 4% in trading Thursday afternoon.

The AP has not independently verified the allegations.

The report said that through the Mauritius funds, the two men bought and sold Adani stock and "made considerable profits in the process.

"The question of whether this arrangement is a violation of the law rests on whether Ahli and Chang should be considered to be acting on behalf of Adani promoters," it said. "If so, their stake in the Adani Group would mean that insiders altogether owned more than 75% allowed by law.'

"It's only a matter of time before everyone shifts to electric," he said.

Two- and three-wheelers are mostly used to make deliveries or give rides. They clock up miles fast, making an electric model a noticeably cheaper option than paying for gas, said N.C. Thirumalai at the Bengaluru-based think tank, Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy.

#### Restructure

"Let me emphasize, the vast majority of the cost reductions will come from natural attrition, retirements and internal mobility. Around 1,000 redundancies will result from the integration of Credit Suisse (Switzerland)," Ermotti said.

"In addition, the necessity to profoundly restructure other parts of Credit Suisse is expected to lead to about 2.000 additional redundancies in Switzerland over the next couple of years," he added.

He defended and explained the hard-wrought decision for UBS to hold on to the Swiss operations of Credit Suisse instead of spinning off or otherwise divesting them, citing the complexity of unraveling the domestic business from the global bank, technology issues and other factors.

UBS said it planned to "substantially complete" the integration of Credit Suisse's operations by the end of 2026 and to "achieve gross cost reductions of over \$10 billion over that time.'

JCPenney's CEO Marc Rosen, who took the company's helm in November 2021 and has served as an executive at Levi Strauss and Walmart, is renewing the chain's focus on its core middle-income shoppers with affordable fashion and housewares.

"Now is the time more than ever to lean into that and make sure that we're delivering that experience for our customer," Rosen said in an interview with The Associated Press. That's a change of tactics from previous management teams that pursued wealthier shoppers with offers of trendy items and major appliances.

As part of the plans unveiled Thursday, check-out stations that had been located throughout JCPenney's stores will be replaced with a single area of cashiers. Shoppers will also see brighter lighting and a fresh coat of paint. Store employees will be equipped with mobile devices to scan inventory and ring up shoppers' purchases. And the chain is making upgrades to its Wi-Fi networks to speed up in-store connections.

But JCPenney is playing catch-up with its competitors - from discounters to department stores like Macy's and Walmart - that have been upgrading their stores and online businesses, un-

Ermotti trumpeted "formidable momentum" in deposits in the quarter, with \$23 billion flowing in. It included \$18 billion to the wealth-management and Swiss bank operations of Credit Suisse, which was bleeding deposits amid a crisis of investor confidence late last year and early this year that led to its demise and marriage with UBS.

Investors appear pleased with the way UBS has handled the deal. Its shares are up about 35% this year on

The chain's core customers are budget-conscious families, whose median income ranges from \$50,000 to \$75,000. They've been particularly hit hard by higher costs basic items and high interest rates, making borrowing on credit cards and taking out a mortgage more expensive.

#### Customers

Rosen said JCPenney's customers are spending \$700 more per month than two years ago just for basic necessities, like rent, gas and food. He noted they're seeking competitive prices as well as a good shopping experience.

But in this tough economy, JCPennev has a role. Rosen said. He believes shoppers are finding other department stores too expensive, while online retailers and off-price stores don't give them the customer service JCPennev shoppers are looking for.

The company filed for bankruptcy reorganization in May 2020 after the pandemic-induced temporary closing of stores put the already struggling retailer deeper in peril.

Under new owners - mall companies Simon Property Group Inc. and Brookfield Property Partners LP - JCPennev shuttered nearly a quarter of its 850 stores. It now has roughly 650 stores. It has less than \$500 million in debt, down from nearly \$5 billion at the time of its bankruptcy filing, Rosen said.

the Swiss SIX stock exchange, including a 5% gain to 23.25 Swiss francs Thursday morning after the quarterly report.

Deutsche Bank analysts Benjamin Goy and Sharath Kumar wrote in a research note that the results were "overall positive in our view." They pointed to their favorable rating on UBS shares.

"The underlying UBS business is seemingly not impacted by the deal," the analysts said. "Clearly, the group remains a construction site in the near term, however we believe this set of results and announcements should give confidence in the mid-term bull case. Buv.

UBS said the two banks will operate separately until a planned legal merger next year, and the Credit Suisse brand - with its storied yet recently troubled legacy in Swiss finance - would remain 'until we complete the migration of clients to our system, which we expect in 2025.'

#### Cyber resilience expanding

## Cyberattacks, other threats remain top concern across all industries

SAN FRANCISCO, Aug 31: InformationWeek, the world's most trusted business technology resource, has unveiled the 2023 State of Cyber Risk and Resiliency report. Cyberattacks and other threats to an organization's ability to do business remain a top concern across all industries. While ransomware continues to make headlines, it's not the only thing threatening businesses. When asked, 18% of respondents report cyberattacks threatened or disrupted their business, severe weather or natural disaster (15%) and internal failure or failure of an internal system (12%) were also high on the list.

"Many of the decisions that CIOs and CISOs have to make during a crisis aren't about technology; they're about business and risk," said Sara Peters, Editor-in-Chief of InformationWeek. "Our survey asked respondents what types of events, including cyberattacks, caused major disruptions to their IT systems.

They told us that increasing attacks by malicious actors are making it more difficult for organizations to maintain IT operations after an incident; but it's much more complicated than that. Cyber resilience and cyber incident response plans are expanding to include supply chain breakdowns, cloud computing outages, geopolitical events, AI-related threats, death, climate change and more. Many technologies are implemented to maintain resilience, and solid backups remain the number one answer.

The challenges seem insurmountable sometimes, and the

fact that our readers approach cyber resilience so bravely is impressive."

Cyber risk mitigation investments are not the bulk of budget allocations for most companies. The research shows that 39% of respondents allocate less than 10% of their annual IT budget to cybersecurity. The investment is split between defense (70%), such as technologies and talent expenditures, and rebound (30%), like business continuity, disaster recovery, data backups, cyber insurance and ransom money.

Due to strong defense and resilience strategies, more than half of respondents (51%) said their companies did not experience a significant disruption of any kind. It's unclear what percentage of respondents may have been lucky and what percentage

benefited from as end-user training (62%); identity and access management (58%); encryption (58%); endpoint detection and response (57%); and physical security controls (54%).

A strong defense strategy may not be enough to hold the attackers back and a company must rely on the strength of its rebound plan. The best way to gauge the incident response effectiveness is to test it, yet nearly one quarter (23%) of companies surveyed have either never conducted tests or are unsure if their teams have tested with tabletop exercises or other measures. Backups top the list of tools and procedures used by respondents (69%), yet half of respondents (50%) report they include misconfigurations in their cyber resilience plans, and 43% include planning for severe weather events.

## **BUSINESS**

#### Together, all-in-one AI health assistant, improves care for aging people

## Mental Vitals screens symptoms of depression through voice analysis

PALO ALTO, Calif, Aug 31: Together, the leading AI-based health assistant, has unveiled its latest groundbreaking feature: Mental Vitals, an innovative mental health detection tool designed to screen for symptoms of depression and anxiety through voice analysis. Launched just six weeks ago, Together has already garnered more than 11,000 active users — 64% of whom are over the age of 55 — and is transforming the way aging Americans and caregivers manage and monitor their health.

As a user speaks for 30 seconds, the app uses advanced AI developed at MIT's renowned Lincoln Labs to analyze users' prosody (melody), system (vocal tract movements), and source (vocal fold dynamics). With this data, Together can discern if a user displays potential signs of anxiety or depression, making early detection and intervention more accessible than ever.

The Mental Vitals feature joins Together's existing suite of tools that enable users to measure vitals such as blood pressure merely by pointing their smartphone camera at their face. Furthermore, without the need for cumbersome typing or data entry, Together seamlessly manages daily medications, refills, doctors' appointments, and more.

"Our mission with Together is to unify every aspect of health care, from vitals monitoring to mental health detection, into one intuitive platform," said Dr. Renee Dua, founder and chief product officer of Together. "The potential impact is enormous, especially for the nearly 100 million Americans over 50 living with more than two chronic diseases and the 53 million caregivers who often feel overwhelmed."

#### Risk

Depression and anxiety are serious and costly illnesses in the United States. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, 32.3% — more than 84 million – of U.S. adults reported having symptoms of depression or anxiety this year. According to a Mental Health America 2023 survey report, 54% of adults with a mental illness did not receive treatment. According to a study published in JAMA Psychiatry, people with obesity have a 55% higher risk of developing depression, while people with depression have a 58% higher risk of becoming obese. Recent articles published in the Journal of the American Medical Association indicate that routine screening for anxiety could save years of distress and reduce economic burden. and that major depressive disorder, if left untreated, "can interfere with daily functioning and can be associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular events, exacerbation of comorbid conditions, or increased mortality." An article published in PharmacoEconomics reports the economic burden of adults with major depressive disorder was \$326.2 billion in 2020 values.

For caregivers, Together serves as an indispensable tool. Not only can they manage their health, but they can also oversee the well-being of their loved ones, all within the app's private, secure, and user-friendly envi-"As adults, we're all and we're all caregivers. We're all in this...Together," Dua added, stressing the need to make caregiving sustainable for those with aging loved ones. By combining mental health detection, vital measurement, and routine health management, Together can be uniquely effective as an AI-driven patient-centric care coordination and whole-person health platform. "Now the same app that reminds you to take your blood pressure medicine will measure your blood pressure, so you know if that medication is working. The same app that screens for symptoms of anxiety can also see if you have increased heart rate while giving you one-touch access to all your healthcare providers," added Dua. Together is completely free, pri-vate, secure and designed to be magically easy. With face-based selfies that measure vitals; automated prescription refill and medical appointment scheduling; recommended preventive health and more, Together helps adults follow their care plans to better health, while providing peace of mind to caregivers who are otherwise caught between the desire to help older loved ones and the frustration of not knowing quite what to do in the first place.

Together is available for free for Apple smartphones here on the Apple App Store and soon also will be available for free for Android smartphones on the Google Play Store.

Created by visionary, accomplished health-tech entrepreneurs Dr. Renee Dua and Nick Desai, who previously founded and led award-winning doctor house call market-leader Heal, Together is an AIdriven health assistant designed to make health management seamless for aging Americans and their caregivers. With its revolutionary interface that requires no typing or data entry, Together combines vital measurements, medication management, appointment scheduling, and now, mental health detection, all in one platform. Founded with the mission to simplify and revolutionize healthcare management, Together is a testament to the potential of technology to impact lives positively. Together is supported by \$8.5 million of seed venture capital from Tau Ventures, Quiet Capital, Fika Ventures, Mucker Capital, the AARP, Positive Ventures, Global Founders Capital, SaaS Ventures and City Light Capital.

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3B Scientific, a leading manufacturer and marketer of medical simulation products and anatomical models for healthcare education, has announced that it has reached an agreement to acquire iNNOGING Medical.

iNNOGING Medical has developed the pioneering cloud-based SaaS solution e Sono for ultrasound simulation that enables users to train and analyze ultrasound scans, anywhere, anytime using any internet-connected device on reallife scenarios as if the patient was right next to them. Led by CEO Adi Baruch and CTO Eliad Moshe, iNNOGING Medical was built by a highly experienced, innovative group of industry and tech leaders, with a shared vision of revolutionizing the way ultrasound image analysis is trained for the improvement of ultrasound diagnosis worldwide.

#### Innovative

**Todd A. Murray**, CEO of 3B Scientific, shared: "We're extremely excited to have iNNOGING Medical join our growing 3B Scientific family. Their innovative approach to digitally training ultrasound skills with e Sono is truly impressive. Together, we will work towards revolutionizing the field of sonography training. Our shared goal is to make a profound impact on healthcare education worldwide."

Adi Baruch, co-founder and CEO of iNNOGING Medical, commented: "We are incredibly excited to join forces with 3B Scientific, embarking on our journey to redefine the landscape of digital ultrasound simulation with e Sono. Together with the development strength and global reach of 3B Scientific, we aim to revolutionize how healthcare professionals acquire and train their ultrasound skills. This partnership marks a pivotal step forward in our commitment to advance ultrasound training around the world.' 3B Scientific, established in 1948 in Hamburg, Germany, is a global pro-vider of state-of-the-art medical simulators, catering to medical education training across all levels. Building on an extensive range of top-quality educational and simulation products, the 3B Scientific Group of Companies has established a strong presence in over 120 countries worldwide. Using this wide-reaching platform, 3B Scientific continues to drive its mission forward: advancing the delivery of medical and healthcare education worldwide.

Pfizer's Omicron XBB.1.5-adapted shot gets EU regulators approval

'COVID-19 expected to adopt a seasonal pattern'

NEW YORK, Aug 31: Pfizer Inc. (NYSE: PFE) and BioNTech SE (Nasdaq: BNTX) have announced that the Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use (CHMP) of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) has recommended marketing authorization for the companies' Omicron XBB.1.5-adapted monovalent COVID-19 vaccine (COMIR-NATY ® Omicron XBB.1.5) administered as a single dose for individuals 5 years of age and older, regardless of prior COVID-19 vaccination history. The Committee has also recommended the updated vaccine for children 6 months through 4 years of age as part or all of the pri-mary three-dose vaccination series, depending on how many prior doses they received, or as single dose for those with a history of completion of a COVID-19 primary vaccination course or prior SARS-CoV-2 infection.

The European Commission (EC) will review the CHMP's recommendation and is expected to make a final decision soon. Following a decision from the EC, the updated vaccine will be ready to ship to applicable EU member states immediately. Pfizer and BioNTech have been manufacturing the Omicron XBB.1.5-adapted monovalent COV-ID-19 vaccine at risk to ensure supply readiness ahead of the upcoming fall and winter season when the demand for COVID-19 vaccination is expected to increase.

<sup>6</sup>This season's vaccine is ready to ship as soon as the final regulatory decision is made, so that people across Europe can better help protect themselves against COVID-19 illness as the risk rises," said Albert Bourla, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer at Pfizer. "It's been nearly a year since many citizens in the European Union were vaccinated against COVID-19 and the updated formulation provides the opportunity for them to receive a vaccine more closely matched to current sublineages."

#### Protection

"As COVID-19 is expected to adopt a seasonal pattern, similar to other respiratory viruses, we remain committed to providing COVID-19 vaccines that are better matched to relevant circulating variants or sublineages to people worldwide, to support vaccinations in the upcoming fall and winter season," said Prof. Ugur Sahin, M.D., CEO and Co-founder of BioNTech. "Omicron XBB-related sublineages are antigenically distant from prior Omicron strains and continue to account for the vast majority of COVID-19 cases globally. The updated COVID-19 vaccine aims to further improve protection against severe illness and hospitalization." The CHMP's recommendation is based on the full body of previous clinical, non-clinical, and real-world evidence supporting the safety and efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccines by Pfizer and BioNTech. Further, the application included pre-clini-

### **COVID** testings decline

# XiFin's LVI delivers deeper insights in post-pandemic diagnostic testing

SAN DIEGO, Aug 31: XiFin, Inc, a leading provider of innovative healthcare information technologies and services that deliver artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled operational efficiency, interoperability, and simplicity, has announced that it has added new features and insights to its diagnostic industry-leading Lab Volume Index (LVI). The LVI insights and trends are derived from claims transaction data from within the award-winning XiFin RPM platform. Four of the five top integrated delivery networks (IDNs), seven of the top ten independent laboratories nationwide, and many of the leading molecular diagnostics companies use the #1 client-rated revenue cycle management (RCM) solution.

While COVID testing has declined, overall molecular testing has steadily grown and continues to grow post-COVID. This is an indication that labs are taking the excess capacity that grew to support COVID testing and utilizing it for other types of molecular and genetic testing, led by women's health, predominantly prenatal testing.

"The new and expanded XiFin Lab Volume Index, with additional functionality for users seeking new insights on the latest trends in diagnostics, continues to be an indispensable industry standard," said Jeff Carmichael, senior vice president

cal data showing that the Omicron XBB.1.5-adapted monovalent CO-VID-19 vaccine generates a substantially improved response against multiple XBB sublineages, including XBB.1.5, XBB.1.16, and XBB.2.3, compared to the Omicron BA.4/ BA.5-adapted bivalent COVID-19 vaccine. Additional pre-clinical data demonstrate that serum antibodies induced by the updated COVID-19 vaccine, when compared to the Omicron BA.4/BA.5-adapted bivalent COVID-19 vaccine, when compared to the Omicron BA.4/BA.5-adapted bivalent COVID-19 vaccine, also effectively neutralize the globally dominant and recently WHO-designated variant of interest EG.5.1 (Eris). of engineering at XiFin. "Molecular testing overall has grown pretty steadily, thanks to the doubling of demand since 2019 for women's health testing, led by prenatal. The rapid increase in capacity and upgrades in technology infrastructure investments made by labs to manage workflow and productivity during the pandemic have paid off."

#### Genetic

The XiFin Lab Volume Index enables views of testing volumes over time and across four key categories of testing: clinical, immunology and microbiology, molecular and genetic, and anatomic pathology. Segmentation is based on the type of testing, not the type of laboratory performing the tests. For example, if the Lab Volume Index is selected for molecular and genetic, it shows the testing volume of all molecular and genetic testing, irrespective of whether it was performed at a hospital lab, a clinical lab, one that primarily does pain management and toxicology, or a lab specializing in molecular testing.

The enhanced XiFin Lab Volume Index also features a new userselectable baseline for 2019 -2022, making it possible to compare the time going forward including annually. Previously, the baseline was set to 2019, before the start of COVID.

proprietary mRNA technology and were developed by both companies. BioNTech is the Marketing Authorization Holder for COMIRNATY and its adapted vaccines (COMIR-NATY Original/Omicron BA.1; COMIRNATY Original/Omicron BA.4/BA.5) in the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom, Canada and other countries, and the holder of emergency use authorizations or equivalents in the Throughout COVID, using that same baseline was a good measure of fluctuations in volume as compared to pre-COVID average volume. The expanded Lab Volume Index also includes new data from additional labs added after the original baseline period, making the data even more robust.

Because the COVID volume is historically significant, the original XiFin Lab Volume Index was measured weekly to trend the surges and lulls that happened quickly during the pandemic. With COVID testing continuing to stabilize and replaced by ongoing molecular testing, the Lab Volume Index is now measured monthly, normalizing the data to reduce the impact of variations caused by holidays in a given week.

XiFin is a healthcare information technology company that empowers healthcare organizations to navigate an increasingly complex and evolving healthcare landscape. Through innovative technologies and services, we deliver AI-enabled operational efficiency, interoperability, and simplicity. Our solutions help organizations to achieve stronger finances, streamline operations, and develop industry-leading business strategies. XiFin solutions deliver THE POWER TO DO GOOD<sup>™</sup> so that healthcare organizations can do more good for more patients.

this product is only authorized for the duration of the declaration that circumstances exist justifying the authorization of emergency use of the medical product under Section 564(b)(1) of the FD&C Act unless the declaration is terminated or authorization revoked sooner.

At Pfizer, we apply science and our global resources to bring therapies to people that extend and significantly improve their lives. We strive

Pfizer and BioNTech have also filed an application with the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requesting approval of their Omicron XBB.1.5-adapted monovalent CO-VID-19 vaccine for individuals 6 months of age and older. A decision is expected in the coming days. The companies have submitted data for the updated COVID-19 vaccine to other regulatory authorities around the world.

The COVID-19 vaccines (COMIRNATY®) by Pfizer and BioNTech are based on BioNTech's

United States (jointly with Pfizer) and other countries.

Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine, Bivalent (Original and Omicron BA.4/BA.5) is FDA authorized under Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for active immunization to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) in individuals 6 months of age and older.

Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine has not been approved or licensed by FDA, but has been authorized for emergency use by FDA, under an EUA to prevent Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) for use in individuals aged 6 months of age and older. The emergency use of to set the standard for quality, safety and value in the discovery, development and manufacture of health care products, including innovative medicines and vaccines. Every day, Pfizer colleagues work across developed and emerging markets to advance wellness, prevention, treatments and cures that challenge the most feared diseases of our time. Consistent with our responsibility as one of the world's premier innovative biopharmaceutical companies, we collaborate with health care providers, governments and local communities to support and expand access to reliable, affordable health care around the world. For more than 170 years, we have worked to make a difference for all who rely on us.



#### Show to benefit out-of-work staff

## Late-night hosts team up for 'Strike Force Five' podcast

has in his possession a pair of pants belonging to the late Nicaraguan dictator, Anastasio Somoza. It's a long story but his mom dated Somoza when she was younger (before he became a dictator, says Colbert). Speaking of pants, Jimmy Kimmel once bought a pair of Gary Coleman's pants off eBay. These are just two of the wonderfully weird factoids shared by late-

night hosts Colbert, Kimmel, Jimmy Fallon, John Oliver and Seth Meyers, in a new podcast called "Strike Force Five" - named after their personal text chain — which debuted Wednesday on Spotify.

NEW YORK, Aug 31, (AP): Something interesting: Stephen Colbert

Because their respective shows have been dark since the Writers Guild of America went on strike in May, all profits from the podcast will go to their respective staffs. The show is sponsored by Mint Mobile and liquor company Diageo, and Kimmel said the money will "largely" come from them. Kimmel served as the inaugural moderator and that responsibility will be shared among the hosts.

'What would happen if five of America's Top 11 most-beloathed talk show hosts all talked on top of each other for an hour? You're about to find out," said Kimmel at the beginning of the episode.

"There wasn't a lot of communication during the last WGA strike between late-night hosts and as a result there was a lot of nonsense that went on," he added, "so Stephen suggested we get together and we talk through our issues or whatever we're dealing with.

Oliver asked, "Would it be fair to say that in 2008 the hosts didn't along quite as well as we do? I know it's an incredibly low bar but that was a sequence of dying marriages that they were.

The late-night hosts in 2008 were Kimmel, Conan O'Brien, Jay

Variety

Leno, Dave Letterman, Craig Ferguson and Colbert and Oliver. Kimmel said their shows were all dark but eventually Letterman and Ferguson went back on the air first "and we were all mad," he said.

A lightning sound effect would play each time the words "Strike Force Five" were said and the hosts spent the hour-long episode shar-ing basically whatever they wanted. Meyers said their unpolished delivery was a tribute to why they really need a staff, including writers and researchers.

More wonderfully weird anecdotes included how Fallon went fishing with Kimmel over the summer in Idaho where Kimmel has a home. It was Fallon's first time fishing.

#### Confusing

"If you think it's confusing to talk to two Jimmys in a podcast, imagine to talking to two Jimmys in a boat. Imagine being a guy just like, 'Jimmy over here on your left,' and we both throw it left and we both end up tangling," said Kimmel. This is when Meyers asked Kimmel about his A-list pals (includ-

ing Jennifer Aniston, Jason Bateman and Kristen Bell,) who have been photographed visiting him in Idaho. "Kimmel, is there any truth to the rumor that you have scuba divers under the water who hook the fish to the rods of the A-listers?"

"Most celebrities don't fish, they just kind of hang around which enrages me," said Kimmel.

Oliver and Meyers performed a few comedy dates together where they took to the stage for a Q&A with the audience. Oliver, said Meyers, mocks the people who don't properly execute their opportunity to ask a question, by taking too long or they fumbling their words. Oliver did not refute this observation.

Kimmel said he usually has summers of f - a fact that annoys the other hosts who normally have shows during the summer months and he prefers being on vacation knowing the other hosts are working. "I enjoy the fact that you don't get them that makes it all the more sweeter. I like getting the summer off better when I'm getting paid to get the summer off," said Kimmel. "You're not getting paid to not

work when normally you are paid to not work," Colbert responded. Other facts included how Fallon's mom tried being a nun for a week but it wasn't for her. He says there is photo evidence of his mother wearing a habit, possibly holding a doll of a nun to which Meyers replied, "I have a picture of my dad holding a GI Joe, but I don't think he was in the army.

It was agreed that if Fallon finds the nun photos, Colbert will dig up Somoza's pants.

Colbert also said he's created "code names" for the others in case he loses his cell phone. Kimmel is Crank Yanker, Fallon is Steve Allen, Meyers is Boom Chicago, John Oliver is Joliver.

"You'd have to be a pretty dumb guy who stole Stephen's phone to not figure out Joliver," quipped Meyers.

They ended the podcast with a promise to drop another episode "this week." They plan to do at least 12 episodes.

Sarah Kobos, who worked as a photo research coordinator at "The Tonight Show" said, "There hasn't been any info or communication given internally about how this works. ... That said, we are extremely grateful that the podcast says it will go towards helping staff. It is much needed!'



This image released by Sony Pictures Entertainment shows Denzel Washington in a scene from 'The Equalizer 3.' (AP)

Film

**RIDAY-SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 1-2, 2023** 

LONDON: Britain's Prince Harry says he didn't have the support he needed when he returned home from combat in Afghanistan as he reached out to other veterans in a new Netflix series about the Invictus Games for injured soldiers. The new series launched on

Wednesday on the streaming service.

In talking about post-traumatic stress disorder, Harry said that his return from Afghanistan in 2012 triggered emotions that he suppressed after the death of his mother, Princess Diana, when he was just 12 years old. The prince, whose troubles with the royal family have been chronicled in the past, said the impact of Diana's death was never discussed.

"The biggest struggle for me was no one around me really could help; I didn't have that support structure, that network or that expert advice to identify what was actually going on with me," Harry said. "Unfortunately, like most of us, the first time you consider therapy is when you are lying on the floor in the fetal position probably wishing you had dealt with some of this stuff previously." "Heart of Invictus" features a

group of injured soldiers as they prepared for last year's Invictus Games in The Netherlands. Modeled after the Warrior

Games in the United States, Harry founded the Invictus Games in 2014 as a Paralympic-style event designed to inspire military veterans around the world as they work to overcome battlefield injuries.

Harry and his wife Meghan Markle, signed a lucrative con tract to produce content for Netflix after they stepped away from royal duties in 2020 and moved to Southern California. "Harry & Meghan," a six-part series detail-ing the couple's split from the royal family, premiered last year.

Harry, who is also known as the Duke of Sussex, appeared at a preview screening of the new series in California on Tuesday, telling the audience about the sacrifices veterans and their families make while serving their countries. (AP)

PITTSBURGH: A woman accused of intentionally abandoning her dog at a Pennsylvania airport before she boarded a flight to a resort in Mexico earlier this month has been charged with animal cruelty

Actor back as McCall to battle Italian mafia

## Washington charms in 'Equalizer 3'

#### **By Jake Coyle**

There's an awful lot of talk about the end of movie stars considering Denzel Washington is right over here, walking around

Antoine Fuqua's "Equalizer 3," a taut and textured sequel to Washington's vigilante series, isn't one of the actor's best films. It wouldn't crack his top 10. But it vividly encapsulates Washington's formidable onscreen potency.

You might think this would be in the movie's brutal action sequences, but no. It's the scenes of Washington fastidiously having a cup of tea at a sidewalk cafe or strolling the streets of a Sicilian town. This is a movie stitched together less by its plot mechanics than the pleasure of watching Denzel smirk, scowl and smile, in leisurely scenes mixed in with all the murder.

In that way, the "Equalizer" movies (the third of which is certainly the best of a so-so bunch), remind me of those great Walter Matthau thrillers like "Charley Varrick" and "Hopscotch" - movies about old men with expressive eyebrows who are set in their ways but have plenty of tricks left up their sleeve. (Washington, now 68, also took over Matthau's role in the remake of "Pelham One Two Three.")

There's no shortage these days of older stars plying their special sets of skills in action thrillers. Throw a stone in a movie theater and you're likely to hit (and risk drawing the lethal ire of) Liam Neeson, Harrison Ford or Tom Cruise. "Equalizer 3," an all-in-all good entry in the genre, is on the bloodier end of the spectrum.

Yet curiously neither the fight sequences (rapid and grotesque) nor the film's sense of suspense (perfunctory) are much of a selling point. The film, scripted by Richard Wenk, opens with a trail of bodies through the main house of an Sicily vineyard. In the wine cellar calmly sits Robert McCall (Washington), who shrugs, "Wouldn't let me in, so..."

"The Equalizer" is loosely based on an 1980s TV series about a former intelligence service agent who spends his retirement bringing the scales of justice back in balance for regular folks he happens to encounter. And there's a pleasantly episodic quality to the third film in the series.

A bullet in the back leaves McCall laid up in recovery after he's taken in by a kindly village doctor named Enzo (Remo Girone). We're in Southern Italy. Most of the film was shot along the Amalfi coast, specifically the enchanting medieval fishing village of Atrani. If there's one truly implausible thing about "Equalizer 3," it's the fact that there isn't a tourist in sight. McCall, who once out of bed strolls the village's cobbled steps with a cane, seems to be the only American in town. He's quickly charmed by the people who warmly welcome the "Americano."

#### Vigilante

And the same time, the Camorra mafia is pushing harder into the village, with intentions of driving out locals to make room for hotels and casinos. They make a small army of designer-dressed, tattoo-covered thugs, and they descend on the village, unaware of the lurking elite vigilante quietly sipping tea across the street from their shakedowns or eating pasta at the next table.

The well-traveled Fuqua, who helmed both prior "Equalizer" movies and first directed Washington in "Training Day," is in his genre wheelhouse here. He trails McCall patiently and soaks up the local color, with a few touches of Christian imagery from the church above the town. There's a sinister, ominous sense of evil scourges - a heinous drug from Syria, sold by the mafia is funding terrorists cells - seeping into a society of "good people.

The clear dichotomy of good and bad is cozy, and so, too, is Washington's savage, untroubled dispatching of the mafia ring. There are CIA officials in the mix, too, including Dakota Fanning's desk clerk turned operative. But they are mostly following McCall's lead. He - Washington really - is in a league of his own, and "Equalizer 3," smartly, doesn't even try to suggest it's a close race. Not all are created equal, after all.

"Equalizer 3," a Sony Pictures release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for strong bloody violence and some language. Running time: 109 minutes. Three stars out of four.

#### Also:

**NEW YORK:** AMTD Group Inc., AMTD IDEA Group (NYSE: AMTD; SGX: HKB), AMTD Digital Inc. (NYSE: HKD) ("AMTD Digital"), and AMTD World Media and Entertainment Group ("AMTD WME"), the multi-media, entertainment and cultures worldwide platform of AMTD Group, are thrilled to jointly announce that the highly anticipated movie titled "Moscow Mission" ("Movie"), is successfully scheduled for release to the public nationwide on Sept 29, 2023.

"Moscow Mission" was produced based on the true story of "China-Russia Train Robbery" happened in 1993 which led to China's first-ever cross-border manhunt. It gathers a group of top stars and heavy weighs including Zhang Hanyu, Andy Lau, Huang Xuan, Janice Man, etc.. The Movie represents the third cooperation between AMTD Group and world's leading award-winning actor Andy Lau, following the movies titled "Shock Wave 2" and "The Trading Floor". Dr. Calvin Choi, Chairman of AMTD Group as

well as the founder of AMTD IDEA Group and AMTD Digital, serves as an executive producer of the Movie.

AMTD Group focuses on the development of a multi-media, entertainment and culture business platform as one of its long term core strategies. AMTD WME was established earlier this year to embark and focus on global developments in such areas. Leveraging upon its media resources, including L'Officiel's global fashion media platform; The Art Newspaper's (pending for closing conditions) globally renowned and authoritative art media voice; DigFin Asia's leading FinTech news portal; ValueChampion's lifestyle and financial knowledge hub, etc, AMTD WME endeavours to bridge the East to the West by providing extensive top cultural and social experience to clients around the world.

Xavier Zee, Chief Financial Officer of AMTD Digital, commented, "We are pleased release another movie featuring HK Global superstar Andy Lau and the up and rising actress Janice Man to further deepen our exposure and credentials during our journey of developments in global movie industry. We see many opportunities in the media and entertainment sector globally and will continue to focus our development in this area." (AP)

and related charges, authorities announced.

Allegheny County Police say Allison Lyn Gaiser, 44, tried to bring her brown-and-white male French bulldog with her on a flight departing from Pittsburgh International Airport on Aug 4. But the dog was denied boarding by the airline because it did not meet the



Meghan

Harry

criteria for an emotional support animal and did not have a proper kennel as required.

After leaving the ticket counter, Gaiser was seen on surveillance cameras pushing the dog in the stroller back toward a moving walkway enclosure, next to glass exit doors in the airport's shortterm parking lot. She was later

seen heading to an area where a county police officer found the dog unattended in the stroller about 40 minutes later, authorities said.

The dog - who was unharmed was licensed and had an identification microchip. It was turned over to an animal care facility and is now staying in a foster home, where authorities said the dog is doing well.

A county police sergeant was waiting for Gaiser when she returned to the airport about 12:30 am on Aug 10. Authorities said Gaiser admitted leaving the dog behind because the airline wouldn't allow it on the plane but said she made arrangements with her mother to pick up the animal at the airport. (AP)



## **NEWS/FEATURES**

## **People & Places**

#### Media

#### Thompson hopeful

## **CNN** names ex-BBC chief as new leader

NEW YORK, Aug 31, (AP): A former chief executive of the BBC and The New York Times who says he sees opportunity in times of disruption was chosen Wednesday to lead CNN, which has burned through two leaders and bled viewers over the past two years.

Mark Thompson was appointed as CNN's new chair and CEO by the network's parent company, Warner Bros. Discovery. Thompson will replace Chris Licht, who was fired in June, and a four-person team that had been running CNN in the interim, when he takes over Oct. 9.

Thompson, who left the Times in 2020 after eight years as that company's president and CEO, is cred-



ited with helping the newspa-per transition to a digital-first organization more dependent on paid subscribers than the collapsing advertising market that has doomed many newspapers.

The native of England, who was knighted by the British government this year, was director-general of the BBC from 2004 to 2012 from 2004 to 2012.

Thompson

"I've long admired Mark's transformative leadership and his ability to inspire organizations to raise their own ambitions and sense of what's possible, and achieve it," David Zaslav, chief of Warner Bros. Discovery, said in a note to CNN staff.

Thompson, in his own note, said that television journalism is approaching peak disruption. CNN and other networks have suffered from people cutting off cable subscriptions, and the company has so far fumbled its attempt to establish a streaming service.

"We face pressure from every direction - structural, political, cultural, you name it," Thompson said. "Like many other media organizations, CNN has recently felt some of the uncertainty and heartache that comes with all of that. There's no magic wand I or anyone else can wield to make this disruption go away. But what I can say is that where others see threat, I see opportunity.

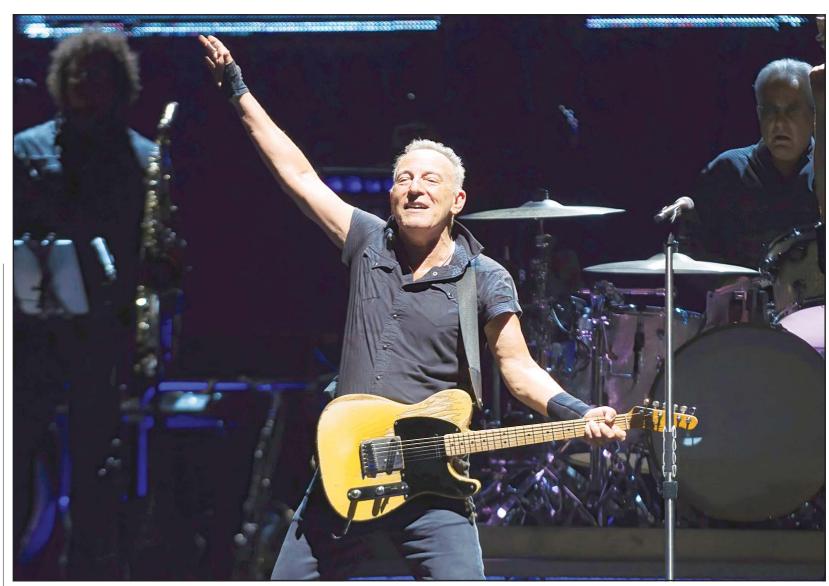
#### Experience

CNN will be going from someone with little lead-ership experience - Licht was a producer who ran shows like "Morning Joe" and the CBS "Late Show" before taking over CNN - to a person with top ex-ecutive roles at two of the world's largest and most respected news organizations.

Ât the Times, he concentrated on the business side, not journalism. CNN will give him a broader role, similar to what he achieved at the BBC, where he steadily rose through the ranks to the top spot.

He helped steady the BBC in his early years as leader after it had been rocked by scandal over its reporting on Britain's intelligence about Iraq's weapons programs in the run-up to the 2003 US-led invasion.

Thompson later faced criticism over the broadcaster's handling of child abuse allegations against the longtime BBC children's TV presenter Jimmy Savile, who was exposed after his death in 2011 as a pedophile who molested children for decades. An investigation into Savile by the BBC's "Newsnight" program due to run soon after his death was shelved at the last minute; Thompson denied involvement in that decision. In a 2021 interview with Exec Publications, Thompson said there was a lot of skepticism within the Times that digital subscriptions could be built up significantly, given a public aversion to pay walls. But he said he hired teams of engineers and data scientists to improve the experience of reading the newspaper on different devices.



Bruce Springsteen and The E Street Band perform on tour at MetLife Stadium on Wednesday, Aug. 30, in East Rutherford, N.J. (AP)



Recording artist Jean Dawson poses for a portrait in Los Angeles on Tuesday, July 11, 2023, to promote his latest release. (AP)



## Singer introduces fans to 3 new characters

Dawson unveils latest musical trilogy

LOS ANGELES, Aug 31, (AP): Jean Dawson is an open book. Onstage, the eccentric performer takes control as he bounces around, full of energy with vulnerable lyricism and experimental sound. In person, he's charming and introspective, sitting across with a tight sweatshirt hoodie pulled over his head and his hair falling over his eyes as he speaks in metaphors and long anecdotes about his latest projects, fame, cultural identity and more.

Music

Since the release of his 2019 mixtape, "Bad Sports," Dawson has created music that seamlessly ebbs and flows from one genre to the next, ranging from rap to punk to folk and abstract hip-hop, with relatable lyrics that take on topics like mental health and hypermasculinity.

other people uncomfortable for me to be so vulnerable.'

His second installment, "'Destruction For Dummies', Pt 2 Jean Dawson As 'Nightmare,''' released Aug. 17. It displays a more tender side, with three songs that blend slower tempo elements of pop, rap and rock.

The Nightmare character, Dawson says, "is when I'm feeling a little softer, and I want to whisper for the rest of the day, and I don't really have all the words that I want to say.

"You're always dreaming/Trying to find the meaning/What if there's no meaning/Why I'm never sleeping," he sings on "X-Ray."

The third installment of the project is set to release later this year, featuring a character that Dawson describes as "misunderstood."

today."

Dawson's parents had a strong influence on his taste and artistry. His Mexican mother would play Ice Cube and '80s rock in their home, while, in the US, his father would frequently listen to Mexican corridos.

"Little did they know that their love for cultures that wasn't their own would create somebody that lives in the intersection," said Dawson.

This amalgamation of influences led to Dawson's innovative genre fusion, from "Bad Sports" to his coming-ofage album "Pixel Bath" in 2020 and his self-reflective 2022 sophomore album, "Chaos Now(asterisk)." His releases have featured other young innovators ranging from Mac DeMarco

to A\$AP Rocky and Earl Sweatshirt.

The Times, which also benefited from a boost in news interest during the Trump administration, had 10 times as many paid subscribers when he left than when he started.

Thompson had a far worse experience implementing a digital media plan for the BBC. He was called before a parliamentary committee to testify after a government audit found that a plan to combine digital production and archiving wasted millions of dollars due to confusion and poor planning.

#### Dynamic

At CNN, he faces a dynamic nearly as old as the network itself. Viewership interest in its news coverage has peaks and valleys. CNN has fallen well behind Fox News and MSNBC in popularity, with opinionated talk connecting more with viewers in a politically polarized time. Licht had encouraged CNN to find a middle ground and flex its newsgathering muscles.

He was doomed at the end by a damning Atlantic magazine profile that showed his failure to connect with employees, many loyal to his predecessor, Jeff Zucker. Zucker was pushed out in February 2022 after failing to disclose to his bosses a romantic relationship with a fellow network executive.

Besides ratings, CNN's finances have suffered. The network earned \$892 million in profit in 2022, down from \$1.08 billion in 2020, according to S&P Global Market Intelligence.

Shortly after Licht was named to his new job, CNN's new corporate masters pulled the plug on a well-publicized streaming service after only weeks in operation. Just this month, it announced that CNN news would be part of its Max streaming service.

CNN also fired two popular prime-time hosts over the past two years, Chris Cuomo and Don Lemon, the latter after an ill-fated move to a new morning show.

Licht never settled on a new prime-time lineup in his tenure. The four-person interim leadership team - Amy Entelis, David Leavy, Virginia Moseley and Eric Sherling - recently set a new lineup that includes Kaitlan Collins, Abby Phillip and Laura Coates in weeknight roles, with veteran Christiane Amanpour and Chris Wallace getting new weekend gigs.

Zaslav said that the four interim leaders would remain at CNN, reporting to Thompson. The incoming chief executive's selection was first reported Tuesday night by Puck.

In his note Wednesday, Thompson sought to buoy staff members by praising the network's coverage of the brief rebellion against Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"That day confirmed an old truth to me: when it matters most, CNN is the best place to find out what's happening," he wrote. "You always rise to the occasion.

#### Variety

WHEELING, W.Va: G. Ogden Nutting, who helped grow his family's newspaper business to more than 50 daily publications

in 18 states, has died. He was 87 Nutting died Friday, according to The Intelligencer and Wheeling News-Register, which published his obituary and a separate story on his death Monday.

A Wheeling resident, Nutting was the longtime publisher of Ogden Newspapers Inc. and spent more than 60 years in various roles with the private company. His grandfather, H.C. Ogden, founded The Wheeling Evening News in 1890, and it formed the basis of the newspaper chain.

Nutting joined Pittsburgh Pirates team owner Kevin McClatchy's ownership group in 1996. McClatchy and Nutting knew each other initially through their newspaper industry ties before McClatchy brought Nutting into his ownership group that kept the team from leaving Pittsburgh.

But McClatchy eventually lost his majority ownership stake to Nutting's son, Bob, who supplanted McClatchy as the Pirates' principal owner in 2007. Bob Nutting also is president and CEO of Ogden Newspapers.

Ogden Nutting earned awards from the West Virginia Press Association and the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association. He received a Distinguished West Virginian award by the governor in 2005 and was inducted two years later into West Virginia University's Order of Vandalia for service to the state.

West Virginia Press Association President Don Smith told The Intelligencer and Wheeling News Register that Nutting was the "last of the great publishers in the history of newspapers in West Virginia.

Nutting is survived by his wife, Betty Woods "Snookie" Nutting; a brother, William C. Nutting; his two sons, Bob and Ogden Newspapers Vice President William O. Nutting; and five granddaughters and one grandson.

According to Nutting's obituary, no visitation or public service will be held. (AP) 

LONDON: Baroque music conductor John Eliot Gardiner is pulling out of future engagements after allegedly hitting a singer who left the stage incorrectly after a performance.

The conductor said in a statement Thursday that he was stepping back to get "the specialist help I recognize that I have needed for some time.

This year, he's unveiling a new body of work that allow fans to see three different, "hyper-aestheticized" parts of himself.

Dawson's musical trilogy is divided into three chapters, each with its own unique character. The first, "'Xcape,' Pt. 1 Jean Dawson As Phoenix" was released in May and features two upbeat singles that reel in listeners with an emergent sound that still has a touch of early emo punk nostalgia.

"I am nothing but a myth/I fool everyone, burn everything I ever touch/I live life on the fringe/Dreads cover a golden smile/Gold turns Styrofoam for style," he sings on "youth+."

"Phoenix is a character very, very close to what I am already," Dawson tells The Associated Press. "I'm going to talk too much. I'm going to say too much. I'm going to be overtly vulnerable for no reason because it makes me comfortable, and it makes

"I want to apologize to colleagues who have felt badly treated and anyone who may feel let down by my decision to take time out to address my issues. I am heartbroken to have caused so much distress, and I am determined to learn from my mistakes," he said.

The conductor allegedly hit William Thomas after the bass singer left the podium on the wrong side during a concert last week at the Festival Berlioz in La Cote-Saint-Andre, southeastern France.

A spokesperson for Gardiner initially said the conductor was suffering from extreme heat in France and suspected that a recent change in medication may have

Dawson, 27, is as open and vulnerable in person as he in his music, even when hiding behind a hoodie.

#### Connected

"I just am not afraid to tell people what I know about myself because I'm not afraid of myself," he says. "I want to be so connected to when I tell somebody, 'I feel you,' I'm not lying. I want to have true empathy before I die.'

Dawson who is of mixed Black American and Mexican heritage, says his upbringing - living between the border cities of San Diego and Tijuana - led him to grapple with the meaning of identity at a young age.

"It was hard for me to gather what identity should be. So I chose to adopt none of it," he said. "I quickly learned that my identity being nothing meant that I could be everything. And that is what made me the musician I am

contributed to the behavior, according to

the classical music news site SlippeDisc.

pretations of Baroque music on period

instruments with the Monteverdi Choir

and the English Baroque Soloists, but his

repertoire and discography are not limited

to early music. With the Orchestre Révo-

performed a wide range of Classical and

Berlioz and all of Beethoven's sympho-

nies. A recording of the third symphony

of the latter was used in a dramatisation

symphony. Gardiner has served as chief

by the BBC of Beethoven's writing of that

Romantic music, including many works of

lutionnaire et Romantique Gardiner has

Gardiner is most famous for his inter-

Dawson is now embarking on more collaborations as he joins rapper Trippie Redd's "Take Me Away" arena tour, starting Aug. 31, and opens for Interpol at the Greek Theatre in Los Angeles later this fall, performing for thousands of fans and leaning into the sense of acceptance he feels every time he steps on stage.

But as his career grows, fame is the last thing on his mind. Dawson cares more about connection and knowing that at least one person is able to feel understood through his art.

"If I am a fraction of 1% of something that can make you feel something because I have something to say, then I can leave this earth and be like, 'You know what? I tried to do my service," he said. "And my service was here to be not a pied piper, not to have anybody follow me, not to have anybody think of me highly - just for me to be a friend when somebody needs it."

conductor of the North German Radio Symphony Orchestra and has appeared as guest conductor with such major orchestras as the Berlin Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and Vienna Philharmonic. Gardiner is also well known for his refusal to perform the music of Richard Wagner; in a 2008 interview for Gramophone Gardiner said, 'I really loathe Wagner - everything he stands for - and I don't even like his music very much.'. Gardiner has been the subject of various allegations of rudeness and bullying of performers and colleagues. (Agencies)

#### 

BUÑOL, Spain: Some 15,000 people, including many tourists, pasted each other with tomatoes Wednesday as Spain's an-nual "Tomatina" street battle took place in the eastern town of Buñol.

Workers on trucks tipped 120 tons of overripe tomatoes into the main street of the town for participants to throw.

The street fight leaves both the street, its houses and participants drenched in red pulp.

Tickets for the festival start at 12 euros (\$13).

The town hoses down the area and the revelers shower off within minutes of the hourlong noon battle finishing.

The festival, held on the last Wednesday of August, was inspired by a food fight between local children in 1945 in the town, located in a tomato-producing region.

Media attention in the 1980s turned it into a national and international event, drawing participants from every corner of the world.

Participants use swimming goggles to protect their eyes and usually dress in Tshirts and shorts. (AP)



Director Edoardo De Angelis, (right), and Pierfrancesco Favino pose for photographers upon arrival for the opening ceremony and the premiere of the film 'Comandante' during the 80th edition of the Venice Film Festival in Venice, Italy, on Wednesday, Aug. 30. (AP)

## **SCIENCE**

#### ARAB TIMES, FRIDAY-SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 1-2, 2023

#### Ecology

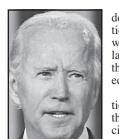
#### Turning to tech

## US grassland birds in peril as habitat dwindle

POTTER, Neb., Aug 31, (AP): When Reed Cammack hears the first meadowlark of spring, he knows his family has made it through another cold, snowy winter on the western South Dakota prairie. Nothing's better, he says, than getting up at sunrise as the birds light up the area with song.

"It's part of the flora and fauna of our Great Plains and it's beautiful to hear," says Cammack, 42, a sixth-generation rancher who raises cattle on 10,000 acres (4,047 hectares) of mostly unaltered native grasslands.

But the number of returning birds has dropped steeply, de-spite seemingly ideal habitat. "There are quite a few I don't see any more and I don't know for sure why," says Cam-mack's 92-year-old grandfather, Floyd. whose family has allowed conservation groups to install a high-tech tracking tower and to conduct bird surveys.



North America's grassland birds are deeply in trouble 50 years after adoption of the Endangered Species Act, with numbers plunging as habitat loss, land degradation and climate change threaten what remains of a once-vast ecosystem.

Over half the grassland bird population has been lost since 1970 - more than any other type of bird. Some species have declined 75% or more, and a quarter are in extreme peril. And the 38% - 293,000 square

Biden

miles (760,000 square kilometers) - of

historic North American grasslands that remain are threatened by intensive farming and urbanization, and as trees once held at bay by periodic fires spread rapidly, consuming vital rangeland and grassland bird habitat.

So biologists, conservation groups, government agencies and, increasingly, farmers and ranchers are teaming up to stem or reverse losses

Scientists are sharing survey and monitoring data and using sophisticated computer modeling to determine the biggest threats. They're intensifying efforts to tag birds and installing radio telemetry towers to track their whereabouts. And they're working with farmers and ranchers to implement best practices that ensure survival of their livelihoods and native birds - both dependent on a healthy ecosystem.

#### **Species**

Daniel Horton sets his timer, cocks his head and listens intently while standing in a fog-shrouded expanse of grasses and wildflowers, the morning horizon glowing pink and orange

Western meadowlarks sing atop flowering yuccas. Grasshopper sparrows flit and disappear. Horned larks hunker in the dense grass. There are rock wrens, nighthawks, mourning doves and lark buntings.

Horton is recording the species and number of birds and assessing their habitat. It's part of an effort to estimate bird population densities and evaluate whether conservation efforts are making a difference. Once grasslands are gone, he says, "it becomes harder for them to ... live in those areas where they evolved and where they have been historically."

A 2019 study found grassland bird populations had fallen 53% since 1970, compared to overall bird loss of 30%, in the continental US and Canada. A 2022 report found that, of 24 grassland bird species, two-thirds had experienced significant population declines and eight were at a tipping point - having lost 50% or more of their breeding population and on track to lose another 50% in the next half century - putting them on a path to possible extinction.

The lesser prairie chicken is the only grassland bird federally listed as endangered, but only in part of its range. It has declined by more than 90% with an estimated remaining 2022 population of about 27,000. The Senate and House have voted to delist the bird in an effort led by Republicans who say it hinders oil and gas drilling, though environment



A rare Blue Supermoon rises over Lake Michigan as spectators watch from Chicago's 31st Street beach Wednesday, Aug. 30. (AP)

#### Rare blue supermoon dazzles stargazers around the globe

A rare blue supermoon - the closest full moon of the year — dazzled stargazers Wednesday night. Saturn joined the celestial spectacle, visible alongside the moon, at least where skies were clear. It was the second full moon of August, thus the blue label

And it was unusually close to Earth, therefore a supermoon.

The moon appeared to be bigger and brighter than usual, given its close proximity to Earth: just 222,043 miles (357,344 kilometers) or so. The Aug. 1 supermoon was more than 100 miles (160 kilometers) farther away.

If you missed it, it will be a long wait: The next blue supermoon isn't until 2037.

But another regular supermoon is on the horizon at the end of September, the last one of the year.

The Conversation



#### **By Inga Popovaite**

University of Iowa

ture, whether another wave of pandemic or interplanetary space travel.

Most group behavior research in space and space-analog environments focuses on leadership, cohesion and conflict - factors that affect teams' performance and their ability to complete tasks. It makes sense, as astronauts are first and foremost a team of co-workers on a specific mission.

But, by focusing on the professional level, researchers overlook other potential relationships between crew members - such as family ties or intimacy. It is not a minor detail: Interpersonal relationships can certainly eral do more unpaid domestic and care labor, as well as more emotional labor - taking care of others' feelings and well-being in addition to their own.

Now, their toll is increasing. Men and women have the same general goal - to survive the pandemic and its aftermath - but they experience the quarantine differently. In most middle-class families, the traditional work-home divide is now gone, as both partners work from home. But women are still likely to spend more time running the household, including child and elderly care

While at this stage there are no



A grasshopper sparrow perches on a barbed wire fence, Tuesday, June 20, 2023, in Denton, Neb. North America's grassland birds are deeply in trouble 50 years after adoption of the Endangered Species Act, with numbers plunging as habitat loss, land degradation and climate change threaten what remains of a once-vast ecosystem. (AP)

talists hope President Joe Biden will veto the measure ...

Although some grassland birds require large contiguous prairie lands, most adapted to living alongside agriculture, Cornell's Rodewald says. That was possible because some habitat was nestled within fields or along the margins and farmers often fallowed some fields.

But more-intensive farming practices - including eliminating hedgerows and buffers, planting fewer crop types and pesticide use - have taken a toll. And climate change is bringing hotter, drier conditions that affect soil health and worsen erosion, while watering holes dry up.

So nonprofits and government agencies are working with farmers and offering incentives to improve soil, preserve grasslands and adopt bird-friendly practices, such as delaying mowing until after nesting season.

To help target conservation efforts, the Bird Conservancy is integrating its population and habitat data with other sources, including the US Geological Survey's long-running breeding bird survey and Cornell's eBird sightings database.

Still, much is unknown: If birds must travel great distances to find suitable breeding habitat, does that affect breeding success? Where do they stop during migration and for how long? What's happening on their wintering grounds and how many birds return from their winter territory?

"Where along that full life cycle both in time and space are these birds suffering the most?" says Andy Boyce, a research ecologist at the Smithsonian's Migratory Bird Center who studies the Sprague's pipit. "We need to figure out a lot of this before we can even start to prioritize where conservation actually needs to take place.'

#### Track

Researchers aim to find out through a growing network of radio telemetry receivers being installed across the Great Plains to help track birds from Canada to Mexico's Chihuahuan desert.

When a bird fitted with a tiny transmitter flies within 12 miles (20 kilometers) of a receiver - mounted on towers, poles and other structures - information is stored on a computer connected to a cell network accessible to researchers

Radio telemetry is more efficient than traditional banding that requires birds to be caught or spotted again to provide data on movements and longevity, researchers say. That's key because many grassland birds roam the Great Plains for the best nesting habitat instead of returning to the same spot every year - a trait that evolved when wildfires and great bison herds created a constantly shifting grassland mosaic.

The receivers, part of the Motus Wildlife Tracking System managed by Birds Canada, have been installed extensively throughout Eastern and Western North America., but there were few in central grasslands until recent years, Boyce says.

Researchers are about halfway to building a network of 150 or more receivers from Canada into Mexico, says Matthew Webb, an ecologist who leads the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies' installation efforts.

Several years ago, Baird's sparrows, which have lost more than half of their population since 1970 and almost exclusively breed in the northern Great Plains states and Canada, suddenly showed up in Colorado and have bred there successfully since. It's unclear, Webb says, if their range is expanding or if disturbance in their core breeding area - perhaps oil and gas drilling - forced them to turn back and use less-ideal habitat.

In South Dakota, the Cammacks allowed the bird conservancy to install the tracking tower on their ranch and another group has conducted surveys that found several tipping point species.



Obrador



Longest alligator captured: A group of hunters have captured the longest alli gator ever to be recorded in Mississippi, according to the state Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks.

Four state residents - Donald Woods, Will Thomas, Joey Clark and Tanner White - harvested a male alligator Satur-

day in west Mississippi's Sunflower River. It weighed 802.5 pounds (364 kilo-grams) and measured 14 feet, 3 inches (4.3 meters) long, breaking the previous record by over 2 inches, the department said.

After capturing the animal, the hunters hoisted it with a forklift and posed for a picture at Red Antler Processing in the Mississippi Delta town of Yazoo City.

The area is located in a designated alligator hunting zone. Mississippi's alligator hunting season opens on the last Friday in August each year. In 2023, the season ends Sept 4. (AP)

Pandas celebrate 4th bday: The first giant pandas born in Germany celebrated their fourth birthday Thursday as the Berlin Zoo prepares to send them to China, a journey that was delayed by the COV-ID-19 pandemic.

Pit and Paule, who also are known by the Chinese names Meng Xiang und Meng Yuan, have been a star attraction at the zoo since their birth in 2019. On Thursday, keepers presented them with an ice cake made with apples, carrots and beetroot, and a side serving of snow.

While China for decades gifted friendly nations with its unofficial mascot as part of a policy of "panda diplomacy," the country now loans pandas to zoos on commercial terms. Pit and Paule's parents, Jiao Qing and Meng Meng, arrived in Berlin in 2017.

Florian Sicks, the zoo's curator for mammals, said the young pandas belong to China and its Chengdu Panda Base, and officials hope the pair will travel there soon. (AP)

5m bees fall off truck: Police west of Toronto on Wednesday warned drivers to keep their car windows closed after a truck spilled crates carrying five million bees onto a road.

Halton Regional Police said they received a call around 6:15 a.m. reporting

But, in an ironic twist, the coronavirus pandemic and the worldwide spread of social distancing put on hold our simulation of isolation on Mars.

The Conversation is an indepen-

dent and nonprofit source of news,

analysis and commentary from ac-

was supposed to travel to "Mars"

Lthis month. The plan was to stay two

weeks at the Mars Desert Research

Station - actually in the Utah desert -

to simulate human operations on the

red planet. Eight of us were to live in a

two-story cylinder, 24 feet in diameter.

We would conserve water and put on

mock spacesuits every time we ven-

ademic experts.

tured outside.

My main goal had been to collect data for my dissertation. I research groups in space-analog environments isolated and confined places that share characteristics with human space missions. I'm especially interested in the way gender contributes to individuals' influence within a group and how men and women manage their emotions in isolation and confinement.

I will not go to "Mars" this spring. As I am self-isolating at home, though, I keep thinking about what lessons for future space travel the current situation can provide. Astronauts have shared tips on how to survive long periods of loneliness and isolation. Maybe in return, the experiences of millions living under lockdown can offer insights into previously understudied social effects of isolation and aid future space travel.

Let me be clear: By no means am I denying the seriousness of the pandemic, and I am not reducing vitally important social distancing measures to a set of convenient social observations.

However, the more researchers understand the social effects of isolation on regular people - as opposed to those certified to have "the right stuff" - the better we will be prepared for the fu-

the bee crates had come loose from a truck and spilled onto Guelph Line, north of Dundas Street, in Burlington, Ontario, just west of Toronto.

It was "quite the scene," Const Rvan Anderson said.

"Crates were literally on the road and swarms of bees were flying around," he said. "The initial beekeeper that was on scene was apparently stung a few times."

change dynamics of group behavior. If you've ever shared a workplace with a romantic couple, for instance, you probably know there can be some drama.

#### Support

So far, only one married couple has been to space. Researchers suggest that couples are better equipped to handle isolation because of mutual social support. Having couples on board makes the team feel closer as a whole.

However, anecdotal evidence from China suggests that divorce rates jumped after the quarantine. This factoid suggests that it's not clear whether average real-world couples are better suited for isolation than single individuals.

Now, researchers like me have an opportunity to understand how couple dynamics influence life in isolation including sex and sexuality, questions that NASA is not eager to address. While pregnancy can be dangerous, intimacy and sexuality can improve emotional and mental well-being over long periods of social isolation.

In addition to intimate relationships, current isolation conditions mean researchers could pay more attention to structural gender inequalities accentuated by the pandemic. Women in gen-

The scene prompted police to warn drivers to close their windows as they passed by and for pedestrians to avoid the area.

About an hour after police put out a notice on social media, several beekeepers were in touch with police offering to help. Six or seven beekeepers eventually arrived at the scene, Anderson said.

By around 9:15 am, police said most of the five million bees had been safely



A child plays in the surf as the first bands of tropical storm Idalia began effecting Surfside Beach in Myrtle Beach, S.C. on Wednesday, Aug. 30, after the passage of Hurricane Idalia. (JAP)

screaming toddlers in space, spaceanalog research shows similar trends of women taking care of other crew members. The widespread lockdown could allow researchers to get more data on how social norms and expectations about each gender - for example, who is supposed to offer more emotional support - influence behavior in mixed-gender groups in highly uncertain and stressful situations.

Whether you are in deep space or in quarantine, communication with family and friends outside is crucial for your well-being.

In the past weeks, social lives have moved online, from work conference calls to Friday night trivia. The current situation can help to settle the debate whether online communication can or cannot replace real-life conversations. What forms of digital communications are closest to meeting a friend for a real cup of coffee? How often should astronauts host a digital happy hour en route to Mars?

There is no doubt that coronaviruscaused social isolation will take a toll on individual and collective mental health. But staying home saves lives. Maybe this experience will also provide lessons on how to plan for future cities and social life on another planet. (AP)

collected and the crates were being hauled away. Some crates had been left behind for the uncollected bees to return to them on their own. (AP)

#### 

'Expand net-snagging hooks': Mexico's Navy said Wednesday it is planning to expand the area where it sinks concrete blocks topped with metal hooks to snag gill nets that are killing vaquita marina porpoises.

The Navy began dropping the blocks into the Gulf of California last year, in hopes it may help save the world's most endangered marine mammal. Mexico's president is Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

The vaquita lives only in the Gulf, also known as the Sea of Cortez, where as few as ten vaquitas remain. They cannot be held or bred in captivity.

The vaquitas are caught and drown in illegal gill nets set for totoaba, a Gulf fish whose swim bladder is considered a prized delicacy in China, worth thousands of dollars per pound. That is where the concrete blocks come in; the hooks catch on the expensive totoaba nets, ruining them.

That should supposedly discourage illicit fishermen from risking their expensive gear in the "zero tolerance area," a rough quadrangle considered the last holdout for the vaquitas. It's called that because that's where the blocks are sunk, and where patrols are heaviest, and there is supposed to be no fishing at all, though it still sometimes occurs. (AP)

## **SPORTS**

# Yankees end 10-series winless streak

Harper's 300th homer not enough as Angels rally past Phillies

DETROIT, Aug 31, (AP): The New York Yankees ended a 10-series winless streak as Gleyber Torres homered for the third straight game in a 6-2 victory over the Detroit Tigers on Wednesday night.

"I'm trying to follow my plan every day and when I get to home plate, do all the little things," Torres said. "I'm just trying to enjoy this and try to hit the pitches I can hit."

Torres is hitting .273 with 23 homers and 57 RBIs.

DJ LaMahieu and Giancarlo Stanton also homered for the Yankees, who have won the first three games of the four-game set. They hadn't won a series since sweeping three games from Kansas City from July 21-23 and hadn't taken a road series since winning two of three at Oakland from June 27-29.

#### BASEBALL

Stanton reached 20 homers for the 12th time in 14 seasons, the most times at 20 in the major leagues since 2010. He has 398 homers in his big league career

Gerrit Cole (12-4) allowed two runs and four hits in six innings, winning back-to-back starts for the first time since May 28 and June 3. His 2.95 ERA dropped into second in the AL behind Minnesota's Sonny Gray at 2.92.

Ian Hamilton finished a four-hitter for his second save.

Jake Rogers and Spencer Torkelson homered for the Tigers, who have lost five straight and seven of nine on a 10game homestand.

#### Angels 10, Phillies 8

In Philadelphia, Bryce Harper put the Philadelphia Phillies ahead in the eighth inning with his 300th home run, but Brandon Drury capped a three-run ninth with a tiebreaking, two-run homer than lifted the Los Angeles Angels to victory that prevented a three-game sweep.

In a game with four lead changes, Los Angeles led 7-6 before Harper's two-run homer in the eighth off Matt Moore (4-1). Harper and Moore were 1-2 among Baseball America's top prospects in 2012.

Harper's homer, his 15th this season and 10th in August, came in the 30-yearold's 1,481st game. He homered in three straight games for the second time this month and has 10 homers in August. Moore was the 224th pitcher he went deep against.

#### Cubs 3, Brewers 2

In Chicago, Cody Bellinger drove in the tiebreaking run with a ricochet infield single in the eighth inning and the Chicago Cubs beat Milwaukee to pull within three games of the first-place Brewers in the NL Central.

Bellinger's sharply hit ball up the middle glanced off the right ankle or foot of reliever Joel Payamps and to

Luis Robert Jr. hit his 35th home run in the third inning to put Chicago ahead won 17 of their last 22 for good. Andrew Vaughn and Óscar

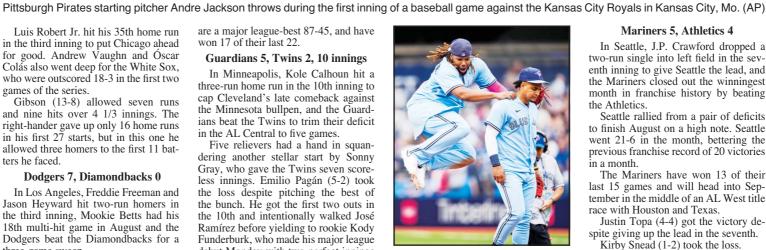
> Gray, who gave the Twins seven score-Ramírez before yielding to rookie Kody debut Monday with two perfect innings

#### Reds 4, Giants 1

In San Francisco, Christian Encarnacion-Strand homered and drove in three runs in his first four-hit game in the majors, and the Reds beat the Giants to

avoid a three-game sweep. Encarnacion-Strand, a Bay Area native who played at College Park High School in Pleasant Hill, finished a triple shy of the cycle.

Elly De La Cruz and Luke Maile each had two hits, and Hunter Greene outdueled Logan Webb (9-11) in his first career start against San Francisco.



Toronto Blue Jays' Vladimir Guerrero Jr. (right) leaps while celebrating with teammate Santiago Espinal after defeating the Washington Nationals in MLB interleague baseball action in Toronto. (AP)

in extra-inning games, according to the

Elias Sports Bureau. St. Louis trailed 4-3 before Masyn Winn doubled off Hader (0-3) with two outs in the ninth and Edman sliced a sinker to the opposite field and into the Cardinals bullpen behind the right-field wall. Edman's 10th-inning single on Tuesday night gave St. Louis a 6-5 win.

Blue Jays 7, Nationals 0

Mariners 5, Athletics 4

In Seattle, J.P. Crawford dropped a two-run single into left field in the seventh inning to give Seattle the lead, and the Mariners closed out the winningest month in franchise history by beating the Athletics.

Seattle rallied from a pair of deficits to finish August on a high note. Seattle went 21-6 in the month, bettering the previous franchise record of 20 victories in a month.

The Mariners have won 13 of their last 15 games and will head into September in the middle of an AL West title race with Houston and Texas.

Justin Topa (4-4) got the victory de-spite giving up the lead in the seventh. Kirby Snead (1-2) took the loss.

#### Astros 7, Red Sox 4

In Boston, Framber Valdez, who pitched seven no-hit innings in his previous start, retired the first 10 Boston batters on Wednesday and took a shutout into the sixth inning to help the Astros complete their first sweep at Fenway Park.

Houston, which played in the NL for 50 years before switching in 2012, has won five straight as it fights for a third consecutive AL West title. The Astros entered the day essentially tied with -.001 behind - the Texas Rangers and Seattle Mariners; all three teams remain in contention for the AL wild-card spots

The Red Sox lost for the fifth time in

six games and are fifth in the race for the

three AL wild-card berths, four games

behind Toronto and seven back from the

AL West pack heading into Wednesday

on Aug. 1 and left Friday's start against

Detroit with a no-hitter intact before the

Rays 3, Marlins 0

ing single during Tampa Bay's three-

run 10th inning, and the Rays beat the

Marlins for their fourth straight victory.

on a four-hitter. After going 8-17 in July, the Rays closed out a 17-8 August

Four Tampa Bay pitchers combined

In Miami, Josh Lowe hit a tiebreak-

Valdez (10-9) no-hit the Guardians

night's game.

bullpen took the loss.

**MLB Results/Standings** WASHINGTON, Aug 31, (AP); Results and stand-

14

ings from MLB games on Wednesday. Chicago W. Sox 10 Baltimore 5 Cleveland 5 Minnesota 10 inn 2 Toronto 7 Washington 0 Seattle 5 Oakland 4 Houston 7 Boston 4										
Cleveland 5 Minnesota 10 inn 2 Toronto 7 Washington 0										
Toronto 7 Washington 0										
Seattle 5 Oakland 4										
Houston 7 Poston 4										
Houston 7 Boston 4										
Tampa Bay3Miami 10 inn0NY Yankees6Detroit2										
NY Yankees 6 Detroit 2										
NY Mets 6 Texas 10 inn 5										
Pittsburgh 4 Kansas City 1										
Chicago Cubs 3 Milwaukee 2										
St Louis 5 San Diego 4 Toronto 7 Washington 0										
Cincinnati 4 San Francisco 1 Atlanta 7 Colorado 3										
LA Dodgers 7 Arizona 0										
American League										
East Division										
W L Pct GB										
Baltimore 83 50 .624 -										
Tampa Bay 82 52 .612 1-1/2										
Toronto 73 61 .545 10-1/2										
Boston 69 65 .515 14-1/2										
New York 65 68 .489 18										
Central Division										
W L Pct GB										
Minnesota 69 65 .515 -										
Cleveland 64 70 .478 5										
Detroit 59 74 .444 9-1/2										
Chicago 53 81 .396 16										
Kansas City 41 94 .304 28-1/2										
West Division W L Pct GB										
Seattle 76 57 .571 -										
Houston 77 58 .570 –										
Texas 75 58 .564 1										
Los Angeles 64 70 .478 12-1/2										
Oakland 39 95 .291 37-1/2										
National League										
East Division										
W L Pct GB										
Atlanta 87 45 .659 -										
Philadelphia 74 59 .556 13-1/2										
Miami 66 67 .496 21-1/2										
Washington 62 72 .463 26										
New York 61 73 .455 27										
Central Division										
W L Pct GB Milwaukee 74 59 .556 -										
Milwaukee 74 59 .556 – Chicago 71 62 .534 3										
Cincinati 69 66 .511 6										
Pittsburgh 61 73 .455 13-1/2										
St Louis 58 76 .433 16-1/2										
West Division										
W L Pct GB										
Los Angeles 83 49 .629 -										
San Francisco 69 64 .519 14-1/2										
Arizona 69 65 .515 15										
San Diego 62 72 .463 22										
Colorado 49 84 .368 34-1/2										

and pulled within 11/2 games of AL Eastleading Baltimore.

Jonathan Aranda opened the 10th with an infield single for the Rays' third hit of the game, moving automatic runner Jose Siri to third. Lowe, hitting for Vidal Brujan, then singled back up the middle against David Robertson (4-6).

Randy Arozarena added a two-run single as the Rays won for the eighth time in nine games overall.

#### Mets 6, Rangers 5, 10 innings

In New York, DJ Stewart homered twice, then forced in the winning run when he was hit by an Aroldis Chapman pitch with the bases loaded in the 10th inning as the Mets beat Texas 6-5 and dropped the Rangers into third place in the tight AL West.

Stewart also made a running backhand catch while crashing into the fence in the ninth inning, robbing Marcus Semien of an extra-base hit.

Texas (75-58) lost for the 10th time in 13 games and fell from a first-place tie with Seattle (76-57), also dropping behind Houston (77-58). The Rangers finished 3-6 trip and is 10-17 on the road since July 1.

are a major league-best 87-45, and have Guardians 5, Twins 2, 10 innings Colás also went deep for the White Sox, In Minneapolis, Kole Calhoun hit a who were outscored 18-3 in the first two three-run home run in the 10th inning to games of the series. Gibson (13-8) allowed seven runs cap Cleveland's late comeback against the Minnesota bullpen, and the Guardand nine hits over 4 1/3 innings. The ians beat the Twins to trim their deficit right-hander gave up only 16 home runs in his first 27 starts, but in this one he in the AL Central to five games. Five relievers had a hand in squanallowed three homers to the first 11 batdering another stellar start by Sonny

less innings. Emilio Pagán (5-2) took the loss despite pitching the best of the bunch. He got the first two outs in the 10th and intentionally walked José Funderburk, who made his major league against the Guardians.

third baseman Andruw Monasterio. Bellinger beat out Monasterio's throw, allowing Mike Tauchman to score from third

After dropping the first game of the series Monday, the Cubs came back to take the next two with solid pitching and defense. At 71-62, Chicago is a seasonhigh nine games above .500.

#### White Sox 10, Orioles 5

In Baltimore, The White Sox hit three home runs off 13-game winner Kyle Gibson to rally from an early four-run deficit and beat the Orioles, avoiding a three-game sweep.

Anthony Santander homered for the AL East-leading Orioles, who led 4-0 in the first inning before fading to their third loss in 12 games.

#### Braves7, Rockies 3

**Dodgers 7, Diamondbacks 0** 

Jason Heyward hit two-run homers in

the third inning, Mookie Betts had his

18th multi-hit game in August and the

Dodgers beat the Diamondbacks for a

three-game sweep. The NL West leaders won their fourth

in a row overall and fifth straight at

home, outscoring the D-backs 23-5 in

the series and finishing with their 13th shutout of the season. The Dodgers out-

Freeman hit his MLB-leading 51st

Betts, who singled in the first, reached

on an infield single to short leading off

the third. Freeman followed with a 440-

foot blast - third-longest for the Dodg-

ers this season - into right field for a

double in the fourth, leaving him one shy of tying Johnny Frederick (1929)

hit the D-backs 38-20.

2-0 lead.

for most in franchise history.

In Los Angeles, Freddie Freeman and

ters he faced.

In Denver, Darius Vines pitched six strong innings to win in his major league debut and Marcell Ozuna homered for the second time in as many games as the Braves beat the Rockies to complete a season sweep.

Kevin Pillar and Orlando Arcia also homered for the Braves, who finished 7-0 against the Rockies for their third season sweep of Colorado. Atlanta outscored Colorado 64-20 over the season

The Braves went 6-0 against Colorado in 2003 and 13-0 in 1993, the first year of the Rockies' existence. Atlanta has won its last eight game at Coors Field against the Rockies, who lost for the ninth time in 10 games. The Braves

Greene (3-6) struck out six in 5 1/3 innings in his first win since June 17. The right-hander, who missed much of this season with a right hip injury, allowed an unearned run and three hits.

Fighting for an NL wild card, Cincinnati (69-66) stopped a three-game slide and improved to 10-17 in August.

#### Cardinals 5, Padres 4, 11 innings

In St. Louis, Tommy Edman hit a two-run homer off Josh Hader in the 11th for his second walk-off hit in two days off the All-Star closer, and the Cardinals beat San Diego to drop the Padres to 0-12 in extra innings this season.

San Diego wasted a 3-0 lead and matched the expansion 1969 Montreal Expos, who had the most losses by a team that finished the season winless

In Toronto, Alejandro Kirk had three hits and three RBIs, Chris Bassitt and Jay Jackson combined on a five-hitter and the Blue Jays beat the Nationals.

Santiago Espinal had two hits and two RBIs and Ernie Clement had two hits and drove in a run as the Blue Jays took two of three from the Nationals, denying Washington a sixth straight series victory.

Kirk hit a two-run double in the first inning, doubled and scored in the fourth, singled and scored in the sixth and hit a sacrifice fly in the seventh.

Bassitt (13-7) allowed three hits in eight innings.

Nationals left-hander Patrick Corbin (9-12) lost for the first time in three starts.

if they falter.

#### Pirates 4, Royals 1

In Kansas City, Andre Jackson pitched two-hit ball into the sixth inning in his first major league win, and the Pirates beat the Royals for a three-game sweep.

Jackson (1-1) struck out a career-high seven and walked two in 5 2/3 innings. The 27-year-old right-hander, who made his big league debut in 2021 with the Los Angeles Dodgers, allowed one run in his 20th major league appearance.

Bryan Reynolds and Jack Suwinski homered for the Pirates (61-73), and Vinny Capra hit an RBI double.

#### Luton host West Ham, Burnley at home to Tottenham

## Everton already destined for another tough season

LONDON, Aug 31, (AP): Never again, they said.

Never again could Everton, a permanent fixture in England's top soccer league since the 1950s, be dragged into the kind of end-of-season relegation scrap this storied club has found itself in far too many times for comfort over the last few years.

That was the widespread feeling inside Goodison Park on May 28 as Everton produced another last-day escape act - its third in less than three decades - to preserve its place in the Premier League and avoid slipping into the Championship and potentially financial ruin.

"We need to realize the mistakes we made this season," Everton midfielder Abdoulaye Doucoure said at the time.

Well, guess what? It looks to be happening again.

Three games in and Everton has no points and no goals. That hasn't happened before in the club's 145year history. The start of the season almost went from very bad to worse on Wednesday when Sean Dyche's team entered the final 20 minutes of its English League Cup match against Doncaster - an opponent lying in last place in the fourth division - a goal down and posing minimal threat.

Late goals rescued a 2-1 victory but it was hardly the kind of performance to instil confidence in supporters ahead of what already looks to be a huge Premier League match on Saturday: Away to Sheffield United.

Neither team has a point and both seem destined for a season of struggle and to be among the relegation candidates.

That was to be expected of Sheffield United, recently promoted and a club that lost two of its best players - Sander Berge and Iliman Ndiaye during the offseason and found it hard to replace them.

But Everton? Again? So much for this being a campaign when Dyche restored "The Toffees" -

SOCCER

as they are nicknamed - into a solid, hard-to-beat team, got Everton back up toward mid-table and brought some renewed hope ahead of the club's move to a new 53,888-capacity stadium at Bramley-Moore Dock for the start of the 2024-25 season. There was a summer overhaul of the

board - including the departure of CEO Denise Barrett-Baxendale - and the hope of new investment, reportedly from New York-based MSP Sports Capital.

There's been no sign of progress on that front, a major blow for a club which posted losses in excess of 430 million pounds (\$540 million) over the last four years and has an outstanding Premier League charge for allegedly breaching profit and sustainability rules. It's a difficult situation for majority owner Farhad Moshiri, a British-Iranian billionaire and business partner of Russian metals tycoon Alisher Usmanov, who was sanc-



Doncaster Rovers' Sam Brown (left), battles for the ball with Everton's Idrissa Gueye, during the English League Cup second round match between Everton and Doncaster Rovers at the Eco-Power Stadium in Doncaster, England. Everton won 2-1. (AP)

tioned by the European Union last year in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine - leading to Everton halting its major sponsorship with companies belonging to Usmanov.

Unsurprisingly, the business in the summer transfer window has been unforward who turned down Everton in favor of Tottenham last season - arriving on loan and young, unproven strikers Beto and Chermiti coming in for a combined \$50 million. On the field, Everton has already lost

at home to Fulham and Wolverhampton and been thrashed 4-0 at Aston Villa. Its 121st season in the top flight is looking like being similar to many others in recent years - painful for the supporters of this founder member of the English league in 1888.

What might save Everton this season is the fact that the three teams who have just been promoted - Sheffield United, Luton and Burnley - already look ill-equipped to cope in the Premier League.

Saturday's game at Bramall Lane should, then, be instructive, even if Sheffield United's players themselves will be thinking there is no better time to get off the mark.

Burnley and Luton are also stuck on zero points, though they have played only two games each. Their meeting in round two was postponed because Luton's stadium at Kenilworth Road wasn't ready to stage the game.

It is now, and Luton hosts West Ham on Friday. Burnley is at home to Tottenham.

### Lyon in 'crisis' amid a fight between owner Textor and former boss Aulas

PARIS, Aug 31, (AP): There was a time when Lyon ruled French soccer. Back when the likes of Karim Benzema, Brazil midfielder Juninho and France winger Florent Malouda were helping the club win seven consecutive league titles at the start of the century.

Well, that was a long time ago. And it doesn't look like such a dynasty can be revived soon, with the club now plunged in a sporting crisis amid a legal dispute between its current owner, American businessman John Textor, and his predecessor.

It was worth listening to Lyon midfielder Corentin Tolisso when he left the field last weekend after another worrying display from his team, a 0-0 draw at Nice that left Lyon second from last with only one point from three matches.

"Today, we're the Olympique Lyonnais of 2023-2024. We're not the Olympique Lyonnais of 2002-2003," Tolisso summed up. "We're not going to take ourselves for others. We're not like our predecessors ... And today, the Olympique Lyonnais of 2023-24 is happy to take a point at Nice."

Nobody will blame Tolisso, a product of the club's renowned academy who returned to Lyon last year to help it back to its glory days, for speaking the truth.

But it's unlikely his words of wisdom will have pleased Textor, who proclaimed his ambition to target the dominance of Paris Saint-Germain when he became the club's main shareholder last year.

Saying that things didn't work out as the new boss had hoped would be an understatement.

After finishing last season in seventh place and 23 points behind PSG, Lyon got off to its worst start to a season since 1966 with two consecutive losses that included a 4-1 home defeat. Still winless, coach Laurent Blanc is now under pressure ahead of Sunday's game against PSG, and Textor has made clear he wants improvement.

But Blanc has limited means to get things back on track, with several key players injured and only a few arrivals from the transfer window, including forwards Mama Balde and Ernest Nuamah, as well as former Arsenal midfielder Ainsley Maitland-Niles.

Blanc has been complaining about the frugal offseason purchases, but there is nothing much Textor could have been doing after a decision by French soccer's financial watchdog to

#### SOCCER

monitor the club's transfer activities this season.

Because of the restrictions imposed by the DNCG, Lyon was allowed to bring in new players but its moves in the market have been limited under "a framework for wage costs and transfer indemnities" that hampered its recruiting.

The DNCG ruled that Lyon did not provide sufficient financial guarantees despite Textor's financial arguments.

"We lost an opportunity to be aggressive this summer, to go after targeted players that Lyon doesn't usually go after," Textor was quoted as saying in an interview with several media outlets. 'We weren't able to make that leap forward. It's a terrible feeling to be going into this 'mercato' with one hand tied behind our backs. We have the investment scale to position ourselves on players valued at 30 to 50 million euros, but we can't spend that money."

derwhelming, with 38-year-old Ashley Young joining on a free transfer, Jack Harrison - a winger currently injured - and Arnaut Danjuma - a

#### Brook, Malan prove points to guide England

## Australia thrash South Africa by 111 runs in Durban T20

DURBAN, South Africa, Aug 31, (AP): Australia turned the highest Twenty20 total at Kingsmead into a 111-run win over South Africa.

Made to bat first, Australia put up 226-6 then bowled out South Africa for 115 in 15.3 overs.

New captain Mitch Marsh led with a 22-ball fifty in an unbeaten 92, and was supported by Tim David's 28-ball 64.

All four debutants contributed, especially leg-spinner Tanveer Sangha with 4-31 and fast bowler Spencer Johnson's 2-33.

South Africa never got going. It was 69-5 and lost its last five wickets for nine runs.

Marsh walked in after only three deliveries and plundered 20 runs in the game's second over bowled by Lungi Ngidi.

Matthew Short went after Marco Jansen and the 50 partnership was raised in less than four overs.

Marsh hit medium-pacer Lizaad Williams out of Kingsmead in the fifth over and achieved his fastest T20 fifty - off 22 balls - in the ninth over.

David slapped Tabraiz Shamsi for sixes over long on and midwicket, and sent a delivery by new medium-pacer Gerald Coetzee over midwicket.

After his 24-ball half-century, David had one more six in him, pulling Shamsi, before he was out to a

CRICKET

great catch by Temba Bavuma on the boundary.

David and Marsh combined for 97 runs.

Marsh was losing steam but finished unbeaten after 13 boundaries and two sixes.

South Africa's reply was a bust. Bavuma inside-edged Marcus

Stoinis on to his stumps in the first over. Stoinis was tagged for 15 runs

by Rassie van der Dussen, and new fast left-armer Johnson went for 17 straight after.

But Van der Dussen fell to Sean Abbott on 21 and Sangha's introduction decisively ended the contest. Sangha's first over netted captain Aiden Markram, who cut straight to Stoinis at backward point.

Batting newcomer Dewald Brevis lasted six balls, hitting Sangha straight to long off. Tristan Stubbs was stumped next ball, at 69-5.

Sangha wound up with four wickets while South Africa opener Reeza Hendricks batted through for 56 off 43.

Stoinis returned with two wickets in one over, and Johnson got the last two in one over, including Hendricks.

The second T20 is on Friday.

Playing with points to prove, Harry Brook and Dawid Malan guided England to an easy win over New Zealand in the first of four Twenty20 internationals between the teams.

Brook (43 not out off 27 balls) and Malan (54 off 42) shared a 54-run partnership as England reached its target of 140 with six overs to spare at Chester-le-Street for a sevenwicket victory.

England's selectors surprisingly left Brook out of the squad for the 50-over World Cup in India starting in October but his form is making a mockery of that decision.

Widely viewed as one of the world's most destructive batsmen, he starred in the recently completed edition of The Hundred and was devastating against New Zealand in hitting three sixes and two fours.

Malan, meanwhile, got a muchneeded big score after some patchy recent form, reaching fifty for the 16th time in T20 internationals and helping to steady the innings after the early loss of Jonny Bairstow (4) in England's reply to New Zealand's 139-9.

Liam Livingstone (10) got England over the line with a huge pull for six. Jos Buttler, England's captain and star batter, wasn't even needed to bat.

Malan and Livingstone are in England's World Cup squad and Brook is putting huge pressure on selectors to get the call, too, with the group heading for India not having to be finalized until the end of September. Put into bat, New Zealand saw Glenn Phillips hit the team's top score of 41 off 38 balls but the tour-



England's Luke Wood celebrates taking the wicket of New Zealand's Devon Conway, during the first T20 cricket match between England and New Zealand, at the Seat Unique Riverside, in County Durham, England. (AP)

**Barca visit Osasuna** 

Real host crosstown rivals Getafe

ists struggled after losing three wickets in 12 balls from 25-0.

Pace bowler Brydon Carse had 3-23 off four overs on his T20 international debut while Luke Wood, who was hit for three sixes by Finn Allen (21) off the first over of the match, had figures of 3-37.

The second match of the series is in Manchester on Friday.

## Babar, Iftikhar centuries lead Pak to big win over Nepal in Asia Cup



BARCELONA, Spain, Aug 31, (AP): When Real Madrid spent more than \$140 million for Jude Bellingham, the Spanish powerhouse was confident it had locked up the heir to Luka Modric in the midfold for yoars to gome Par

in the midfield for years to come. Barcelona visits Osasuna on Sunday with teenager Lamine Yamal enjoying a breakout start to the season.

The forward became the youngest starter in the history of Barcelona two weekends ago at 16 years, 38 days. Yamal then impressed by playing a role in two goals by teammates in a 4-3 win at Villar-

real. Atletico hosts Sevilla on Sunday following its 7-0 rout of Rayo Vallecano. Sevilla, which won the Europa League in May, has lost all four games it has played this sea-Bellingham including son.

falling to Manchester City in the European Super Cup.

The 14-time European champions hadn't counted on also getting a streak

Bellingham debuted for Madrid less than a month ago, but the 20-year-old England player looks like he has been playing for his new team much, much longer given his impact on the field.

Bellingham, who now wears the No. 5 formerly owned by Zinedine Zidane in Madrid's all-white, has scored in all scorer.

"Bellingham is insane," Madrid defender David Alaba said last week. "I don't know what to say, I'm speechless."

With each goal, all in away games, Bellingham approached the section of visiting fans and raised his arms wide to soak up the applause of Madrid's traveling supporters.

On Saturday, Bellingham will feel the love from the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium for the first time when Madrid hosts crosstown rival Getafe.

Bellingham, who joined Madrid on a 130 million euro (\$142 million) move from Borussia Dortmund, scored eight goals in 31 Bundesliga games last season. He is well on pace to beat that mark.

Bellingham and forward Rodrygo

#### SOCCER

will have even more pressure on them to produce goals after Vinícius Júnior endured a muscle injury to his right leg at Bilbao. Madrid had already lost Thibaut Courtois and Éder Militão to long-term leg injuries.

Getafé held Barcelona to a scoreless draw in their season opener. It has lost at Girona 3-0 and beaten Alaves 1-0 at home since.

Getafe coach José Bordalás knows that his disciplined defense will be well tested by Bellingham.

"We already knew he was a magnificent player, but wow, what a signing," Bordalás told Cadena SER radio.

Pakistan's Babar Azam (right), plays a shot as Nepal's Aasif Sheikh watches during the one-day international cricket match of Asia Cup between Pakistan and Nepal, in Multan, Pakistan. (AP)

three games the team has played this season. He sealed a 2-0 win at Athletic Bilbao in his debut, struck twice in a 3-1 comeback at Almeria, and then headed in a late winner to down Celta Vigo 1-0 on the road.

That total of four goals makes Bellingham the Spanish league's top "Look at the runs he makes, his movement, his ability to join the attack. Madrid made a great decision to sign him."

Madrid leads the league with nine points, followed by Barcelona, Atletico Madrid and a surprising Girona, all two points behind.

#### Newcomers bowled out for 104 in 23.4 overs

MULTAN, Pakistan, Aug 31, (AP): Captain Babar Azam notched his 19th ODI hundred and Iftikhar Ahmed smashed 109 off 71 balls as Pakistan opened the Asia Cup with a resounding 238-run win over newcomer Nepal.

Babar's 151 off 131 deliveries and his double-century fifth-wicket stand with Iftikhar provided Pakistan a strong total of 342-6 after the hosts won the toss and elected to bat in the Group A game.

Nepal, making its first appearance in the Asia Cup, was bowled out for 104 in 23.4 overs.

Shaheen Shah Afridi and Naseem Shah sliced through the toporder with the new ball and then

#### CRICKET

Shadab Khan mopped the tail with 4-27.

Afridi lived up to his reputation of picking up early wickets in white-ball cricket when he had Kushal Bhurtel (8) caught behind and then pinned captain Rohit Paudel plumb leg before wicket off the next delivery.

Naseem then found a thick outside edge of Aasif Sheikh's (5) bat as Nepal slipped to 14-3 inside the first two overs. Top-scorer Sompal Kami (28) and Aarif Shaikh (26) combined in a 59-run stand before express fast bowler Haris Rauf removed both batters in successive overs and Shadab picked up four wickets in quick time.

Earlier, Nepal ran a few jitters in the Pakistan ranks when Fakhar Zaman (14) edged Karan Khatri Chhetri while Imam-ul-Haq couldn't beat a strong throw of Paudel from mid-on and got runout for 5.

But these early setbacks didn't deter the confidence of top-ranked

batter Babar, who first added 86 with Mohammad Rizwan (44) and then annihilated Nepal spin and pace with a brisk partnership of 214 off 131 balls with Iftikhar.

Rizwan was run-out off another superlative fielding effort of Dipendra Singh Airee close to the halfway of the innings before Babar and Iftikhar routed Nepal's inexperienced bowlers. Babar took his time to reach his half-century off 72 balls while Iftikhar was more attacking before raising his maiden ODI hundred off 67 balls.

Nepalese fielders were brilliant in patches, but had several fielding lapses in hot and humid weather of Multan. Imam was dropped at gully by Aarif Sheikh just before he was run-out while Babar got reprieve soon after he had completed his half-century. Nepalese fielders in the outfield fumbled several times and conceded boundaries.

Babar reached his 19th test hundred in his 102nd innings - the quickest in ODI.

Fast bowlers Sompal Kami (2-85) and legspinner Sandeep Lamichhane (1-69) were smacked for boundaries at will that included a couple of one-handed sixes by Babar at backward square leg.

Both batters dominated the latter half of the innings as Pakistan smacked 129 runs off the last 60 balls before Kami picked up the consolation wickets of Babar and Shadab Khan in the last over. Babar holed out at mid-off and Shadab got clean bowled off the final delivery while attempting a ramp shot.

The Asian Cricket Council is organizing this year's tournament in two countries - Pakistan and Sri Lanka - after India refused to travel to Pakistan because of political tensions between the two countries.

The ACC accepted Pakistan's hybrid model, according to which India, placed in Group A, will play all its matches in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka will host nine games, including the final on Sept. 17, while Pakistan will host four games.

Group B includes Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh and all three teams will play at least one game in Pakistan.

#### Canada bidding for first medal ever

### USA in great position entering Round 2 of World Cup

MANILA, Philippines, Aug 31, (AP): The opponent names will become more recognizable for USA Basketball now. Nikola Vucevic awaits on Friday, Jonas Valanciunas on Sunday, and if the Americans keep progressing through this FIBA World Cup the challenges will only get tougher.

To that, they say this: Good.

Second-round play at the World Cup starts Friday, with a 32-team field to start the tournament now down to 16 contenders for the Naismith Trophy. The U.S. is one of eight teams with 3-0 records, and those are the teams that have the easiest path to the quarterfinals.

"There's an immediate respect level from guys going against them in the NBA," U.S. coach Steve Kerr said. "The familiarity really helps as well. The hard part is when you go into a game and there's a great player who these guys don't know, and he's got a last name with lots of letters, and you have to refer to him as No. 5 or whatever and our guys aren't ready for how good this player is. That's a huge challenge in this tournament."

Not anymore. Nobody will need to Google most of the best players on the teams that made Round 2. Luka Doncic is headed there, along with Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, Karl-Anthony Towns, Dennis Schroder, Patty Mills, Bogdan Bogdanovic, Vucevic and Valanciunas - among others.

In Round 2, the U.S. plays Montenegro on Friday and Lithuania on Sunday.

"For us as a country, to get to play against the U.S. will

#### BASKETBALL

be a huge thing," said Vucevic, Montenegro's best player. "We have to go out there and show our best ... and enjoy that game."

Joining the U.S. in Round 2 with 3-0 records out of group play are Slovenia, defending World Cup champion Spain, Canada, Germany, Serbia, the Dominican Republic and Lithuania. For those eight teams, the task is this simple: Win two games this weekend, and the quarterfinals are certain. Each could also lose one of their next two games and still advance.

Also in the second-round field are eight teams that advanced with 2-1 records: Montenegro, Greece, Italy, Puerto Rico, Australia, Georgia, Brazil and Latvia.

The Americans are the only team in the tournament that have won every game so far by at least 27 points. Canada's closest win margin so far is 26; Lithuania's is 20. "Nothing changes," U.S. captain Jalen Brunson said.

"Nothing changes," U.S. captain Jalen Brunson said. "The approach has to be the same. It's almost the knockout stage, and we approach the game like it's our last game every game. We've got to keep that same mentality. There's just a lot more at stake now." There's more than just the World Cup at stake, even.

Australia has already qualified for next year's Paris Olympics. All 15 remaining second-round teams are still in the mix to clinch an automatic berth in those games based on their finish here; two of the five Americas teams will get Olympic spots, two of the 10 European teams left will get them as well.

For those teams that keep winning, the Olympic spots will take care of themselves.

"Our goal, our first goal, was to win the group stage," said Gilgeous-Alexander, Canada's top player and one of two current All-NBA players in the tournament - Doncic, the Dallas star who leads Slovenia, being the other. "But we're not done. We're not satisfied. And we have five more games to try to go win."

Canada is bidding for its first World Cup medal ever. There will be at least two teams on the medal podium that didn't get there at the last World Cup in 2019; Spain - which has an 11-game World Cup winning streak - is still alive, but silver medalist Argentina didn't qualify for this tournament and bronze medalist France was ousted in Round 1.

"Our goal for this season was to make it to the quarterfinals and then relax and see what happens," Spain coach Sergio Scariolo said. "It's going to be a hell of a challenge."

As far as the various permutations go to advance, the U.S. doesn't seem that interested in anything besides the most obvious path - win Friday, win Sunday and go into the quarterfinals unbeaten entering the win-or-else round.

"When you put this uniform on, losing's not really an option," U.S. guard Tyrese Haliburton said. "Every game holds real weight. It's serious for us. We're not looking at it as, 'Oh, if we lose, we can still win it.' It's just about improving every game."

Some of the most intriguing second-round matchups:

Dominican Republic vs. Puerto Rico, Friday at Manila: Regional rivals and both probably need a win to keep realistic hopes of getting an automatic Olympic berth.

■ Italy vs. Serbia, Friday at Manila: Italy has won the last two meetings, including a victory in Belgrade to go to the Tokyo Olympics (and knock Serbia out) and a win in last year's EuroBasket opening knockout stage.

■ Slovenia vs. Australia, Friday at Okinawa: A rematch of the Tokyo Olympics bronze-medal game, won by Australia.

■ Lithuania vs. U.S., Sunday at Manila: Lithuania's super-proud basketball history includes beating the Americans at the 1998 world championships (the U.S. had no NBA players because of a lockout) and at the 2004 Athens Olympics.

Canada vs. Spain, Sunday at Jakarta: The upstart Canadians against the defending champions.



Japan guard Yuki Kawamura (5) looks to pass the ball to a teammate against Venezuela center Windi Graterol (15) in the first half of their Basketball World Cup classification match in Okinawa, southern Japan. Japan won 86-77. (AP)



Japan's team members celebrate after defeating Venezuela in their Basketball World Cup classification match in Okinawa, southern Japan. (AP)



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South Sudan keep hopes alive

## Japan rally to beat Venezuela at WC, close in on Olympic berth

MANILA, Philippines, Aug 31, (AP): Japan is one win away from getting back to the Olympics.

Makoto Hiejima scored 23 points, Yuta Watanabe added 21 and Japan roared back from a 15-point thirdquarter deficit to beat Venezuela 86-77 on Thursday in a classification round game at the Basketball World Cup in Okinawa, Japan.

Yuki Kawamura scored 19 for Japan (2-2), which would clinch a berth in the Paris Olympics with a win over Cape Verde on Saturday.

Garlo Sojo led Venezuela (0-4) with 20 points, and Nestor Colmenares added 17.

A win Saturday would give Japan its second consecutive Olympic berth. The team played in the Tokyo Games two summers ago as the host nation, but fans could not attend because of restrictions related to the pandemic.

Lauri Markkanen scored 34 points and Finland (1-3) got its first win of the World Cup.

Ivan Almeida led Cape Verde (1-3) with 17 points.

#### BASKETBALL

At Manila, Carlik Jones nearly had a triple-double - 17 points, 14 assists and nine rebounds - as South Sudan (2-2) kept alive in the race to take the automatic Olympic qualifying berth from the African region.

Jordan Clarkson scored 24 for the Philippines (0-4).

France got 13 points from Elie Okobo and 12 from Nando De Colo to improve to 2-2 and now has a chance to leave this World Cup with a winning record.

Rudy Gobert returned from an ankle issue and had nine points, nine rebounds and four blocks for France. Benham Yakhchali and Meisam Mirzaei led Iran (0-4) with 11 points apiece.

Hu Jinqiu scored 20 points for China (1-3). Childe Dundao led Angola (1-3) with 17 points.

Pako Cruz scored 27 points and Mexico (1-3) wasted most of a 19-point lead before holding on to top New Zealand.

Reuben Te Rangi led all scorers with 32 for New Zealand (1-3).

Assem Marei had 20 points and 14 rebounds, Ehab Amin added 20 points and Egypt (2-2) pulled away in the fourth quarter.

# Zhang upsets Ruud at US Open



Novak Djokovic, of Serbia, returns a shot to Bernabe Zapata Miralles, of Spain, during the second round of the U.S. Open tennis championships in New York. (AP)

Remarkable show

NEW YORK, Aug 31, (AP): Casper Ruud, the 2022 U.S



Tiafoe into third round, Wozniacki ousts Kvitova

two highly seeded men exited on his half of the draw: No. 5 Casper Ruud, last year's runner-up, and No. 7 Stefanos Tsitsipas. With No. 4 Holger Rune out in the first round, three of the tournament's top seven men already are gone A year ago at Flushing Meadows, Tiafoe's career changed and his life did, too. He beat Rafael Nadal in the fourth round along the way to reaching the semifinals of a major for the first time, then pushing eventual champion Carlos Alcaraz to the limit before bowing out. All the way, the fans - including some well-known ones, such as former first lady Michelle Obama and NBA All-Star Bradley Beal - showered Tiafoe with affection. And he certainly enjoyed basking in that adulation and the extra attention that came with his higher profile, including a role in the Netflix docuseries about tennis, "Break Point."

## **Fast bowler Pathirana leads Sri Lanka to** 5-wicket win over Bangladesh in Asia Cup

PALLEKELE, Sri Lanka, Aug 31, (AP): Young fast bowler Matheesha Pathirana grabbed a career-best 4-32 and led injury-hit Sri Lanka to a comfortable five-wicket win over Bangladesh in the Asia Cup on Thursday.

Pathirana consistently challenged the batters with his deceptive pace while spinners Dhananjaya de Silva and Dunith Wellalage dried up runs in the middle overs as Bangladesh was bowled out for 164 in 42.4 overs.

Charith Asalanka (62 not out) and Sadeera Samarawickrama (54) then hit half centuries and carried Sri Lanka to 168-5 with 11 to overs spare despite the top order hobbling against Bangladesh's pace and the leftarm spin of captain Shakib Al Hasan, who took 2-29.

Sri Lanka stuttered at 3-43 within the first 10 overs when fast bowler Taskin Ahmed had Dimuth Karunaratne clean bowled cheaply and Al Hasan knocked back the stumps of Kusal Mendis with a straight delivery.

But Asalanka and Samarawickrama rebuilt the chase with a 78-run stand before Mahedi Hasan had the latter stumped off a delivery that spun away from the righthander. Al Hasan then had Dhananjaya de Silva's stumps rattled with a full pitched delivery before Asalanka ensured Sri Lanka got home with plenty of overs to spare.

It was a remarkable show by Sri Lanka's second string bowlers after injuries to multiple frontline bowlers ahead of the tournament, including ace legspinner Wanindu Hasaranga.

Al Hasan's decision to bat first under overcast conditions didn't go well. Offspinner Maheesh Theekshana struck off his second ball when he had Tanzid Hasan leg before wicket without scoring that encouraged Sri Lanka skipper Dasun Shanaka to deploy spinners inside the first 10 overs despite overcast conditions.

CRICKET

De Silva had Mohammad Naim (16) caught at point off a leading edge and Pathirana's pace outdone Al Hasan (5) who gloved a low catch to wicketkeeper Pathum Nissanka as Bangladesh slipped to 3-36 in the 11th over. Najmul Hossain Shanto top-scored

with 89 off 122 balls but never looked

to threaten the pace and spin on a tricky wicket. Shanto shared a 59-run fourth-wicket partnership with Towhid Hridoy, who made 20 before Shanaka went for a successful television referral of lbw against Hridoy and broke the stand in the 24th over.

Bangladesh's most experienced player Mushfiqur Rahim (13) was one of the four batters to reach double-figures before he fell in Pathirana's return spell as he failed to clear the third man fielder with his uppercut. Pathirana made short work of the tailenders by claiming two more quick wickets as Bangladesh folded for a well below-par total.

Afghanistan is the other team in Group B, with the top two advancing to the Super 4. Pakistan inflicted a crushing 238-run defeat on newcomer Nepal in the opening Group A game on Wednesday and will take on archrival India in its next group game on Saturday.

The Asia Cup is being hosted in Pakistan and Sri Lanka after India refused to travel to Pakistan because of political tensions between the two countries. Pakistan will host four games while Sri Lanka will host nine, including the final on Sept. 17.



Sri Lanka's Sadeera Samarawickrama plays a shot during the one day international cricket match between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh of Asia Cup in Pallekele, Sri Lanka. (AP) - See Also Page 15

Open runner-up, was eliminated Wednesday night when Zhang Zhizhen became the first Chinese man to beat a player in the top five of the ATP rankings.

Zhang upset the No. 5 seed 6-4, 5-7, 6-2, 0-6, 6-2 to reach the third round of a Grand Slam tournament for the second time. It was his second five-set victory to open this tournament after he lost his first four five-setters.

He wasn't discouraged by those previous losses, with the breakthrough finally coming Monday when he outlasted J.J. Wolf in 4 1/2 hours.

"Try to just keep playing and keep believing yourself every single time, Zhang said. "(Even in) tough moments, still try to believe yourself. In the end, you'll make it."

Zhang became the first Chinese man to compete in the main draw at Wimbledon in the professional era when he qualified in 2021. He qualified last year at the U.S. Open, joining Wu Yibing as the first men from their country in the main draw of the year's final Grand Slam tournament.

The 26-year-old Zhang reached the third round of the French Open in June before falling to Ruud, who had been to the finals in three of the last six Grand Slam events.

Ruud, who lost to Carlos Alcaraz last year in Flushing Meadows, is the highest-ranked Norwegian in the history of the ATP rankings, which date to 1973. He had reached No. 2 last year and is currently No. 5.

Zhang will face Rinky Hijikata of Australia in the third round, and Ruud believes he can keep on going.

When Caroline Wozniacki finished off the biggest victory of her still-fresh comeback following 3 1/2 years away from tennis, she sat in her U.S. Open sideline chair, leaned forward and covered her face with both hands. Then she leaned back, glanced over at her husband and her father in the stands, and smiled.

Two gold chains dangled from her neck, each carrying a name written in cursive: Olivia, for her 2-year-old daughter, and James, for her 10-monthold son.

Yes, Wozniacki clearly made the right choice to come out of retirement

Peyton Stearns, of the United States reacts during a match against Clara Tauson, of Denmark during the second round of the U.S. Open tennis championships in New York. Stearns won 6-3,6-0. (AP)

and try her hand at this tennis thing again, making it to the third round at Flushing Meadows by beating twotime Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova 7-5, 7-6 (5) in Arthur Ashe Stadium

This is the third event of Wozniacki's comeback and she looked quite capable of strong play in her 15th career matchup against the 11th-seeded Kvitova. There were some wobbles, including when Wozniacki held her first two match points at 5-4 in the second set and failed to convert either.

But her game was good enough to hang in there and pull out the tiebreaker. There was not much drama involved in Frances Tiafoe's secondround victory at the U.S. Open . He quickly grabbed a lead and never let go. He only faced one break point and saved it. He volleyed terrifically. His outmatched opponent needed some help from a trainer for a bothersome neck.

And you couldn't escape the feeling that the 10th-seeded Tiafoe was having the time of his life. This is where he wants to be, no matter the details of the match. Under the lights at a Grand Slam tournament, absorbing the attention of thousands of folks in the Arthur Ashe Stadium stands and reciprocating the love while getting past Sebastian Ofner of Austria 6-3, 6-1, 6-4 in a tad more than 1 1/2 hours.

He knew this was Ofner's U.S. Open debut and said after Wednesday's encounter that he wanted to use "the environment to my advantage.

Tiafoe took a step forward on a day

#### TENNIS

Tiafoe is part of a crop of American men in their 20s who have been steadily moving up the rankings and starting to show signs of threatening for major championships. Andy Roddick was the last man from the country to earn a Grand Slam trophy, at the U.S. Open 20 years ago.

Three other U.S. men joining Tiafoe in the third round with victories were No. 9 Taylor Fritz; No. 14 Tommy Paul, an Australian Open semifinalist in January who collected his first career comeback from two sets down to beat Roman Safiullin 3-6, 2-6, 6-2, 6-4, 6-3; and Ben Shelton, who advanced when 2020 champion Dominic Thiem stopped playing in the second set after being visited by a physiotherapist.

Another man from the United States, No. 28 Chris Eubanks, lost in four sets to Benjamin Bonzi of France.

In earlier action Wednesday, defending champion Iga Swiatek and Coco Gauff remained on course for a quarterfinal showdown with straight-set victories, while 23-time major champ Novak Djokovic also had little trouble moving into the third round.

And Tsitsipas, a two-time Slam finalist never past the third round in New York, was eliminated by 128th-ranked Swiss qualifier Dominic Stricker 7-5, 6-7 (2), 6-7 (5) 7-6 (6), 6-3.



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