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Activists keep up pressure on govt to resolve bedoon issue

Sit-in continues in Jahra to demand rights for stateless residents



KUWAIT: Hundreds of bedoon and Kuwaiti protestors gather on Friday in "Freedom Square" in Taima to demand greater rights for stateless people.

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Hundreds of peaceful bedoon and Kuwaiti protestors gathered on Friday in "Freedom Square" in Taima in Jahra governorate to demand greater rights for stateless people and the abolishment of the Central Agency for Resolving the Status of Illegal Residents. On the 22nd day of their sit-in that they began on Aug 4, activists Fadel Al-Shammari and Basel Al-Shban organized the gathering titled "This Friday for a people who cooperated, not humiliated", in an attempt to pressure the government to give bedoons their full rights.

Shammari revealed he is being harassed by Taima police station officers, who tried to prevent the gathering, although it was legally authorized. "I cannot legally complain because of the unjust Central Agency for Resolving the Status of Illegal Residents. There are a lot of suicides and injustice against the bedoons. We are not against the law, but we strive to be legal - they even took away my ID. We will not remain silent and continue to hold semi-

nars and sit-ins," he said.

Mohammed Al-Barghash, a human rights activist in Kuwait who advocates for the rights of the bedoon community, told Kuwait Times that HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah has his full trust to resolve the case that has been festering for over 60 years. "I trust Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf - if the bedoon case is not resolved in his tenure, it will never be resolved. We honestly love him - he is an honest and loyal man for his good reputation, clean history and his noble stance towards the bedoon issue," he said.

Barghash revealed no officials have contacted and reached out to them, and no solutions have been discussed. "We are now coordinating with political forces and civil societies. We want to reach the decision-makers and the legislative authority, but the matter is moving very slowly, unfortunately. We can no longer wait - there must be a fair and just solution to the issue," he said. "The Central Agency for Resolving the Status of Illegal Residents

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News in brief



ROSARIO, Argentina: Police stand guard over seized packages of cocaine on Aug 26, 2022. — AFP

1.6 tons of cocaine seized

BUENOS AIRES: Argentine authorities seized 1.6 tons of cocaine hidden in animal feed destined for Dubai and detained 12 people, police said on Friday. The seizure took place overnight from Thursday to Friday in the central city of Rosario. The cocaine "is worth approximately \$60 million," said Mariano Giuffra, head of the dangerous drugs department in the federal police. The arrests took place at various sites around the country. Several firearms, sports cars and a large amount of cash were also seized. Police said the cocaine probably originated in Colombia. — AFP

Tunisia recalls Morocco envoy

TUNIS: Tunisia said Saturday it would recall its ambassador from Morocco for consultations, a day after the kingdom did the same in response to Tunisia's president hosting the Polisario movement's head. Tunisian President Kais Saied had on Friday hosted Polisario chief Brahim Ghal, who is also president of the self-proclaimed Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), who arrived to attend the Japanese-African investment conference TICAD. — AFP

Moderna sues Pfizer, BioNTech

WASHINGTON: Moderna said Friday it is suing rival vaccine makers Pfizer and BioNTech, alleging the partners infringed on its patents in developing their COVID-19 shot administered to hundreds of millions around the world. "Moderna believes that Pfizer and BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine Comirnaty infringes patents Moderna filed between 2010 and 2016 covering Moderna's foundational mRNA technology," the US-based biotech firm said in a statement. — AFP

Rules for nurseries amended; MoCI firm over prices

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of Social Affairs Fahad Al-Shuraian issued amendments to the executive rules of private nurseries. The new rules call for a KD 5,000 deposit for the duration of the nursery's license to ensure it complies with commitments as mentioned in the rules. It also stipulates the owner must be a Kuwaiti citizen and holder of a diploma or university degree, and must not

be working in any government or private entity.

The license will be valid for five years, and the form should carry the name of the nursery, address, number of children allowed, type of disability in case the nursery is licensed for the disabled, concerned authorities' approvals and the number of employees and their duties. The license holder shall refer to the ministry three months before the expiry of the license to complete all required documents, and the same procedures for granting a license will be followed.

No more than three nurseries will be licensed in the same block of an area, and one must be for the disabled. The building must be in a service-oriented location. There must be a car parking lot with a capacity suitable with the number of those associ-

Pakistan orders evacuations as rivers swell

MINGORA, Pakistan: Thousands of people living near flood-swollen rivers in Pakistan's north were ordered to evacuate Saturday as the death toll from devastating monsoon rains neared 1,000 with no end in sight. Many rivers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa - a picturesque province of rugged mountains and valleys - have burst their banks, demolishing scores of buildings including a 150-room hotel that crumbled into a raging torrent.

"The house which we built with years of hard work started sinking in front of our eyes," said Junaid Khan, 23, the owner of two fish farms in Chrasadda. "We sat on the side of the road and watched our dream house sinking." The annual monsoon is essential for irrigating crops and replenishing lakes and dams across the Indian subcontinent, but each year it also brings a wave of destruction.

Officials say this year's monsoon flooding has affected more than 33 million people - one in seven Pakistanis - destroying or badly damaging nearly a million homes. On Saturday, authorities ordered thousands of residents in threatened areas to evacuate their homes as rivers had

Continued on Page 6

Libya clashes kill 12, spark fears of war

TRIPOLI: Clashes between backers of rival governments killed at least 12 people and damaged six hospitals in Libya's capital Saturday, sparking fears that a political crisis could spiral into a major new conflict. Small arms fire and explosions rocked several districts of Tripoli overnight and into Saturday, when smoke could be seen rising from damaged buildings.

Early on Saturday evening, the

health ministry in Tripoli gave a preliminary toll of 12 dead and 87 wounded from the fighting. Six hospitals were hit and ambulances were unable to reach areas affected by the clashes, the ministry had said earlier, condemning "war crimes". The two rival administrations exchanged blame as videos posted online showed burned-out cars and buildings riddled with bullet holes, as well as a mosque on fire.

The UN's Libya mission called for "an immediate cessation of hostilities", citing "ongoing armed clashes including indiscriminate medium and heavy shelling in civilian-populated neighborhoods" that it said had

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JAFFARABAD, Pakistan: A man along with a youth use a satellite dish to move children across a flooded area after heavy monsoon rains in this district of Balochistan province on Aug 26, 2022. — AFP



TRIPOLI: A man gestures as smoke billows while rival Libyan groups exchange fire on Aug 27, 2022. — AFP

Local

NoufEXPO, KFEOCH to organize the 9th e-Government Forum

Forum convenes under the motto ‘e-Government is a Pillar of Comprehensive Development Renaissance’

KUWAIT: NoufEXPO and the Federation of Kuwait Engineering Offices & Consultant Houses (KFEOCH) announced in a press release that they will organize the “9th eGovernment Forum” on Oct 23-25, 2022. This became possible since Kuwait restored regular life practices and succeeded in overcoming the risks of COVID-19. EGOV9 will convene at the Al-Baraka Ballroom of the Crowne Plaza Hotel. EGOV9 convenes under the auspices of Rana Al-Fares, Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology Affairs.

EGOV9, whose motto states, “e-Government is a Pillar of Comprehensive Development Renaissance,” aims to trigger a comprehensive development renaissance in Kuwait, where technology in general and e-government programs, in particular, represent the pillar of this renaissance. More precisely, EGOV9 aims to turn Kuwait’s digital transformation efforts into a renaissance path charting Kuwait’s bright future while integrating with Kuwait’s vision of 2035.

President of KFEOCH Bader Al-Salman commented on the EGOV9 motto by saying: “EGOV9 motto reflects a logical direction to link the comprehensive and integrated e-government initiative development with the execution of the development plans of Kuwait. Both are strategic projects requiring renovating government departments and re-engineering government processes according to new principles.



Rana Al-Fares



Bader Al-Salman



Magdy Sabry

Some government agencies may require restructuring to improve their efficiency and productivity. The concurrent implementation of both initiatives will result in significant savings in financial resources, human effort, and time.”

Magdy Sabry, the Executive Manager of NoufEXPO, said: “EGOV9 continues its contributing role to Kuwait’s development by presenting the vision of synchronizing the execution of both Kuwait’s development plan and its integrated e-government program. We believe this represents the right track to put Kuwait on the path of real growth based on future technological foundations. This will

help Kuwait rightly position itself among its neighbors and the group of developed nations. This visionary route, as well, will contribute to opening the horizons of the information economy to young Kuwaiti generations.”

Sabry expressed his delight to come back to in-person events that allow meeting with officials and friends of participating organizations, sponsors, experts, and specialists directly after successfully overcoming COVID-19.” Sabry added that face-to-face meetings provide an interaction we miss in virtual conferences despite NoufEXPO’s success in organizing virtual confer-

ences over the past two years.

In addition to hosting many government institutions related to developing and implementing development plans in Kuwait, EGOV9 will attract international technology companies specialized in developing e-government programs and boosting the efficiency of government agencies. EGOV9 will also host a technology exhibition that allows sponsoring companies to highlight their products, services, experiences, and technical capabilities through their booths. They can also network directly with visitors; collect their contact details, business reports, and brochures.

KFEOCH and NoufEXPO concluded their press release by extending gratitude to many global and local technology vendors who persistently participated in the previous EGOV events. International vendors include Microsoft, IBM, EMC, CISCO, Symantec, Fortinet, FireEye, EY, SAP, Huawei, Aruba, Red Canari, and Techno-Management.

Local vendors include major Kuwaiti enterprises such as VIVA, Al-Ghanem Industries, Kuwait United Co. for Copies and Computer Services, KFH, Zain, KNET, Sultan Center, and Advanced Technology Company (ATC). KFEOCH and NoufEXPO look forward to welcoming organizations specialized in executing national development plans and eGovernment programs, especially those with similar successful experiences in the GCC countries.

local spotlight

Kuwait mostly grants freedom of religion



By Atyab Al-Shatti

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“Freedom of belief is absolute, and the state protects the freedom to practice religious rites in accordance with established customs, provided that this does not violate public order or contradict with public morals.” - Article 35 of the Kuwaiti constitution

Article 2 of the Kuwaiti constitution tackles essential rules on which governance is based in the country, and reflects the identity of the state and most of its people. But it causes ambiguity with interpretation to how government authorities regulate freedom of religion. Article 2 of the Kuwaiti constitution is in the first chapter of the constitution, which deals with the details of the state and the system of government.

The explanatory memorandum, which aims to explain the articles of the Kuwaiti constitution, elaborates on this article. The detailed memorandum confirms that the constitution not only stipulates that the Islamic religion is the state religion, but also Islamic sharia is the country’s main reference in governance. Which makes us conclude that the article states the importance of considering what Islamic jurisprudence has prescribed with regards to ruling on any issue related to the state and the country, but with the flexibility to introduce any rulings from any other quarters or sources.

After interpreting this article, conflicts arise, as there are plenty of Islamic jurisprudences the people of Kuwait believe in, while the chosen jurisprudence of the state is the Islamic Sunni-Maliki. Moreover, Christian and Bahai Kuwaitis and other residents are granted the same rights to exercise freedom of belief in the country equally, but implementation of conflicting articles leads to many gaps and shortfalls, considering the fact that there is a lack of a government body that grants permissions to establish worship houses other than Islamic ones, leaving people with a shortfall that is unsolved.

In my personal opinion, it is inaccurate to consider a religion for things; juristic personalities are not actual individuals; companies, institutes, government bodies, countries are not human beings and cannot have a religion or worship. Therefore, it is recommended to reform the article in a way that regulates freedom of religion and grants all individuals equal rights to practice their religious rituals and establish worship houses.

1 ton of expired food found in restaurant

KUWAIT: The commerce and industry ministry closed a Salmiya restaurant for using expired food. A large quantity of expired food material was found hidden in the restaurant’s store. Inspectors accounted for almost a ton of material, in cooperation with the food and nutrition authority. The ministry also cited a store for selling accessories carrying banned symbols in violation of public order. Further legal action is being taken.

Meanwhile, Jahra and Vocational Jahra fire centers battled a blaze in makeshift rooms on the roof of a building in Jahra industrial area on Thursday. No injuries were reported.



KUWAIT: The expired food found at a Salmiya restaurant, which was closed.



Minister calls to boost security at Kuwait ports

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah has directed to work on the application of the automatic link between the Interior Ministry, General Directorate of Customs and the Kuwait Ports Authority to strengthen security and customs measures at the country’s ports. This came according to a press release issued by the General Directorate of Security Relations and Media on Friday during Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled’s surprise visit to Shuwaikh Port, in continuation of his tours to all sectors of the ministry of interior to follow up on the progress of work, identify obstacles and find solutions to them.

Sheikh Talal stressed that the exit of containers should be properly addressed and that no container should leave until after inspection by concerned authorities to counter smuggling attempts. He praised the efforts of port security personnel and customs officials for their great efforts in protecting the homeland, calling on them to be more careful



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah visits Shuwaikh Port.

and vigilant to protect the country from the entry of any contraband or narcotic substances.

Sheikh Talal began his visit by inspecting the entrances and exits of Shuwaikh Port and was briefed on the mechanism of work inside the port’s customs and the procedures for inspecting con-

tainers inside it. Upon his arrival, he was received by Assistant Undersecretary for Ports Security Affairs Major General Mansour Al-Awadhi, Director General of Customs Sulaiman Al-Fahad and Acting Director General of Kuwait Ports Authority Essa Al-Mulla. — KUNA

More than 30 million Pakistani flood victims require your urgent care

KUWAIT: Pakistan is facing the worst floods catastrophe in living memory with torrential rains as much as 2.7 times the national thirty years average. More than a thousand people have lost their lives so far. More than 30 million people have been badly affected by the torrential rains, flash floods and forced evacuations. Millions of cattle have perished, hundreds of thousands of houses wiped out. Agricultural crops on thousands of acres have been destroyed.

Pakistan is making all efforts led by the government with the help of development partners including the United Nations, IFIs and many countries and organizations to address the daunting challenges posed by the devastating floods.

It is critical to appreciate the importance of coordinated and concerted efforts for rescue and relief in the immediate phase to be followed by reconstruction and rehabilitation in the long term. The government of Pakistan has carried out holistic need assessment in coordination with the UN Country team along with details of loss of life and damage done to infrastructure and property. It was important to mitigating the inter-related impacts of the floods including food shortage, communicable diseases, loss of shelter, non-availability of water



RAJANPUR, Pakistan: Rescue workers help evacuating flood affected people from their flood hit homes following heavy monsoon rains in this district of Punjab province on Aug 27, 2022.

and sanitation facilities, etc.

We request the brotherly state and people of Kuwait, charity organizations and Pakistani community to mobilize resources and humanitarian assistance to alleviate the immediate suffering of our people. The United Nations Flash Appeal in this regard will be launched on August 30 simultaneously in Geneva and Islamabad.

The people of Pakistan have always shown

exemplary resilience, brotherhood, compassion, generosity and commitment in the wake of such natural disasters. Pakistan is amongst the top ten disaster-prone countries due to climate change and the recent flash floods are another manifestation of this fact. It is important that the international community shows solidarity with Pakistan and reinforces its national efforts in combating the impacts of such natural disasters. — Embassy of Pakistan

Local

UK Navy keen to hold joint drills, strengthen relations with Kuwait



KUWAIT: The HMS Middleton British Royal Navy vessel. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: A ceremony took place Thursday on the occasion of the arrival of the HMS Middleton vessel in Mina Shuwaikh to further promote historical solidarities and relations between Kuwait and UK Naval Forces. In a statement to KUNA, Commanding Officer Lt Commander of the Royal Navy Gemma Britton was very ardent on this visit upon arrival from base camp in Bahrain, as her crew along with the Failaka naval vessel underwent warfare maneu-

vering drills before docking in Mina Shuwaikh.

The HMS Middleton operates under the Mine Counter Measures Vessel (MCMV) title and consists of 45 crewmembers who hail from Scotland's base training Land, Sea, and Air Strategic Special Program, with the objective of mine hunting. She also mentioned the navy is looking forward to joint training exercises in the coming years, as conditions happen to improve following a reticent period. She



Reception ceremony of HMS Middleton.

also succeeds her husband in this mission, who previously led the post-Gulf War operation to clear planted mines, safeguarding the area with a successful 100+ mines discharged.

Present at the ceremony, Naval Rear Admiral Salah Al-Sallal said: "Our navy is linked with historic relations with the Royal Navy, with several joint tasks between both sides operating to secure and safeguard international waters." He added Kuwait is

adamant on making the most out of this visit, especially with ties to joint tasks with the GCC as well as other naval forces around the world, noting that many among the Kuwaiti fleet are trained by the British Navy. The HMS Middleton's reception ceremony was attended by UK Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis, along with a number of military attaches as well as high-ranked emissaries of the Kuwaiti Naval Force. — KUNA

Kuwait hands Bahrain command of CTF 152

KUWAIT: Kuwait Navy Force on Friday handed the Royal Bahrain Naval Force the command of the Combined Duty Force (CTF 152); one of the three task forces of Combined Maritime Forces. Bahrain took over the command in a ceremony attended by Commander of the Kuwait Navy Force Commodore

Hazza'a Al-Alati, Bahrain Defense Force Chief-of-Staff Lt Gen Theyab Al-Nuaimi and Commander of United States Naval Forces Central Command and Commander of Fifth Fleet Vice-Admiral Charles Bradford Cooper.

CTF 152 (Arabian Gulf security and cooperation), CTF 150 (maritime security and counterterrorism), and CTF 151 (counterpiracy) forces form CMF - a US-commanded multinational naval partnership to promote security, stability and prosperity across approximately 3.2 million square miles of international waters. - KUNA



Kuwait hands Bahrain command of CTF 152.



Special forces from Arab and foreign countries take part in joint training (Hercules-2). — KUNA photos

Forces from Arab, foreign countries conclude joint drills

CAIRO: Special forces from Arab and foreign countries concluded the joint training Hercules-2, which lasted several days and included several activities, including raiding a "terrorist outpost" inside a border village, clearing it and regaining control of it. Egyptian Armed Forces military spokesman Colonel Gharib Abdel Hafez said in a statement on Saturday that the joint exercise, which took place at the Mohamed Naguib military base and training areas within the northern military region, involved elements of the special forces of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Greece and Cyprus.

The spokesperson also noted the participation of Jordan, the United States, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Bahrain as "observers", along with a number of ICRC experts. The final phase of the training included the participating forces carrying out a mission to raise, clear and regain control of a

"terrorist outpost" inside a border village, where multi-role aircraft carried out reconnaissance operations and provided air assistance, he said.

Abdel Hafez pointed to incursion groups from the special forces, the implementation of air landings, vertical incursions and the liberation of the hostages held, after military engineers discovered and dealt with improvised explosive devices and made gaps in buildings. The spokesperson stated that the activities carried out in the joint training included the holding of several theoretical and practical lectures to hone the skills of the participating forces, and an exhibition of weapons and equipment used in training, reconnaissance training and ambushes.

Abdel Hafez also referred to training in guidance of aircraft from the ground (JTAC) and guided drones and training in the handling of hazardous chemicals by chemical and radiological reconnaissance elements. He noted the implementation of a number of typical and atypical live ammunition exercises using various weapons and different firing modes. The spokesman said the training comes within the framework of the joint training plan of the Egyptian Armed Forces to transfer and exchange experiences and strengthen the bonds of military cooperation with brotherly and friendly countries. — KUNA



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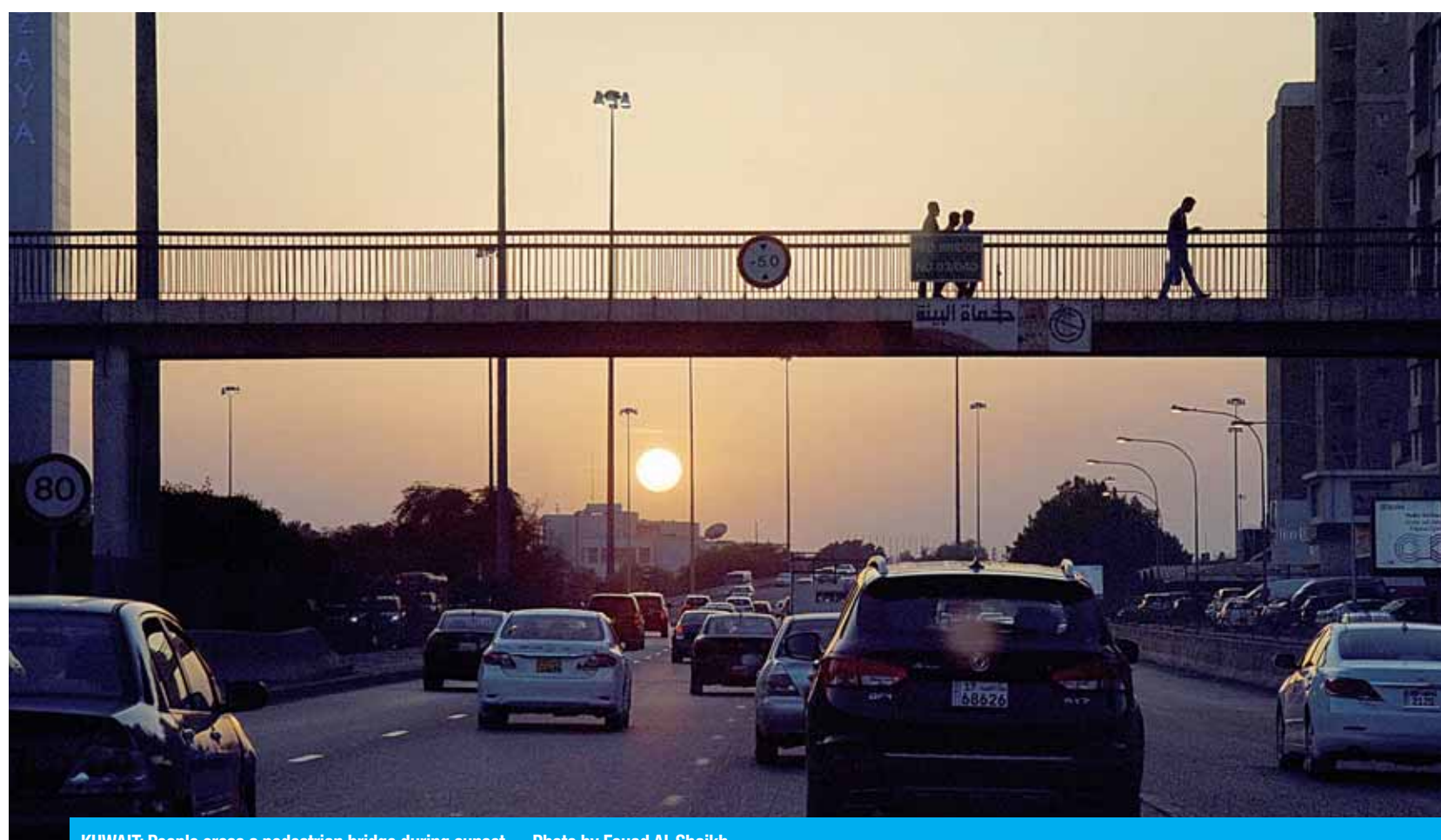
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CIFET announces names of committee members

CAIRO: The administration of Cairo International Festival for Experimental Theatre headed by Dr Jamal Yaout announced during a press conference held at the Higher Council for Culture the names of committee members who will screen and officiate the various festival contests during its 29th edition in the presence festival directors Saeed Qabeel, Dr Mohammad Al-Shafee, and Dr Asmaa Yahya Al-Taher.

The committee officiating the festival's official contest includes Director Khalid Jalal as chairman, and Jordan's Actor Ali Alyan, Kuwaiti Writer Nermin Al-Houti, Swedish Actor Karl Birger Leonardo, Italian Director Danil Cremonte, Polish Actor Dawid Tomas Zkozowski and English Actor Richard Talbot as members.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: People cross a pedestrian bridge during sunset. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Around 76.4 % of unemployed Kuwaitis under 29 years of age

KUWAIT: The Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) issued a report during the second week of August 2022 on unemployed Kuwaitis according to the Civil Service Commission data as on 30/06/2022. Their number reached 8,318 versus 7,668 unemployed on 30/06/2021. They represent about 1.8 percent of the total number of Kuwaiti workers, estimated at 455,700 as on 30/06/2021, according to the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI). This means the unveiled unemployment rate. This unemployment is characterized as expected in some and exceptional in others. We will review them below and refer to our notes on

the report, hoping the CSB adopts some of them.

What is expected is the extent of unveiled unemployment which appears to be low as long as the public sector employs regardless of its need. According to the citizens' gender of the unemployed, males form about 41 percent and females represent 59 percent. It is also normal to see a decrease in the unemployed for those who have been unemployed for a longer time. They scored about 29.2 percent of the total for those who have been unemployed for six months or more and 70.8 percent for the unemployed recently.

What is unusual and dangerous is the high unemployment rate of youth. About 76.4 percent of the unemployed are under 29 years of age, an indication of the continued inability of the economy to create job opportunities. With the temporary relief of public finance, that unhealthy phenomenon may be resolved by nominal employment or veiled unemployment. What is unusual is the high percentage of the unemployed among university degree holders, who scored 51.3 percent of the total unemployed. This indicates how education outputs do not match the labor market needs in both the public and private sectors.

It is also unusual that the unemployed with training courses scored about 84 percent of the total unemployed, while it does not exceed 16 percent for those who did not. This means that unemployment rises steadily with the increase in education levels and the increase in the number of those who obtained training courses. This is undoubtedly a unique Kuwaiti feature.

Our remarks on the report are perhaps more critical. The first observation is that the number of

unemployed Kuwaiti personnel according to PACI in its latest report on population and labor force issued in June 2021 is 36,898 (about 7.2 percent), or about four times the number of the unemployed according to the CSB. The two figures must be unified as long as the two institutions official publish figures for the same country. We have recently pointed to the sharp discrepancy in the numbers of the two institutions regarding the numbers of expatriates. The second observation is that the report is simple, ie an annual report and the unemployment numbers are the most important.

In most countries, such reports are published monthly, and they are in-depth and detailed reports and an essential tool for economic policy-makers. The third note is that what is more critical than unveiled unemployment at present is the veiled unemployment measured by the service type, quality and production cost compared to other countries. Its importance lies in emphasizing the loss of the workforce balance, which will continue if it continues to rise. The risk of ignoring it is grave. The fourth remark studies the incompatibility between education outputs and labor market requirements. This is important because it is a proactive action to avoid the risks of high levels of unemployment, both veiled and unveiled, as discussed in a previous report.

In conclusion, countries compete to highlight the quality and abundance of their information, the most important of which is those related to their human capital. Without this information, preventive or proactive policies cannot be formulated and implemented, and a sustainable economic entity cannot be built. —Al-Shall

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Kuwaiti aid convoy arrives in Gaza via Rafah crossing

CAIRO: The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) convoy arrived in the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing on Thursday, loaded with basic materials, aid and medical supplies. Director of the Public Relations and Media Department of the Society Khaled Al-Zaid said in a statement to KUNA that the convoy is to support the Palestinians in Gaza to confront the last war that destroyed many of Gaza's hospitals, farms, and houses.

Zaid expressed profound thanks to the Egyptian and Palestinian Red Crescents for facilitating the delivery of aid through the Rafah crossing, and to reach those in need in the Gaza Strip. Zaid praised the support of donors among citizens, residents and the private sector to a donation campaign adopted by the association under the slogan 'Gaza is in our hearts' to help brothers in Palestine. —KUNA



GAZA: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) convoy carrying basic needs and supplies arrives through Rafah crossing in the Gaza Strip. —KUNA

Fishermen decry obstacles, ask to meet premier

KUWAIT: The fishermen's association has asked to meet the prime minister in order to discuss challenges that threaten the future of fishing. Kuwait Fishermen's Association appealed to HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah for a meeting to discuss the challenges the fishing sector is facing that threaten the profession and local produce, adding that fishermen are hoping for an end to the difficulties they are facing.

The association said in a statement that there is clear threat to the fishing profession due to obstacles by some entities, and asked officials concerned with the fishing sector to stand alongside this vital sector, which is one of the food security sectors in Kuwait, especially since the state is interested in the local products. It rued sudden decisions by some authorities without any regard to the fishing profession and its importance.

The association's President Dhaher Al-Suwayan said what is happening with the fishing sector is regretful, as well as ignoring many of its demands, which will make fishing license holders leave it, which will doom the sector. He said this will lead to the collapse of the fishing fleet, labor migration and inability to pay debts to banks and companies.



India to blow up illegal ‘Twin Towers’ in developer crackdown



KYIV: New members of the Dzhokhar Dudayev Chechen volunteer battalion take part in a training session in the Kyiv region on August 27, 2022, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. —AFP

Fresh shelling at Ukraine nuke plant

Russian Arctic militarization a ‘strategic challenge’: NATO chief

KYIV: Ukraine and Russia traded fresh accusations of shelling at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant on Saturday, as its operator warned of a radioactive leak risk at the atomic facility.

The Zaporizhzhia plant in southern Ukraine has been occupied by Russian troops since the opening of the invasion. Kyiv and Moscow have repeatedly swapped allegations over rocket attacks in the vicinity of the plant-Europe's largest-located in the city of Energodar. On Saturday operator Energoatom said Russian troops "repeatedly shelled" it over the past day.

Russia's defense ministry issued a counter-claim that Ukraine's troops were responsible for a salvo of 17 shells landing on the site. "As a result of periodic shelling, the infrastructure of the station has been damaged, there are risks of hydrogen leakage and sputtering of radioactive substances, and the fire hazard is high," Energoatom said on Telegram.

The agency said that as of midday Saturday (0900 GMT) the plant "operates with the risk of violating radiation and fire safety standards". Russia's defense ministry said Ukrainian forces "shelled the territory of the station three times" from the town of Marganets across the Dnipro River.

In a communique the ministry accused Kyiv of "nuclear terrorism" and said shells landed near areas storing fresh nuclear fuel and radioactive waste. Nevertheless radiation levels at the plant "remain normal" the ministry said.

Power out

On Thursday, the plant was cut off from Ukraine's national power grid for the first time in its four-decade history due to "actions of the invaders",

Energoatom said. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said the power cut was caused by Russian shelling of the last active power line linking the plant to the network.

It came back online on Friday afternoon but Zelensky warned "the worst case scenario ... is constantly being provoked by Russian forces". The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is urging for a mission to the plant "as soon as possible to



Operator warns of radiation risk at atomic facility

help stabilize the nuclear safety and security situation there".

Agency head Rafael Mariano Grossi has said he wants to visit the site within days, warning of potential disaster. Ukraine energy minister adviser Lana Zerkal said an IAEA inspection "is planned for the next week". But Zerkal told Ukraine's Radio NV late Thursday she was skeptical the mission would go ahead, despite Moscow's formal agreement, as "they are artificially creating all the conditions so that the mission will not reach the site".

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg on Friday stressed the need to beef up security along the alliance's northern flank to counter Russia, as he

wrapped up a visit to Canada that included a tour of its Arctic defenses.

"The high north is strategically important for Euro-Atlantic security," Stoltenberg told a news conference at an air base in Cold Lake, Alberta, noting that with Finland and Sweden joining, seven of eight Arctic states will be NATO members. "The shortest path to North America for Russian missiles and bombers would be over the North Pole," he also warned. "This makes NORAD's role vital for North America and therefore also for NATO."

NORAD is the North American Aerospace Defense Command, a US-Canadian organization.

The NATO chief and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau toured a Cold War-era early warning radar site, and observed Canadian Arctic military exercises. Russia's capabilities in the far north "are a strategic challenge for the whole alliance," he said, citing a significant Russian military buildup in the region.

This includes, he outlined, the reopening of "hundreds of new and former Soviet era Arctic military sites," and its use of the high north "as a test-bed for the most advanced weapons including hypersonic missiles." Stoltenberg also expressed concerns about China's reach into the Arctic for shipping and resources exploration, with plans to build the world's largest icebreaker fleet. "Beijing and Moscow have pledged to intensify practical cooperation in the Arctic. This forms part of the deepening strategic partnership that challenges our values and our interests," Stoltenberg said.

Britain's defense ministry said satellite imagery showed an increased presence of Russian troops at the power plant with armored personnel carriers deployed within 60 meters (200 feet) of one reactor. —AFP



ROCKVILLE, US: US President Joe Biden participates in a rally for the Democratic National Committee (DNC) at Richard Montgomery High School in Rockville, Maryland, on August 25, 2022. —AFP

Biden urges Dems to defeat ‘semi-fascism’

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden told Democrats at a rally that they need to save the country from the "semi-fascism" of Donald Trump's Republicans and keep control of Congress in upcoming midterm elections. Speaking to hundreds of party faithful in Maryland, just outside Washington, Biden sought to build on growing energy in the party, which believes it can fend off a threatened Republican victory in the November 8 vote.

Casting the Republicans under ex-president Trump's sway as a party of "anger, violence, hate and division," Biden said, "We've chosen a different path forward: the future of unity, hope and optimism."

"This fall there will be a choice between these two visions. We must take our case to the American people and be crystal clear about it," he said. Earlier, in remarks ahead of the speech, Biden likened Trump's Make America Great Again or MAGA brand as "extreme."

"It's not just Trump, it's the entire philosophy that underpins the-I'm going to say something, it's like semi-fascism," Biden said. "You need to vote to literally save democracy again," he then said in his speech.

Democrats on a roll

Just weeks ago, Democrats were in the doldrums. With Biden's approval ratings below 40 percent and the party seemingly unable to close the deal on a series of election promises, there were widespread expectations that the Republicans would easily take control of at least one chamber of Congress.

A dramatic August, however, has sown the seeds of what some Democrats hope will be a political miracle, with their party holding the Senate and at minimum mitigating the size of the Republican win in the House of Representatives. The Maryland rally came on the heels of a spate of legislative wins in Congress, coupled with fury among many Americans over the conservative-dominated Supreme Court's ruling to end automatic nationwide abortion access rights. Biden warned that Republicans would seek to outlaw abortion completely if they control Congress but said the issue was galvanizing "the powerful force" of women voters. —AFP

US weather whiplash shows climate change

JACKSON: A series of "once-in-a-millennium" rainstorms have lashed the United States in recent weeks, flooding areas baked dry by long-term droughts, as human-caused climate change brings weather whiplash. And scientists warn that global warming means once-rare events are already much more likely, upending the models they have long used to predict possible disasters-with worse to come.

At least 40 people have been killed in the last month by storms in Kentucky, Illinois, Texas and Missouri, inundating areas that in some cases had seen little to no rain for months.

Up to 12 inches (30 centimeters) fell in one of these storms-the kind of downpour that statistical models say should only happen once in a thousand years. "This is 'weather whiplash'," tweeted Peter Gleick, co-founder of the Pacific Institute, a non-governmental organization that works on water issues around the world.

It is "caused by an intensification of the global hydrological cycle & how it distributes water around the planet, influenced by human-caused climate change." The warnings scientists have been sounding for decades about the effects of unchecked fossil fuel use are suddenly coming into focus for millions of people.

A warming planet is not a benign place in a far-off future where it is always a bit sunnier; it's a place of wild swings, where the wets are wetter and the dries are drier. And it's now.

"The commonality between these and other extreme rainfall events is you need just the right set of ingredients to come together," said David Novak,



JACKSON: In this file photo taken on July 28, 2022 an aerial view of homes submerged under flood waters from the North Fork of the Kentucky River in Jackson, Kentucky. —AFP

director of the Weather Prediction Center at the National Weather Service. "You need moisture. And you need instability in the atmosphere. And you need some sort of... feature to kind of ignite the storms."

While a rainstorm in Texas or Kentucky or Illinois is not unheard of at this time of year, these events were supercharged by an oversupply of atmospheric moisture-a direct consequence of the planet being hotter. "There's scientific consensus absolutely on the fact that warmer air can hold more moisture," Novak told AFP.

"There is more moisture available... for these fronts to tap, and so you can get these really intense rainfall events." The science is uncontroversial-if a little complicated for those not familiar with linear equations and difficult-to-pronounce chemistry.

The Clausius-Clapeyron equation shows that for every one degree Celsius (1.8 F) the air warms, it

can hold seven percent more moisture. That's what makes hot, equatorial places noticeably more humid than cooler climes, says Novak.

And it's also what's messing with the statistics and making the one-in-1,000-year storms-like the five that hit the US in the last month-a lot more common. Storms like these had a 0.1 percent chance of occurring in any given year in pre-industrial conditions, meaning that on average they would happen once every 1,000 years.

But their percentage chance of happening in a warmer environment that holds more moisture rises dramatically. In other words, the recurrence interval-the periods expected between these once relatively rare events-is shrinking. "Something that really wasn't very likely at all, just a little bit more moisture can make that quite a bit more likely," said Novak. —AFP

International

Wives and widows of Syrian detainees lead shackled life

Syria govt seized \$1.54 billion worth of prisoner assets since 2011

BEKAA VALLEY, Lebanon: In the decade since Syria's regime pronounced her jailed husband dead, Ramya Al-Sous was threatened by security forces, locked out of her spouse's estate and forced to flee abroad. The mother of three, now a refugee living in Lebanon, was never told how her husband died and is unable to sell or rent the properties confiscated by authorities.

"By virtue of me being a woman, everything becomes nearly impossible," she told AFP, echoing a plight shared by many wives and widows of Syrian prisoners. But the 40-year-old wants to put up a fight. "My children wouldn't have suffered as much if it had been me who was detained. They were left with nothing, but I insist on winning something back," she said. Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's regime waged a brutal crackdown on an Arab Spring-inspired uprising in 2011, sparking a war that has killed nearly half a million people.

Around the same number of people, mostly men, are estimated to have been detained in regime prisons since, with tens of thousands dying either under torture or due to poor conditions. Outside prison walls, their wives are anything but free, facing a maze of red tape in a society and legal system that favors men, said Ghazwan Kronfol, a Syrian lawyer living in Istanbul.

Without their husbands' formal death certificates, widows cannot claim inheritance or property

ownership, he said.

Nor can they access their dead husbands' real estate if it was confiscated or escrowed by the state, the lawyer added. Worse still, guardianship over their children is not guaranteed, with judges often granting it to a male next of kin. "All of this comes on top of financial blackmail and sexual harassment" by security officers, Kronfol said.



Women remain easy prey

'Easy prey'

Syria's 2012 anti-terrorism law stipulates the government can temporarily or permanently seize the properties of prisoners accused of terrorism—a blanket charge used to detain civilians suspected of opposition links. The government is believed to have seized \$1.54 billion worth of prisoner assets since 2011, according to an April report by The

Association of Detainees and The Missing in Sednaya Prison.

The Turkey-based watchdog was founded by former detainees held in Sednaya, a jail on the outskirts of Damascus which is the largest in the country and has become a by-word for torture and the darkest abuses of the Syrian regime. Sous's home and farmland were among the properties escrowed after her husband was arrested in a raid in 2013 and later hit with terrorism-related charges she says were trumped up.

A few months later, authorities handed her a "corpse number", she said. Alone and poor, she spent years being bounced around from one security branch to another as she tried to clear bureaucratic hurdles. Sous said she was met mainly with harassment and intimidation.

"Women are easy prey," she said. Fearing persecution by security forces, she fled to neighboring Lebanon in 2016, clutching the old red and white plastic bag in which she keeps her property deeds and reams of other official documents. She has little money left but continues to pay bribes and lawyer fees in an attempt to reclaim assets from the state. "I want to sell them, not for me but for my children."

Salma, a 43-year-old mother of four, also fled to Lebanon after her husband disappeared inside the black hole of Syria's prison system. The one time she enquired about his fate in 2015, security forces



BEKAA VALLEY, Lebanon: Syrian refugee Ramya Al-Sous inspects her family documents at her apartment in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, on June 13, 2022. — AFP

locked her in a room and threatened her.

"I never asked about him again," Salma said, asking to use a pseudonym due to security concerns. When she tried to sell her husband's car and home, she found they had been seized by the state.

"I sold all my jewelry to buy that house," she said. In their ordeal, some women have found a rare silver lining with the empowerment that being left to their own devices has brought about. —AFP



HAMEENLINNA, Finland: Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin talks with local children during a meeting of her Social Democratic party in Hameenlinna, Finland. —AFP

Sanna Marin, from youngest leader to 'partying PM'

HELSINKI, Finland: Since Sanna Marin became Finland's youngest prime minister in December 2019, the "child from a poor family" has risen to become the Nordic country's most popular leader of government in the 21st century.

But the 36-year-old's reputation as a firm crisis leader—deftly navigating her small nation through the COVID pandemic and a historic NATO membership application—has been challenged in the last few days. Marin has become entangled in controversies over her partying, earning her the nickname "Party Sanna" in Finland's tabloid press.

A poll published by leading newspaper Helsingin Sanomat on Friday showed that 42 percent of Finns had a worse opinion of their prime minister due to the scandals.

A video leaked last week—which made headlines around the world—showed Marin dancing and partying with a group of friends and celebrities. That

controversy was quickly followed by another, when Marin was forced to apologize for a photo taken at her official residence of two women lifting their tops to bare their torsos, as she hosted friends after attending a music festival.

In December 2021, Marin came under sustained criticism after it was revealed she stayed out dancing until the early hours despite having been exposed to COVID-19. "Some of the general public consider that partying like that and appearing in such company does not fit the norm for a politician," professor Anu Koivunen told AFP.

Koivunen noted that while the leaks would likely have caused a stir with any prime minister, she believes that the fact that Marin is a young female politician played a role in the ensuing brouhaha. "There's been a debate about her qualifications, whether she's up to the job," Koivunen said, suggesting that this probably would not have been the case with a male prime minister.

But for her, this "ignores Marin's history as a crisis leader and a competent actor." "I am human. And I too sometimes long for joy, light and fun amidst these dark clouds", Marin said this week in an emotional speech where she appeared close to tears. Battling controversies about her lifestyle or stereotypes is nothing new for Marin. — AFP

Angola pays homage to dos Santos amid vote dispute

LUANDA: Angolans started paying their final respect to former president Jose Eduardo dos Santos on Saturday as the veteran strongman's historically dominant party emerged from its worst electoral result.

Dos Santos, who ruled Angola with an iron fist for 38 years, died on July 8 at a hospital in Spain after suffering a cardiac arrest. His tenure saw members of his family plunder the nation's oil riches while most Angolans remained mired in poverty. He will be buried at a state funeral on Sunday, on what would have been his 80th birthday.

The funeral is set to be attended by about a dozen foreign leaders, including the presidents of Portugal, Mozambique and South Africa. A brown casket carrying dos Santos's body and draped with the Angolan flag made the solemn trip through the streets to the city's central Praça da Republica plaza.

Most people went about their daily lives while some watched the cortege slowly drive past. The coffin will lie in state in a tent for the public to pay their last respects. Hundreds of blue seats neatly laid out in the square for mourners were empty with a few MPLA supporters filing past the coffin to bid their final farewell.

'President of peace'

"We are here to salute our president, the president of peace, the president of national reconciliation, the president who helped us through the war, and we live in peace thanks to him," said Solange Quiniani, dressed in the colors of the ruling party. Religious chants echoed through loudspeakers in the vast plaza, where there were black flags and posters paying homage to "Zedu"-dos Santos's nickname. "Farewell beloved President!", "Forever our commander", "Zedu, man of the people".

A few family members and government officials accompanied the casket to the square, but none of his children were present. Some of his children were



LUANDA, Angola: Angola's President Joao Lourenco (center) walks out of a meeting at the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) party headquarters, two days after general elections, in Luanda, on August 26, 2022. —AFP

at loggerheads with the government and his estranged wife over where and when he was to be buried. But a Spanish court last week ruled that the body be repatriated to his wife in Angola.

His eldest daughter Isabel dos Santos, who has faced a slew of investigations into her multinational business dealings, last week wrote on Instagram that she would not be able to see her father to his final resting place. The funeral comes as dos Santos's MPLA party notched up its worst electoral performance in this week's polls.

After 97 percent of the results were tallied, an initial count showed the MPLA had won 51.07 percent of the vote, against 44.05 percent of its main rival, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). UNITA—which fought a bitter 27-year civil war against the MPLA government—has rejected the results and wants a review of the results led by an impartial international panel.

The election handed dos Santos's successor President Joao Lourenco a second five-year term in office. MPLA's support has been on a gradual decline in recent elections. Born in the slums of Luanda, dos Santos was one of Africa's longest-serving leaders. —AFP

Activists keep up pressure on...

Continued from Page 1

has said 34,000 people are entitled to citizenship, so why haven't they got citizenship until now? Despite their claim that there are many who have other nationalities, why haven't these people been transferred to the judiciary yet?" he asked.

Former MP Mubarak Al-Najada said during the event that there are some unresolved cases since 1919, while outgoing National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem has stated there is a family that is oppressed and must be given Kuwaiti citizenship.

Human rights defender Abdullah Fairouz pointed out that no human has the right to control the fate of over 120,000 Kuwaiti bedoons. "There is a law allowing you the right to information, and it is a vital law that must be used to reveal the position of the central apparatus. The Central Agency for Resolving the Status of Illegal Residents is supposed to have

files of every bedoon person, and every person has the right to see the information in their file. If the central agency claims to have 5 million documents, then every person has the right to obtain these documents under law no. 12 of 2020," he said.

Hamoud Sharif, deputy of the National Bloc, said bedoons want justice. "Bedoons did not just appear out of nowhere. We were born on this land. We appeal to the prime minister that we have poor, disabled and unmarried girls because of a lack of personal documents. Some sick people need to travel for treatment, but they do not have passports," he said.

More than 100,000 bedoons are long-term residents of Kuwait, with most of them born here and belonging to families who have lived here for generations. They face severe restrictions in their ability to access documentation, employment, healthcare, education and state support. Kuwait claims most of its bedoon population are migrants from other countries who hid their nationalities and classifies them as illegal residents. Authorities have intensified pressure on the community over the last two years to "reveal their country of origin" or accept an "assigned citizenship" based on investigations by Kuwaiti state security services.

increases in Kuwait, adding there is no longer any reason to stick to the decision to fix prices. Official sources said the commerce ministry found that cancelling the decision is not feasible and should remain until the end of the year.

The sources said the ministry's reticence is for two reasons - the first is that cancelling the decision will cause a sudden and maybe huge increase in prices, which will negatively affect citizens and residents. The ministry also wants to continue measures to support Kuwaiti families through subsidies (tamween) and help limited-income citizens; only then will it think about cancelling the price-fixing decision.

Pakistan orders evacuations as...

Continued from Page 1

still not reached maximum capacity. "Initially some people refused to leave, but when the water level increased they agreed," Bilal Faizi, spokesman for the Rescue 1122 emergency service, told AFP.

Officials say this year's floods are comparable to 2010 - the worst on record - when over 2,000 people died and nearly a fifth of the country was under water. Farmer Shah Faisal, camped by the side of a road in Chrasadda with his wife and two daughters, described how he saw his riverside home swallowed by a river as the powerful current eroded the bank. The Jindi, Swat and Kabul rivers flow through the town before joining the mighty Indus, which is also flooding downstream. "We escaped with our lives," Faisal told AFP.

Libya clashes kill 12, spark...

Continued from Page 1

damaged hospitals. The US embassy in Libya said it was "very concerned" about the clashes.

News agency Lana said actor Mustafa Baraka had been killed in one of the neighborhoods hit by fighting, sparking anger and mourning on social media. The Government of National Unity (GNU) of Abdulhamid Dbeibah said fighting had broken out after negotiations to avoid bloodshed in the western city collapsed. Dbeibah's government, installed as part of a United Nations-led peace process following a previous round of violence, is challenged by a rival government led by former interior minister Fathi Bashagha.

Officials blame the devastation on man-made climate change, saying Pakistan is unfairly bearing the consequences of irresponsible environmental practices elsewhere in the world. Pakistan is eighth on the Global Climate Risk Index, a list compiled by the environmental NGO Germanwatch of countries deemed most vulnerable to extreme weather caused by climate change.

Still, local authorities must shoulder some of the blame for the devastation. Corruption, poor planning and the flouting of local regulations mean thousands of buildings have been erected in areas prone to seasonal flooding - albeit not as bad as this year. The government has declared an emergency and mobilized the military to deal with what Climate Change Minister Sherry Rehman on Wednesday called "a catastrophe of epic scale".

According to the National Disaster Management Authority, since the monsoon started in June more than two million acres of cultivated crops have been wiped out, 3,100 km of roads have been destroyed and 149 bridges have been washed away. — AFP

Bashagha, who is backed by Libya's parliament and eastern-based military strongman Khalifa Haftar, says the GNU's mandate has expired. But he has so far been unable to take office in Tripoli, as Dbeibah has insisted on only handing power to an elected government. Dbeibah's government accused Bashagha of "carrying out his threats" to seize Tripoli by force.

Dbeibah's GNU said negotiations had been underway to "hold elections at the end of the year to resolve the political crisis", but that Bashagha had "walked out at the last moment". Bashagha denied such talks had taken place, and accused Dbeibah's "illegitimate" administration of "clinging to power".

Emadeddin Badi, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, warned that the violence could quickly escalate. "Urban warfare has its own logic, it's harmful both to civilian infrastructure and to people, so even if it isn't a long war, this conflict will be very destructive as we have already seen," he told AFP. — AFP

Rules for nurseries amended; MoCI...

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Private companies have said the decision causes them losses, because prices have gone up globally along with raw material costs, as well as export, shipping and even employment costs, which requires price

International

India set to blow up illegal ‘Twin Towers’ in developer crackdown

Controlled implosion to bring down buildings after court ruling

NOIDA, India: Two illegally built residential high-rises are slated for demolition near India’s capital this weekend in a rare crackdown on developers who cut corners and swindle unsuspecting home-buyers.

A controlled implosion will bring down the 100-metre-high “Twin Towers” on New Delhi’s outskirts after a Supreme Court ruling last year found the structures were built unlawfully in collusion with local authorities. Thousands of anxious residents—along with dozens of stray dogs—are being evacuated from the vicinity, but the crew in charge of the knock-down said safety was assured.

“It’s a beautiful feat of engineering,” said demolition team leader Joe Brinkmann, according to the Times of India newspaper.

“Just pack your bags and enjoy the day.” The towers will be fitted with around 3,500 kilos (7,700 pounds) of explosives and are expected to come down in a matter of seconds.

The world’s fastest-growing major economy has seen a construction boom in recent years but developers often cut corners with impunity. Eyeing fat profits and capitalizing on weak regulation, companies often build extra floors or towers and use sub-standard materials, while officials are

bribed to keep quiet.

Middle-class home-buyers fall into the trap of investing their life savings in projects that often never see the light of day, and get drawn into protracted legal battles against powerful builders.

In Delhi’s suburbs of Noida and Greater Noida, it is estimated that more than 100 residential high-rise towers have been abandoned by the builders, making these areas look like ghost cities.

‘Burning their fingers’

Uday Bhan Singh Teotia, one of a group of residents whose case against private developer Supertech led to the demolition order, said the destruction of the buildings will be a vindication of his legal battle.

“The two new towers that they constructed were blocking everything—our air and sunlight and all,” Teotia, who lives close to the structures, told AFP. No one had moved into the two towers before the demolition and Supertech was ordered by the court to refund buyers. The firm did not respond to calls from AFP. Demolitions of residential buildings are rare in India, with builders often escaping with penalties or abandoning projects midway if they fall foul of the law.

Four luxury high-rises in southern Kerala state

Developers ‘cut corners with impunity’



NOIDA, India: Police barricades cordon off a road near the 100-meter-high residential twin tower which is slated for demolition by controlled implosion on August 28, in Noida on the outskirts of New Delhi on August 26, 2022. —AFP

were demolished for breaking environmental rules in 2020. Lawyer Jayant Bhushan, who represented the complainants in the case against Supertech, said builders must clean up their act to win back the

trust of home-buyers.

“Unless builders follow rules, it will be hapless buyers who will end up burning their fingers again and again,” he said. —AFP

Dutch bus out asylum-seekers at crisis-hit centre

THE HAGUE: Hundreds of asylum-seekers have been evacuated from a crisis-hit migrant centre to shelters across the Netherlands after having slept there in the open for days, officials said on Saturday.

Aid organizations had warned of a looming humanitarian emergency at the Ter Apel centre near the northern city of Groningen, where more than 700 people have been sleeping rough outside the gates, many for almost three weeks. The group of all-male asylum-seekers hoped to be processed and given shelter while their applications were under consideration.

“Several hundred people were taken by bus late last night to other reception locations across the country,” said Leon Veldt, spokesman for the Dutch government’s refugee organization (COA) said Saturday.

“We hope to slowly normalize the situation at Ter Apel,” he told AFP. The crisis came under the spotlight after the death at the centre of a three-month-old infant from unknown causes on Wednesday. Dutch newspapers however reported Saturday that dozens of men remained behind at the centre, mainly out of fear of losing their places in the queue.

On Friday the Red Cross and the Dutch arm of Doctors Without Borders (MSF) had warned of a looming medical and humanitarian emergency.

AFP correspondents on Friday saw hundreds of men on the ground under makeshift tarpaulins, close



TER APEL, Netherlands: Asylum seekers are being transferred from the application centre in Ter Apel to reception locations throughout the Netherlands on August 26, 2022, after the alarm of the Health Care and Youth Inspectorate (IGJ) about the health situation. —AFP

to a row of dirty portable toilets with no other facilities. Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte admitted there were “shameful scenes at the centre” and that mistakes had been made, but he promised a “structural solution” to the problem. The Dutch government late Friday announced a raft of measures to deal with the crisis at the country’s main migrant centre — blamed on staff shortages at COA and housing shortages in the Netherlands.

Many asylum-seekers whose applications have been approved were forced to remain in reception

centres as there are no homes available on the Dutch market.

The new measures included temporarily suspending a migrant deal with Turkey to take on 1,000 asylum seekers per year and only bringing over families of successful applicants once housing outside reception centers have been found. The Dutch government also promised to open more centers, including the military possibly making available a property, to use a boat in Arnhem with 200 beds and accommodation at the TU Delft University. —AFP

Russia blocks adoption at UN of nuclear disarmament text

MOSCOW: Russia on Friday prevented the adoption of a joint declaration following a four-week UN conference on a nuclear disarmament treaty, with Moscow denouncing what it said were “political” aspects of the text.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which 191 signatories review every five years, aims to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, promote complete disarmament and promote cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

The nations had been gathered at UN headquarters in New York since August 1 participating in a month of negotiations, including a final session that was postponed for several hours on Friday.

In the end, the conference’s president, Gustavo Zlauev of Argentina, said it was “not in a position to achieve agreement” after Russia took issue with the text. Russian representative Igor Vishnevetsky said the draft final text, which was more than 30 pages long, lacked “balance.”

“Our delegation has one key objection on some paragraphs which are blatantly political in nature,” he said, adding Russia was not the only country to take issue with the text.

According to sources close to the negotiations, Russia was opposed in particular to paragraphs concerning the Ukrainian nuclear power plant in Zaporizhzhia, which is occupied by the Russian military. The latest draft text had expressed “grave concern” over military activities around



NEW YORK: Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, listens to Ambassador Vasily Nebenzia, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, speak during a UN Security Council meeting at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City. —AFP

Ukrainian power plants, including Zaporizhzhia, as well as over Ukraine’s loss of control of such sites and the negative impact on safety.

Neutral and non-nuclear Austria condemned Saturday the attitude at the talks of major powers, and

unexplained catastrophe on the lush banks of a river—between Poland and Germany.

“I’m just starting to realize the scale of what happened,” Wloch told AFP. “Yesterday, I slept all day because I was depressed, unable to move,” he said. In the empty tourist marina of Gicagice in Poland, firefighters in a rubber dinghy are still removing dead fish while environmental agency workers take water samples for tests.

The stench of dead fish fills the air. Between 200 and 300 kilograms (440-660 pounds) of dead fish have been removed in Gicagice in the past few days—out of around 300 tons in total from the Oder since the start of August, officials said.

not just Russia. “While three-quarters of the 191 signatory states support credible progress for nuclear disarmament, it is mainly the nuclear-armed states, and above all Russia, which resisted,” the government in Vienna said in a statement. —AFP

“Everyone is afraid. Only some curious people pop in to have a look, but life has stopped,” said Lukasz Duch, director of a local sports centre. “Before the pollution, on a good weekend, Gicagice would draw between 5,000 and 10,000 tourists. “This place was full of life... Now businesses are making nothing in high season,” he said. While the first signs of pollution appeared at the end of July, the area around Gicagice was only affected on August 8. Thousands of dead fish began appearing in the water. In the region as a whole, residents and firefighters rushed to their river in an effort to clean it up.

Poland’s government only reacted on August 12, sparking widespread criticism from both local Polish

News in brief

Cyberattack hits Montenegro

PODGORICA, Montenegro: A major cyberattack has targeted government institutions in Montenegro, Prime Minister Dritan Abazovic announced, with Russia the chief suspect. The computer systems of several state bodies including the finance ministry were “infected”, he said late Friday, and the NATO-member Balkan nation has asked its allies to help limit the damage. Abazovic did not comment on the origins of Friday’s attack, but his defense minister fingered Russia. Moscow added Montenegro to its list of “enemy countries” in March, after the country of 620,000 people backed European Union sanctions over Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. —AFP

Brnabic to remain Serbian PM

BELGRADE, Serbia: Ana Brnabic will remain Serbia’s prime minister for a third consecutive term, the Balkan country’s president said Saturday. The announcement came nearly five months after the ruling Serbian Progressive Party, led by President Aleksandar Vucic, won the country’s general elections. Although Vucic holds a ceremonial post, rights groups have long accused him of authoritarian tendencies and critics say prime ministers serve only to echo his authority. “It’s very important she remains as head of the government so we can continue to solve problems”, Vucic told a press conference. —AFP

Guinea oppn calls off protests

CONAKRY, Guinea: A political coalition in Guinea on Saturday said it was calling off planned protests against the country’s ruling junta, at the request of a West African regional group. The National Front for the Defense of the Constitution (FNDC) had called for fresh demonstrations in the capital Conakry on Monday and September 4, after accusing junta forces of killing two teenagers during previous protests. But in a statement sent to AFP on Saturday, the FNDC said it had “complied with a request from the heads of the Economic Community of West African States and Guinea Christians to suspend the peaceful citizen demonstrations”. —AFP

Pope creates new cardinals

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis on Saturday created 20 new cardinals picked from the four corners of the world, most of whom could one day end up choosing the pontiff’s successor. Francis has raised the possibility of retiring due to his declining health, a path taken by his predecessor Benedict XVI. If he were to do so, a conclave involving all cardinals aged under 80 would be called to pick a successor. Sixteen of the 20 cardinals created Saturday would be eligible for that conclave based on their ages. —AFP

authorities and Germany. “If we had had the information two weeks earlier, we would have prepared,” said Wojciech Soltys, the mayor of Sulechew, the municipality where Gicagice is located.

“Now we are still waiting for clear and concrete information. What happened? When will we be able to go back to the river?” The Oder begins in the Czech Republic before passing into Poland where it forms a natural border with Germany and then ends up in the Baltic Sea. Until the end of the 1990s, it was heavily polluted—an industrial legacy of the communist era. In 1997, following massive flooding, the river cleaned up naturally and people began returning to its banks. —AFP

Dead fish and depression on the banks of the Oder

STOCKHOLM: Appearing tired and stressed, Piotr Wloch looks out dejectedly at his empty tourist boats on the Oder river after an environmental disaster that has killed thousands of fish. Like many local businesses, Wloch has seen bookings plunge by 90 percent following the as yet

SUNDAY, AUGUST 28, 2022

Business

Taming inflation will inflict ‘pain’ on Americans: Powell

Fed pledges to act ‘forcefully’ to wrestle prices down

WASHINGTON: Taming US inflation will inflict “pain” on American families and businesses, but failure to wrestle prices down from their current 40-year high would be even more harmful, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said Friday in a hotly-anticipated speech to global policymakers.

Addressing the annual gathering of central bankers in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, Powell did not hold back or leave room for doubt about the Fed’s plans, pledging to act “forcefully.”

He warned that the world’s largest economy is likely to slow for a sustained period, and the strong US job market will suffer in order to get prices down-consequences he called the “unfortunate costs of reducing inflation.” The Fed this year launched an aggressive campaign to raise interest rates-and in his unusually short, notably direct remarks, Powell made it clear that the fight against inflation is not over.

“Restoring price stability will take some time and requires using our tools forcefully to bring demand and supply into better balance,” he told the gathering, held against the backdrop of the majestic Grand Teton mountains. “While higher interest rates, slower growth and softer labor market conditions will bring down inflation, they will also bring some pain to households and businesses,” Powell said.

“But a failure to restore price stability would mean far greater pain.” Modest signs of slowing in the US economy and easing price pressures spurred hope in financial markets that the central bank might ease up on its aggressive rate hikes, and perhaps even start to reverse course next year.

But Powell doused hopes of a policy pivot, making it clear that Fed policy and the benchmark borrowing

rate would have to remain “sufficiently restrictive” to bring inflation back down to the two percent target. US markets turned negative on the news, with all three major stock indices losing three percent or more, including a 1,000 point loss for the Dow.

Improving data

The supply chain issues that have beleaguered the global economy have continued, worsened by a series of COVID lockdowns in China, which have combined with Russia’s war in Ukraine to send prices soaring worldwide. In the battle to contain red-hot US inflation, which topped nine percent in June, the Fed has increased rates four times, including three-quarter-point increases in June and July-steep moves unheard of since the early 1980s-to the current level of a range of 2.25 to 2.5 percent.

Powell repeated Friday that another “unusually large” 75 basis point hike could be appropriate at the September policy meeting. But recent data has shown signs of a slowing in price increases. Annual consumer price inflation dipped to a still-high 8.5 percent in July.

And data released Friday showed the Fed’s preferred inflation measure, the personal consumption expenditures price index, actually fell 0.1 percent in July-a dramatic slowdown from the 1.0 percent surge in June, largely reflecting the recent sharp retreat in global oil prices. Over the last 12 months, the PCE price index slowed to 6.3 percent, the Commerce Department reported. But Powell did not take much comfort in the figures.

“While the lower inflation readings for July are welcome, a single month’s improvement falls far short of what (policymakers) will need to see before



WASHINGTON: In this file photo taken on July 27, 2022 Federal Reserve Board Chairman Jerome Powell speaks during a news conference in Washington, DC. —AFP

we are confident that inflation is moving down,” he said. But President Joe Biden cheered the figures, saying, “The American people are starting to get some relief from high prices.”

Still, he added, “We have more work to do. We have to help families who have been squeezed by decades living paycheck to paycheck.” Powell pointed to the experience of one of his predecessors, famed inflation dragon slayer Paul Volcker-who used

aggressive measures to quell runaway prices-and said officials cannot retreat from their responsibility.

“That means the Fed must hammer demand to come in line with what is becoming a global economy of scarcities or constrained supply,” KPMG economist Diane Swonk said on Twitter.

“That is no small challenge. Powell sees a window to avoid a Volcker outcome of deep recessions w/some pain today. —AFP

In risky recycling venture, Gazans burn plastic for fuel

JABALIA, Palestinian Territories: Living in one of the poorest parts of the Middle East and facing some of the region’s highest fuel costs, Palestinians in Gaza are burning plastic to make affordable diesel. It’s an economic and practical solution in a territory blockaded by Zionists for 15 years, but one which poses serious environmental and health risks, experts say.

Standing before rusty metal machinery and fuel containers, Mahmoud Al-Kafarneh described how he and his brothers came up with their plastic recycling project. “We started experimenting to implement the project in 2018, through searching the internet,” he told AFP, at the site in the Jabalia area of northern Gaza.

“We failed a few times; after eight months we succeeded in extracting the fuel.” The distilling set-up features a series of crude-looking tanks and connecting pipes set up outside on the dirt.

The process starts with the burning of wood in a furnace below a large mud-covered tank holding up to 1.5 tons (tons) of shredded plastic. When the plastic melts, the vapors flow through a pipe into a water tank where they cool and drip as fuel into containers, ready to be sold. Black-grey smoke pours from several pipes extending above the furnace and the tank holding the plastic.

Only a few of the workers wear face masks and



JABALIA, Palestinian Territories: A Palestinian worker prepares plastic for processing to extract fuel in Jabalia on the northern Gaza Strip. —AFP

gloves as they melt bagfuls of shredded plastic. Their clothing is stained black. Kafarneh said no-one has experienced health problems since starting work at the site, which sits beside olive trees and away from residential buildings.

“We follow all safety procedures at work”, he said. But Ahmed Hillis, director of Gaza’s National Institute for the Environment and Development, fears an environmental catastrophe from this unregulated industry.

“The method used is rudimentary and very harmful to the workers,” mainly because they inhale

toxic fumes, he told AFP. Burning plastic releases dioxins, mercury and other toxic gases which pose “a threat to vegetation, human and animal health”, according to the United Nations Environment Programme. Hillis adds another danger of burning plastic, which is derived from petroleum hydrocarbons. The tank is “a time bomb because it could explode” from the heat, he says. In Gaza, where exchanges of fire between Palestinians and Zionists for three days earlier this month killed at least 49 Palestinians, health risks are outweighed by economic reality. —AFP

countries that were looking to move away from nuclear have discarded those plans-at least in the short term.

Less than a month after Russia’s attack on Ukraine, Belgium delayed by a decade its plan to scrap nuclear energy in 2025. While nuclear power, currently used in 32 countries, supplies 10 percent of the world’s electricity production, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) raised its projections in September for the first time since the 2011 disaster. The IAEA now expects installed capacity to double by 2050 under the most favorable scenario.

Climate reasoning

Even in Germany, Europe’s biggest economy, sticking with nuclear is no longer a taboo subject as the energy crisis rekindles debate on shutting down the country’s last three nuclear power plants by the end of 2022. Berlin said last month it would await the outcome of a “stress test” of the national electric grid before deciding whether to stick with the phaseout.

Greenpeace Germany’s climate and energy expert, Gerald Neubauer, said turning to nuclear was “not a solution to the energy crisis”. He said nuclear energy would have “limited” efficacy in replacing Russian gas since it is mainly “used for heating” in Germany not for electricity production.

“The reactors would only save the gas used for electricity, it would save less than one percent of the gas consumption,” he added. But according to Nicolas Berghmans, energy and climate expert at



the IDDRI think tank, extending the use of nuclear “can help”.

“Europe is in a very different energy situation, with several overlapping crises: the problem of Russian gas supply, the drought that has reduced the capacity of dams, the French nuclear plants’ weak output... so all the levers matter,” he said.

The pro-nuclear lobby says it is one of the world’s best options to avoid climate change since it does not directly emit carbon dioxide. In fact, nuclear energy accounts for a bigger share of the world power mix in most of the scenarios put forward by the IPCC, the UN’s climate experts, to alleviate the global climate crisis. —AFP

France vows to ‘contain’ soaring electricity costs

PARIS: France’s finance minister pledged Saturday to keep electricity costs in check for consumers as European energy prices soar. The Paris government has put in place an energy price cap to shield households until December 31 and Bruno Le Maire said that next year, expected hikes would be “contained increases”.

“The four percent cap will be maintained to the end of the year,” he told a ruling coalition conference in the eastern city of Metz. “There will be no catch-up of costs on the ceiling in 2023,” he vowed after President Emmanuel Macron had on Wednesday warned of energy price hikes.

Le Maire also said access to a three billion euro fund for businesses unable to meet energy bills would be made easier. European electricity prices soared to new records this week, presaging a bitter winter as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine inflicts economic pain across the continent.

But the war is not the only culprit in France, where nuclear energy currently covers some 70 percent of the nation’s electricity needs. The shutdown of several nuclear reactors due to corrosion issues has contributed to the French electricity price increase. Traditionally an exporter of electricity, France is now an importer. The year-ahead contract for French electricity on Friday surged past A1,100 (\$1,096) per megawatt hour-a more than tenfold increase on last year. —AFP

Energy crisis pushes nuclear comeback worldwide

PARIS: As the costs of importing energy soars worldwide and climate crises wreak havoc, interest in nuclear power is on the rise with nations scrambling to find alternative sources. Investment in nuclear power declined after Japan’s 2011 Fukushima disaster, the world’s worst nuclear accident since Chernobyl in 1986, as fears over its safety increased and governments ran scared.

But following Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine in February, the subsequent squeeze on energy supplies and Europe’s push to wean itself off of Russian oil and gas, the tide is now turning back in favor of nuclear. Governments face difficult decisions with rising gas and electricity bills and scarce resources threatening to cause widespread suffering this winter. Some experts argue that nuclear power should not be considered an option. But others argue that, in the face of so many crises, it must remain part of the world’s energy mix.

One of the countries reconsidering nuclear energy is Japan, where the 2011 accident led to the suspension of many nuclear reactors over safety fears.

This week Japan’s Prime Minister Fumio Kishida called for a push to revive the country’s nuclear power industry, and build new atomic plants. Other

US GDP contracted 0.6% in Q2, less than initial report

WASHINGTON: The American economy contracted in the April-June quarter but not as much as initially reported, as revised data showed stronger US exports and spending, according to government data released Friday.

Second quarter GDP fell 0.6 percent, annualized, less than the 0.9 percent drop the Commerce Department announced in the initial estimate last month. Coming after the steep 1.6 percent contraction in the first quarter, the data still feeds concerns about a recession in the world’s largest economy, which is often defined as two quarters of negative growth.

But many economists have argued that definition does not apply to the current situation, given that the very strong labor market and resilient US consumer mean the downturn is not widespread throughout the economy. Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics notes that incomes also increased in the latest quarter, which bodes well for continued upward revisions to the data. —AFP

Business

Tunis hosts Japan-Africa investment conference

Conference seeks to counter growing influence of China

TUNIS: Tunisia and Japan launched a pan-African investment conference on Saturday, seeking to counter the influence of rival China whose economic imprint on the continent has steadily grown.

The conference takes place amid a “complex” international environment caused by the coronavirus pandemic and the war in Ukraine, the Japanese foreign ministry has said. Some 30 heads of state and government are attending the event in the capital Tunis, at a time when the import-dependent North African nation is grappling with a deepening economic malaise.

In his opening speech, Tunisian President Kais Saied urged delegates to “search together for ways for African peoples to achieve the hopes and dreams of the first generation after independence”.

He praised Japan's success in “achieving development at the same time as preserve its culture and social traditions”. “The world cannot continue as it was. With all its wealth and assets, Africa cannot watch its people live through poverty,” he said.

The eighth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD8) also comes as Beijing cements its influence on the continent with its “Belt and Road” infrastructure initiative.

It is the first TICAD-held every three years either in Japan or an African country-since the pandemic began. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida will be attending remotely after testing positive for COVID-19.

The Japanese delegation is being led by Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi, with about 5,000 participants set to attend. Morocco withdrew from the event and recalled its ambassador from Tunisia for consultations, after Saied hosted the head of Western Sahara's Polisario independence movement.

The conference will focus on three pillars: economy, society, and peace and stability.

A slick promotional video said the conference aims to promote “African development led by African people”. But no journalists from African news outlets had been given access to delegates ahead of the event, except Tunisian state media, alongside Japanese journalists.

Japanese economic paper Nikkei reported that aid to Africa could increase by 40 percent over the next three years, in response to other powers that have boosted their presence on the continent.

Beware of ‘excessive’ debt

At the last TICAD in 2019, former premier Shinzo Abe—who was assassinated at a campaign event last month—warned investors in Africa they must beware of burdening countries with “excessive” debt, an apparent swipe at China. Tunisian authorities hope their struggling economy will benefit from hosting the conference by attracting Japanese investment, particularly in the health, automotive and renewable energy sectors. The conference has sparked anger among Tunisians as major road closures threatened traffic disruptions in the capital.

Authorities also drew widespread mockery after detaining Japanese satellite engineers—TICAD delegates—at Tunis airport for hours because they were in possession of a model satellite that they intend to use to showcase technology. Authorities have spruced up parts of the city likely to be seen by delegates and dug in roadside plants, but these efforts have also drawn the ire of social media users.

“I feel deeply insulted by the clean-up of Tunis for the TICAD,” one Tunisian wrote on Twitter, arguing that “those we pay to make our lives easier” should instead focus on making the capital livable for citizens all year round. With its stated purpose to “create a sustainable world together”, Japan on Saturday



TUNIS: (Left to right) Tunisia's President Kais Saied and Japan's Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi attend the opening session of the eighth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in Tunisia's capital Tunis on August 27, 2022. — AFP

kicks off its aid conference for Africa, where rival China has invested heavily in recent years.

The eighth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD8) comes against the backdrop of China's rising influence, cemented on the continent by its “Belt and Road” infrastructure initiative. A “complex” international environment caused by issues including “the situation in Ukraine” surrounds the meeting in Tunisia's capital, the Japanese foreign ministry said.

It is the first TICAD-held every three years either in Japan or an African country-since the pandemic began and Prime Minister Fumio Kishida will be attending remotely after testing positive for COVID-19. Replacing him at the head of the Japanese delega-

tion will be his Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi, and about 5,000 participants are expected to attend. Among them will be 30 heads of state and government, converging on the Tunisian capital from across the continent.

Alongside the summit, businesspeople will attend an economic conference while various parallel events and workshops will address civil society and women's inclusion.

Since their inception in 1993, the TICAD conferences, co-sponsored by the United Nations, World Bank and African Union, have generated 26 development projects in 20 African countries, largely funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). —AFP

Taiwan fruit, fish farmers feel squeeze of China's sanctions

TAIPEI: As a Taiwanese fighter jet screamed over the lush green fields of eastern Hualien county last week, pomelo farmer Mulin Ou sat in his orchard counting the cost of China's latest push to squeeze the island. Cross-strait tensions have risen to their highest level in decades as China rages over a visit by United States House Speaker Nancy Pelosi earlier this month.

Beijing, which claims democratic Taiwan as its own, launched drills in response, sending missiles into waters around the island—and it torpedoed exports of certain fruit and fish products to China with fresh import bans. The overall impact of China's latest economic sanctions is limited. But producers like Ou are paying a painful price. “Our mainland orders have all been cancelled. Our pomelos have no way of getting there,” he said.

His farm in Hualien's Ruisui township has dispatched about 180,000 kilograms (397,000 pounds) of the citrus fruit to the mainland every year for several decades. “The clients are waiting for the pomelos, but there's nothing we can do, it's a political problem,” he shrugged.

Grouper gap

Taiwanese farmers and producers have increasingly had to get used to import bans from China—with Beijing authorities typically citing sudden reg-

ulatory discrepancies rather than a direct link to politics. After Pelosi's visit, China announced bans on Taiwanese citrus fruit and some mackerel, while halting its own exports to the island of natural sand used in construction.

The month before her visit, it targeted grouper fish, the vast majority of which had previously gone to Chinese consumers. Taipei said the move was politically motivated, while China claimed it found some fish to be contaminated by banned chemicals.

A year earlier, pineapple imports were halted after Chinese authorities claimed to have discovered pests in shipments, just as the annual harvest was under way. At a grouper facility in Pingtung, Taiwan's southernmost county, third-generation farmer Hans Chen of the Lijia Green Energy and Biotechnology Company said he would be “severely impacted” if the sanctions were not lifted by the end of the year.

Chen, 35, manages a farm of some 500,000 groupers, and 90 percent of its exports go to China.

He said the ban was imposed without any warning and came at the worst time for producers already bruised by the coronavirus pandemic. The fish farmer says his business and others are relying too much on the lucrative China market and need to diversify away from their aggressive neighbor after the surprise ban. “Everyone felt the COVID-19 situation was slowly improving and the China market is slowly stabilizing and prices will rise again, so there will be... some profit to make up for the previous losses,” he said. “That's why everyone's anxiety and (the sanctions') impact are very big.”

Symbolic and limited

China remains Taiwan's largest trading partner,



PINGTUNG, Taiwan: This picture taken on July 9, 2022 shows workers from the Lijia Green Energy and Biotechnology Company collecting groupers with nets at a fish farm in Linbian Township, in Taiwan's Pingtung county. — AFP

with the mainland accounting for 28 percent of total exports. But Taiwan's government and businesses have also pushed economic diversification in response to Beijing's increased aggression under President Xi Jinping, China's most authoritarian leader in a generation.

Since 2016, Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen has pursued a “New Southbound Policy” to grow trade with the rest of Southeast and East Asia. Taiwan is also seeing a surge of sympathy from like-minded democracies in the region. Much of last year's pineapple harvest was saved when Japanese consumers rushed to purchase “freedom pineapples” in an act of solidarity. —AFP

European gas prices approach record peak on supply fears

WASHINGTON: European natural gas prices climbed Thursday towards a record peak on heightened fears over Russian supplies, while equities rose on the eve of a key speech from Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell. Europe's benchmark Dutch TTF gas contract advanced to 322 euros per megawatt hour, not far from the record high £345 struck in March shortly after key gas producer Russia invaded Ukraine.

Prices have spiked in recent days as a three-day halt in Russian deliveries to Germany via the Nord Stream 1 pipeline approaches amid fears that Moscow will not turn the taps back on afterwards. At the same time, one-year forward contracts for electricity prices in both France and Germany surged on Thursday to record pinnacles on worries over a winter energy crunch.

‘Unstoppable march upwards’

“Gas is on a seemingly unstoppable march upwards again, a dramatic move which will intensify the energy crisis,” said Hargreaves Lansdown analyst Susannah Streeter.

“Already plans are being brought in to save energy which will darken streets across Germany and make public buildings colder, but much tougher measures may have to be enforced given dwindling gas reserves.” In stock market trade, European equities mostly advanced, with Frankfurt drawing some strength from news that the German economy expanded by an anemic 0.1 percent in the second quarter.

That was upgraded from the prior projection of zero growth, but analysts remain downbeat.

“I'm trying to find a reason to be optimistic on the back of that, but in reality it just means the economy may take a little longer to fall into recession,” warned OANDA analyst Craig Erlam. “With the energy crisis unlikely to improve, this likely means another quarter of flat growth at best before the economy falls into recession later this year.” Wall Street also pushed higher as traders looked to central banking symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyoming this week.

All eyes are on Powell's speech Friday where he is expected to reiterate the message the Fed will continue to hike interest rates to tame high inflation.

Central banks around the world are trying to find a delicate balance between curbing inflation and avoiding recessions. The challenge has been compounded this year by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has sent energy and food prices skyrocketing. There are concerns that the Fed's fight against soaring inflation could lead to a recession in the United States, which could, in turn, hit a global economy that is still recovering from the Covid pandemic.

But the latest data out Thursday initial applications for unemployment benefits unexpectedly fell last week, dispelling concerns about a weakening job market, while GDP in the second quarter contracted by 0.6 percent, much less than first reported. Asian indices rose after China unveiled fresh measures to boost its economy. The moves to shore up the economy were announced by China's State Council on Wednesday, including steps to encourage lending, consumption and investment, according to the official Xinhua news agency.

They also included support for electricity producers and agriculture, two sectors hit especially hard by the heatwave, though Xinhua's readout of the State Council meeting did not mention the extreme weather. —AFP

Stocks slump after Fed chair vows tough inflation fight

LONDON: Stocks slumped on Friday after Federal Reserve boss Jerome Powell pledged to act “forcefully” against soaring inflation in a battle that will be painful for American families and businesses. The Fed has been on an aggressive campaign to raise interest rates—and Powell made it clear at the Jackson Hole gathering of global monetary policymakers that the fight against inflation is not over.

“Restoring price stability will take some time and requires using our tools forcefully to bring demand and supply into better balance,” he told the gathering, held against the backdrop of the majestic Grand Teton mountains. Modest signs of slowing in the world's largest economy and easing price pressures had spurred hope in financial markets that the central bank might ease up on its aggressive interest rate hikes, and perhaps even start to reverse course next year.

But Powell doused those hopes, making it clear that Fed policy and the benchmark borrowing rate would have to remain “sufficiently restrictive” to return inflation to its two percent target. “While higher interest rates, slower growth, and softer labor market conditions will bring down inflation, they will also bring some pain to households and businesses,” Powell said.

“But a failure to restore price stability would mean far greater pain.” Wall Street stocks tumbled, with all three main indices ending with losses of three percent or more. Keith Buchanan at Global Investments said, “This wasn't a shocking speech by any stretch of imagination.” He said the negative reaction was due to “the last possibility of a pivot being kind of shoved off the table.” —AFP

Europe electricity prices soar as tough winter looms

PARIS: European electricity prices soared to new records on Friday, presaging a bitter winter as Russia's invasion of Ukraine inflicts economic pain across the continent. The year-ahead contract for German electricity reached 995 euros (\$995) per megawatt hours while the French equivalent surged past 1,100 euros—a more than tenfold increase in both countries from last year.

In Britain, energy regulator Ofgem said it would increase the electricity and gas price cap almost twofold from October 1 to an average £3,549 (\$4,197) per year. Ofgem blamed the increase on the spike in global wholesale gas prices after the lifting of COVID restrictions and Russian curbs on supplies.

The Czech Republic, which holds the rotating European Union presidency, announced Friday that it would convene an EU energy crisis summit “at the earliest possible date”. Energy prices have soared in Europe as Russia has slashed natural gas supplies to the continent, with fears of more drastic cuts in the winter amid tensions between Moscow and the West over the war.

One-fifth of European electricity is generated by gas-fired power plants, so drops in supply inevitably lead to higher prices. European gas prices on Friday reached 341 euros per MWh, near the all-time high of 345 euros it struck in March. The war is not the only culprit in France. The shutdown of several nuclear reactors due to corrosion issues has contributed to the French electricity price increase as power production has dramatically decreased in the country.

Only 24 of the 56 reactors operated by energy giant EDF were online on Thursday. France, which traditionally exports electricity, is now an importer.

“Winter is going to be a tough period for all the



countries in Europe,” Giovanni Sgaravatti, research assistant at the Bruegl think tank in Brussels, told AFP. “Prices will stay high, possibly they can even go higher,” he said.

Recession ‘probably unavoidable’

A Bruegel study found that European Union countries have allocated 236 billion euros from September 2021 to August 2022 to shield households and firms from rising energy prices, which began to increase as countries emerged from COVID restrictions and soared after the war. In recent days and weeks, countries have announced energy savings campaigns to encourage the public to reduce power consumption during the winter. Germany announced Wednesday that the temperature of public administrative offices this winter would be capped at 19 degrees Celsius (66 degrees Fahrenheit) while hot water would be shut off.

The German measures also include a ban on heating private swimming pools from September and over the six months that the decree is in place. Finland is encouraging its citizens to lower their thermostats, take shorter showers and spend less time in saunas, a national tradition. French households are shielded by an energy price cap until December 31 for now. Industries are also affected by the soaring energy prices. Factories that produce ammonia—an ingredient to make fertilizer—announced the suspension of their operations in Poland, Italy, Hungary and Norway this week. —AFP

Business

UN ends session on high seas biodiversity without a treaty

‘Missed opportunity’ to address growing environmental and economic challenges

WASHINGTON: UN member states ended two weeks of negotiations Friday without a treaty to protect biodiversity in the high seas, an agreement that would have addressed growing environmental and economic challenges.

After 15 years, including four prior formal sessions, negotiators have yet to reach a legally binding text to address the multitude of issues facing international waters—a zone that encompasses almost half the planet. “Although we did make excellent progress, we still do need a little bit more time to progress towards the finish line,” said conference chair Rena Lee.

It will now be up to the UN General Assembly to resume the fifth session at a date still to be determined. Many had hoped the session, which began on August 15 at the United Nations headquarters in New York, would be the last and yield a final text on “the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction,” or BBNJ for short.

“While it’s disappointing that the treaty wasn’t finalized during the past two weeks of negotiations, we remain encouraged by the progress that was made,” said Liz Karan of the NGO Pew Charitable Trusts, calling for a new session by the end of the year. One of the most sensitive issues in the text revolved around the sharing of possible profits from the development of genetic resources in international waters, where pharmaceutical, chemical and cosmetic companies hope to find miracle drugs, products or cures.

Such costly research at sea is largely the prerogative of rich nations, but developing countries do not want to be left out of potential windfall profits drawn from marine

resources that belong to no one.

‘Missed opportunity’

Similar issues of equity arise in other international negotiations, such as on climate change, in which developing nations that feel outsized harm from global warming have tried in vain to get wealthier countries to help pay to offset those impacts. The high seas begin at the border of a nation’s exclusive economic zone (EEZ) — which by international law reaches no more than 200 nautical miles (370 kilometers) from its coast—and are under no state’s jurisdiction.

Sixty percent of the world’s oceans fall under this category.

And while healthy marine ecosystems are crucial to the future of humanity, particularly to limit global warming, only one percent of international waters are protected. One of the key pillars of an eventual BBNJ treaty is to allow the creation of marine protected areas, which many nations hope will cover 30 percent of the Earth’s ocean by 2030. “Without establishing protections in this vast area, we will not be able to meet our ambitious and necessary 30 by 30 goal,” US State Department official Maxine Burkett said at an earlier press conference.

But delegations still disagree on the process for creating these protected areas as well as how required environmental impact assessments will be implemented before new high seas activity begins.

“What a missed opportunity....” tweeted Klaudija Cremers, a researcher at the IDDRI think tank, which, like multiple other NGOs, has a seat with observer status at the negotiations.

The delegate from Samoa, addressing the conference on behalf of the smaller developing



NEW YORK: In this file photo taken on August 14, 2022, images by Greenpeace calling for action to finalize a strong Global Ocean Treaty at the United Nations are projected onto the Brooklyn Bridge in New York City. —AFP

island nations of the Pacific, said they were “disappointed.”

“We live very far and it is not cheap to travel all this way. This money was not spent on roads, on medicine, schools,” she added. “The Pacific came here in good faith and will continue to do so until we conclude this conference in the very near

future,” she said on the verge of tears, to applause from the room. Laura Meller, of Greenpeace’s Protect the Oceans campaign, said: “Time has run out. Further delay means ocean destruction. We are sad and disappointed. While countries continue to talk, the oceans and all those who rely on them will suffer.” —AFP

Al-Marzouq: NBK invests aggressively in future of banking

KUWAIT: In conversation with MEED Magazine, Deputy CEO for Kuwait, National Bank of Kuwait, Sulaiman Al-Marzouq, said: “NBK is focused on further developing its growth trajectory regardless of any rising challenges. Our strategic pathway is based on pursuing core banking activities, diversifying our revenue streams throughout various sectors and geographies, and allocating more investments towards our digital transformation to mitigate risks and create more opportunities.”

“The biggest economic risk we are facing right now is that the world may be falling into the grip of a deep recession. This scenario poses risks on the operating environment in general. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has recently warned that the global economy entered 2022 in a weaker position than previously expected, with forecasted global economic growth revised down to 3.2 percent in 2022 from 6.1 percent last year, which may lead to a drop in global oil demand and lower prices,” Al-Marzouq added.

Al-Marzouq indicated that Kuwait, like other GCC economies, is faced with long-term challenges related to their heavy dependence on oil, which represents 90 percent of the government’s revenues in Kuwait. This spark concerns that lower oil prices would create more challenges, weaken the government’s fiscal position, and increase budget deficit, in addition to slowing down project award, one of the main drivers of business activities in our economy, and subsequently may have a negative impact on business growth and lending activities.

The challenges of inflation

Al-Marzouq pointed out that US inflation hit its highest level in 40 years, whereas in Kuwait it has recently approached a high of close to 4.5 percent. This may reduce consumer spending and mount additional pressures, leaving more direct impacts on retail banking performance and indirectly affecting corporate banking services.

He also highlighted that financial markets continue to fluctuate as they are extremely sensitive to economic factors, which pose additional challenges and risks to wealth management and private banking services for GCC banks. “The upheaval may be turned into opportunities. Banks that managed to successfully position themselves may benefit from the situation, as geopolitical tensions - especially the Russian invasion of Ukraine - push oil prices higher, in turn strengthening the government’s financial position and encouraging investment spending, with KD 1.5 billion worth of projects awarded in Kuwait in 2021, paving the way for corporate lending growth,” Al-Marzouq stated.

Pipeline operator to pay \$13m over California coast leak

SAN FRANCISCO: The operators of a pipeline that leaked crude oil onto California beaches has agreed to plead guilty to environmental pollution charges and pay \$13 million, these companies said Friday.

Amplify Energy, a Texas company operating the pipeline off Huntington Beach, and two of its subsidiaries-Beta Operating Co and San Pedro Bay Pipeline Co-said they will admit to allowing oil to foul the waters off southern California in October last year.

As part of plea agreements entered in federal court, they will pay a \$7.1 million fine and hand over \$5.8 million to compensate federal agencies involved in cleaning up 25,000 gallons of crude oil that spewed from their pipeline. The spill blackened 18 miles (24 kilometers) of coast south of Los Angeles between Huntington Beach and Laguna Beach, spots popular with surfers and a habitat for dolphins.

Underwater inspections revealed that a large segment of the pipeline had been displaced and showed a rupture in the pipe. Investigators said last year they

The monetary policy cycle is now increasingly synchronized around the world, with central banks continuing to raise interest rates as a means of combating inflation. This bodes well for banking operations as it pushes net interest income higher.

“We also noticed that those factors led to changes on the wealth management arena, as clients shifted towards alternative investments and redirected their capital flows, bringing forward some opportunities that NBK has laid out. In 2021, we launched our Global Wealth Management (GMW) platform which combines the extensive investment banking and asset management capabilities of NBK Capital with the expertise, client-focused interfaces developed by the Private Banking Group, as we seek to expand our market share and further grow the Group’s \$17.7 billion assets under management, in addition to expanding our customer base in Kuwait and the region, with special focus on KSA,” Al-Marzouq said.

He also finds that financial institutions with valuable and strong banking brands that managed to build client confidence and loyalty, like NBK, benefit from the fact that customers and investors prefer to choose leading financial institutions in such challenging times of uncertainty. This has been historically proven time after time, as NBK always emerges stronger after each crisis capturing new growth.

Prudent policies

Speaking on the performance of Kuwait banking sector in terms of profitability and loan quality compared to pre-pandemic, Al-Marzouq stated that following the prudent guidance of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK), Kuwaiti banks shifted towards a more conservative approach and prudential policies in managing risks and relying on major banking activities, thus outperforming their regional peers in terms of capital adequacy, liquidity, and asset quality. So, when the pandemic hit, the banking sector in Kuwait was in a better position.

In terms of asset quality, Al-Marzouq said that non-performing loans stood at 1.4 percent by the end of 2021, thus recording its lowest historical level compared to 2 percent in 2020, which reflects economic strength and how successfully Kuwaiti banks balanced the prudent management with a drive to applying financing guidelines.

As for capital adequacy, he hinted that Kuwaiti banks had robust capital adequacy which stood at 19.2 percent by the end of 2021, the highest levels on record since the implementation of Basel III standards, far outperforming the international requirements of 10.5 percent.

He also clarified that Kuwaiti banks had strong liquidity ratios by the end of 2021, reflecting good financial health and regular stream of cash flows, where the liquidity coverage ratio stood at 183 percent in 2021, and the net stable funding ratio at 111 percent, both of which are higher than the minimum requirement of 100 percent.

Conducive environment

Al-Marzouq stressed that Kuwaiti banks were well positioned to face the challenges brought by the pandemic in

terms of providing digital services and advanced payment solutions, thanks to the supportive regulatory environment and keeping pace with the digital transformation of the Kuwaiti society, as banks successfully managed to provide financial services and products during the pandemic induced closures.

He also pointed out that NBK pioneered on the digital transformation front and set an example of taking proactive steps towards digitization, with digital channels accounting for 98 percent of total banking transactions in 2021.

The future of banking services

When asked on the role that digital transformation and financial technology have to play in improving the resilience of financial institutions, Al-Marzouq said: “It hasn’t been long since business bore the brunt of the pandemic. Our performance is a testimony on how our investments and our digital roadmap paid off during such a huge crisis. During that time, NBK’s digital channels played a pivotal role in serving our customers and online transactions reached a record high”.

“We continued to invest in positioning NBK for the future of banking, streamlining our operations across markets and segments and building a next generation digital banking experience,” Al-Marzouq added.

Al-Marzouq explained that NBK has made great efforts in uplifting various channels with regular enhancements to the digital journey for its customers, the number of services the Bank provide digitally, most importantly through mobile banking application, while utilizing data analytics, robotics, and machine learning to improve its operational efficiency and offer personalized experience to meet the evolving banking needs of NBK clients. He also highlighted that when developing NBK’s digital agenda, one of the key objectives was to align the technology investments and digital roadmap to NBK group strategy to standardize our operations across all NBK international locations. This will consolidate, rationalize, and simplify the IT application portfolio within the Bank and will further allow improvement on cost synergies and create room for cross-selling of products and services across our network. “We established NBK Group Digital Office as a key enabler in the organization for digital transformation and is also responsible for increasing innovative products and service portfolio through Fintech partnerships. More importantly, our digital Bank, “Weyay”, that we launched last year in Kuwait, will serve as a springboard for regional growth and expansion. We are mainly focused on markets where we see growth opportunities and where the expansion of our digital services will further increase our growth, market share, and reach our target segments,” Al-Marzouq said. —AFP



Sulaiman Al-Marzouq

Sony hikes PS5 prices in some markets

TOKYO: Sony’s PlayStation 5 is already notoriously difficult to find, and the popular console’s manufacturer said that it will also become more expensive for gamers in many parts of the world. Sony Interactive Entertainment (SIE) has recommended raising the console’s retail price in Europe, the United Kingdom, Japan, China, Australia, Mexico and Canada, the company’s top official Jim Ryan said. US consumers will be spared from the hikes, Ryan said, without providing further explanation. The price rises will see a PS5 Digital Edition retail in Europe for 449.99 euros (\$450), up from 399.99 euros. The same console will be sold in the UK for 389.99 pounds (\$462), up from 359.99 pounds, and in Japan for 49,478 yen (\$363), up from 43,978 yen. Sony blamed “high global inflation rates as well as adverse currency trends” for the price increases. “Based on these challenging economic conditions, SIE has made the difficult decision to increase the recommended retail price of PlayStation 5 in select markets,” Ryan said in a statement. —AFP



MUMBAI: Reliance Industries chairman Mukesh Ambani (right) and his wife Nita Ambani (second right) pose with their children (left center) Akash Ambani, Anant Ambani and Isha Ambani as they arrive for the company’s 40th AGM in Mumbai on July 21, 2017 in this file.

Ambani could spell out succession plan at investor meet

MUMBAI: Investors of Reliance Industries will be looking for clues on Monday when the group meets for its investor conference on the company’s 5G roll-out, how Mukesh Ambani plans to unlock the value of his telecom and retail units through separate listings, and when and how his children will take over the reins of the \$222 billion empire

Anticipation is high as the 65-year-old billionaire, who built Reliance into India’s largest company by market value and a powerhouse conglomerate, has used the speech for a series of big announcements. These include the launch of his disruptive telecom service in 2016, Saudi Arabian Oil’s proposed investment in Reliance’s energy business in 2019 and a strategic shift to green energy last year.

This year’s shareholder meeting comes as the refining-to-retail group faces the twin challenges of a global recession and the blistering rise of Gautam Adani, who eclipsed Ambani as Asia’s richest man earlier this year and is emerging as an alternative power centre on the corporate landscape. Reliance investors will have in mind how Adani’s conglomerate split its business into different listings years ago, unlocking value, and will expect “clarity and specific time lines for the next big things” from Ambani’s more-centralized holdings, said Kranthi Bathini, equity strategist at WealthMills Securities in Mumbai. Adani’s wealth has surged \$58 billion this year riding the stocks rally compared with \$3.3 billion rise in Ambani’s.

The patriarch indicated that succession planning at Reliance will be expedited in last year’s shareholder meet and reiterated it explicitly in December. His three children - daughter Isha and sons Akash and Anant - are already holding various directorships in the group’s unlisted companies and are becoming more visible in their leadership. Ambani stepped down as the chairman of Reliance Jio Infocomm in June, making way for his elder son, Akash, who took over the helm at India’s largest wireless operator.

Mukesh Ambani stepped down as the chairman of Reliance Jio Infocomm in June, making way for his elder son, Akash, who took over the helm at India’s largest wireless operator. As rumors keep swirling around Ambani’s health, investors will look for more concrete steps to be taken in leadership transition, with Isha, Anant and possibly his wife, Nita, taking on more responsibility. Reliance Jio Infocomm bought airwaves worth more than \$11bn at a local spectrum auction as it sought to cement its edge over smaller rivals - Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea - in the roll-out of speedier 5G networks. —Agencies



People ride on the newly renovated sixth generation Peak Tram on its first day of operations in Hong Kong. —AFP



Passengers queue to take the newly renovated sixth generation Peak Tram on its first day of operations in Hong Kong.

Peak Tram back on track in tourist-devoid Hong Kong

The Peak Tram, Hong Kong's famed public transport and a popular tourist draw, reopened Saturday after a year-long \$102 million facelift even as the city's coronavirus curbs continue to keep overseas visitors at bay. The historic funicular, which dates back to 1888 and offers panoramic views of Hong Kong Island's famous skyline as it ascends to Victoria Peak, used to draw over six million visitors a year, according to its operator. The latest makeover brought more spacious tramcars that accommodate 210 passengers, a full overhaul of its rail systems and a redesigned terminus at the heart of Hong Kong's central business district.

The Peak Tram closed for upgrades in June 2021, a period when the Chinese finance hub's strict border controls in line with Beijing's zero-COVID strategy—all but wiped out its tourism industry. The redevelopment went overbudget by around \$15 million, which its operator attributed to supply chain difficulties during the pandemic, such as bringing the custom Switzerland-made tramcars to Hong Kong. An adult return ticket now costs HK\$88 (\$11.20), a nearly 70 percent jump from before the makeover.

"I hope all visitors will feel it's worth the price," May Tsang, general manager of tram operator the Peak Complex, said on Wednesday. "We have to

consider the increase in our operating costs and the long-term sustainability of our business." On Saturday morning, a woman surnamed Kwok and her young daughter were among a crowd of around a hundred waiting in line to try out the refurbished tram. "It's been a long time since I was here and it'll be her first time," she said of her daughter. Chau, who brought his two sons along for a family outing, said he was generally satisfied with the revamp. "It's a bit pricey, but so is everything nowadays."

Tourists were mostly absent on Saturday as Hong Kong saw just a total of 134,000 visitors in the past four quarters—a mere fraction of the 65 million that came to the city in 2018. The new sixth generation tramcars are a far cry from the sedan chairs that carried visitors to Victoria Peak during the early days of British colonial rule. But they are now painted in a deep green color, a nod to previous generation tramcars in service from 1948 until 1989 — when they were refurbished in a burgundy red.

At 396 meters (1,300 feet) above sea level, the Peak, once an exclusive enclave for Hong Kong's rich and powerful, remained off-limits to most of the local population until 1947. It is now best known as an easy-to-access spot for residents and tourists to enjoy views of Hong Kong's sprawling cityscape, with Victoria Harbor in the distance. —AFP



Passengers ride the newly renovated sixth generation Peak Tram on its first day of operations in Hong Kong.



People dressed in costume stand in front of a replica of the first generation Peak Tram in Hong Kong.



Passengers dash off to take the newly renovated sixth generation Peak Tram on its first day of operations in Hong Kong.



A man dressed in costume holds old Peak Tram tickets in Hong Kong.



Members of the media take pictures of new LED screens at the Peak Tram in Hong Kong.



With Elton John, Britney Spears releases first new song since 2016

Britney Spears released her first new song in six years on Friday with the debut of "Hold Me Closer", a duet with British music legend Elton John. The track—a dance-inflected take on John's 1970s ballad "Tiny Dancer", with elements of his later hit "The One"—dropped less than a year after Spears won a court battle with her father, ending a conservatorship arrangement that gave him control over much of her life. "Okie dokie... my first song in 6 years!!!!" Spears wrote on Twitter.

"It's pretty damn cool that I'm singing with one of the most classic men of our time." The cover art features childhood images of the two pop legends, who between them have 90 years' experience in the music

business. In dusting off some of his own classics with the help of a younger artist, John is repeating a trick he pulled with last year's hit "Cold Heart", recorded with Dua Lipa. That track mashed up parts of several of his songs, most notably "Rocket Man". Spears' last release was the 2016 album "Glory".

Since then, the singer—a pop-chart colossus in the late 1990s and early 2000s—has been in the spotlight as a result of the conservatorship that controlled her life for 13 years. In November, a Los Angeles judge formally approved the process of ending the controversial arrangement, which had given her father Jamie Spears control over almost all of her personal, professional and financial dealings.

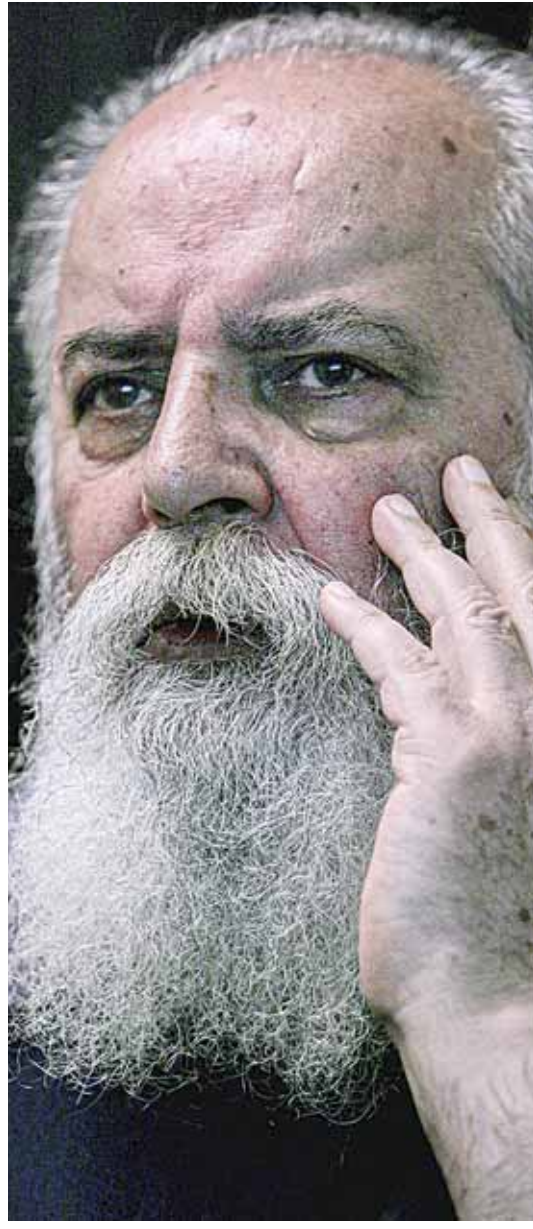
The multi-award-winning John—properly Sir Elton John—is one of Britain's most bankable stars, whose showmanship and musicality have left their mark on the performing arts. Since he first emerged in 1962, the singer-born Reginald Dwight has been responsible for some of the most recognizable tunes in pop, including "Your Song", "Candle in the Wind" and "I'm Still Standing." —AFP

Iranians pay homage to poet Ebtehaj, dead at 94

Hundreds of Iranians attended a funeral service in Tehran on Friday for the country's best-known contemporary poet, Hushang Ebtehaj, who died earlier this month aged 94. Ebtehaj, whose Persian pen name was Sayeh (the Shadow), shot to fame composing lyrical poems themed on love and solitude, as well as reflections on the struggles and upsides of life in Iran. He died of kidney failure in Germany and his remains were transferred to his home country ahead of Friday's service, which was attended by a crowd of officials, artists and admirers.

He was a founder member of the Iranian Writers' Association (IWA), established in 1968. Long close to Tudeh, Iran's Communist party, he resigned from state radio after a 1978 massacre perpetrated by the then shah's security forces. After the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Ebtehaj was arrested along with several members of Tudeh, and the party was banned. From the late 1980s, he flitted between Tehran and Cologne, where he lived a modest life with his family.

After a short ceremony, attendees followed his coffin while a recording of him reciting one of his poems was broadcast. "Sayeh has finally returned to his land," Ebtehaj's daughter Yalda told the crowd, noting that her father "kept repeating that he wished to return to his people". In a message, Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi praised the poet for "his role in the rich treasure of Persian literature" and for his "anti-arrogance" poems, a reference to the US in Iranian government parlance. He is due to be buried Saturday in gardens in his home city of Rasht. —AFP



Lifestyle | Features



Alizbeth Camacho (center), 63, leads a meditation session at her hostel Luz Azul (Blue Light), in Amatlan de Quetzalcoatl, in Tepoztlan municipality, Morelos state, Mexico. —AFP photos



View of a wall with portraits of auras at the hostel Luz Azul (Blue Light), in Amatlan de Quetzalcoatl, in Tepoztlan municipality, Morelos state, Mexico.

Mexico lures visitors on new age tourism trail

With restorative rituals, yoga retreats and psychedelic experiences, Mexico has become a magnet for spiritually minded tourists seeking an alternative vacation far from the troubles of the modern world. While many visitors head straight to the beach, a different type of tourist chooses the village of Tepoztlan, a haven for artists and intellectuals an hour's drive from the capital. Some of its residents once came for a short stay and found it hard to leave.

"I love the vibes here," said Ania Bitiutskaja, a 31-year-old Russian living at the foot of the

Tepozteco Mountain, the legendary birthplace of the Aztec feathered serpent god Quetzalcoatl. "People are more relaxed, more spiritual," she added, browsing an organic market where the sound of a folk guitar and drum beats filled the air.

"I don't see much news. I almost live in the mountains," Bitiutskaja said, adding that she prefers to know as little as possible about the war in Ukraine. The special vibes come at a price: costing upwards of \$50-60 a night, Tepoztlan's hotels are more expensive than those in many parts of Mexico, which welcomed nearly 32 million foreign tourists last year. Visitors can also stay in holistic centers offering yoga and meditation.

"Since the pandemic, many people have come to live in Tepoztlan... foreigners as well as people from Mexico City who realized that their energy would be blocked," said Alizbeth Camacho, of the Luz Azul (Blue Light) holistic center. Camacho offers guests "aura pictures" to visualize their energy, karma and chakras. Mexico's new age tourism dates back to the 1970s, when the anthropologist Carlos Castaneda sold millions of books about the teachings of an Indigenous Yaqui shaman. Pre-Hispanic traditions also inspired Miguel Ruiz's 1997 self-help bestseller "The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom."



Shop staffers show the procedure of a healing therapy, in Tepoztlan, Morelos state, Mexico.

'Inner journey'
For some visitors, a vacation in Mexico



View of the main street of Amatlan de Quetzalcoatl, in Tepoztlan municipality.

Chalamet, Styles, Armas: Next-gen stars to light up Venice film fest

Timothee Chalamet as a love-sick cannibal, Harry Styles in his first leading role, Ana de Armas as Marilyn Monroe—a new generation of stars steps into the spotlight when the Venice Film Festival kicks off Wednesday. Ninety years since its first edition, the world's longest-running film event also boasts a raft of award-winning directors in its line-up this year. Perhaps the most anticipated premiere will be for Monroe biopic "Blonde", a dark retelling of the icon's tragic life. Its Australian director Andrew Dominik has, with typical modesty, declared it "a masterpiece" and it threatens to propel Armas from rising star to fully fledged A-list.

Meanwhile, the army of Chalamet fans are ravenous for "Bones and All", reuniting him with "Call Me By Your Name" director Luca Guadagnino for what is billed as a "cannibal romance". And the internet can barely contain itself over the premiere of "Don't Worry Darling", starring Styles—one of the biggest-selling musicians in the world—alongside Florence Pugh in a thriller about an isolated 1950s community. Amid a wave of rumors about its sex scenes and a supposed rivalry between Pugh and director Olivia Wilde (also Styles' girlfriend), it is not yet known whether the singer will appear in Venice.

Returning winners

The festival, which runs until September 10, is well-timed to kick-start Oscar campaigns, and Hollywood has increasingly used Venice to launch prestige productions such as "A Star is Born", "La La Land" and "Nomadland". This year sees the return of director Darren Aronofsky, who won the top Golden Lion prize

in Venice in 2008 for "The Wrestler" and launched his Oscar-winning "Black Swan" at Venice. His new film "The Whale" stars Brendan Fraser, who has been largely absent from the screen since his heyday in films like "The Mummy" two decades ago, but is picking up a lot of early hype for his transformation into a morbidly obese man trying to reconnect with his daughter.

Another Venice regular, Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu, is back in his native Mexico for family tale "Bardo" after two US hits—"Birdman" (which won the Golden Lion and best film Oscar) and "The Revenant", which snagged a long-awaited Oscar for Leonardo DiCaprio. Venice has a key advantage over its main rival, Cannes,



Alizbeth Camacho conducts a pre-Hispanic ritual in front of a temazcal (a type of sweat lodge) at her hostel Luz Azul (Blue Light), in Amatlan de Quetzalcoatl, in Tepoztlan municipality, Morelos state, Mexico.

would not be complete without a different kind of trip-hallucinogenics. American author Robert Gordon Wasson paved the way in the 1950s by revealing the secrets of a traditional healer, Maria Sabina. Sampling peyote is still possible with Indigenous communities such as the Wixarika, who use the mind-bending drug derived from a cactus in their religious rituals.

And in the mountains of Oaxaca, guides like Pedro Ramirez offer the chance to try magic mushrooms at more than 2,500 meters (8,200 feet) above sea level. "It's going to be an inner journey," said Ramirez, leading a group of Mexicans and foreigners to a clearing in the village of San Jose del Pacifico.

"You might be scared at first, but after 10 to 15 minutes you'll laugh, and maybe cry a little," he added. Araceli Perez said she decid-



Men play drums at a market of organic products, in Tepoztlan.

since the French festival is partly run by cinema owners who refuse films from streaming services. "Blonde", "The Whale" and "Bardo" are all Netflix movies-as is opening film "White Noise" starring Adam Driver and directed by indie favorite Noah Baumbach.

From Iran to Ireland

Hollywood and Western Europe dominate the selection of 23 films competing for the hearts of a jury led by US actress Julianne Moore. One notable exception is Iran's award-winning filmmaker Jafar Panahi, whose "No Bears" is premiering barely a month after he was imprisoned amid a crackdown on dissident directors. Also bound to stir political controversy is a new documentary from Laura Poitras, who follows her films about whistle-blowers Edward Snowden and Julian Assange with "All the Beauty and the Bloodshed" about the family pharma group behind the US opioid epidemic. —AFP



Shop staffers make a demonstration of the procedure for taking pictures of the aura, in Tepoztlan, Morelos state, Mexico.

ed to try the mushrooms following the deaths of her husband, a doctor, from Covid-19 in 2020. "I'm looking for answers and acceptance," she said. —AFP

The 23 films competing at the Venice Film Festival

The 79th edition of the Venice Film Festival will run from August 31 to September 10. These are the 23 films in the running for the top prize Golden Lion, to be chosen by a jury led by actor Julianne Moore.

- Opening film: "White Noise" by Noah Baumbach (US) with Adam Driver, Greta Gerwig, Don Cheadle.
- "The Whale" by Darren Aronofsky (US) with Brendan Fraser, Sadie Sink, Samantha Morton
- "Blonde" by Andrew Dominik (US) with Ana de Armas, Adrien Brody, Bobby Cannavale
- "Tar" by Todd Field (US) with Cate Blanchett
- "Bardo" by Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu (Mexico)
- "Bones and All" by Luca Guadagnino (US) with Taylor Russell, Timothee Chalamet, Mark Rylance
- "The Son" by Florian Zeller (Britain) with Hugh Jackman, Laura Dern, Vanessa Kirby, Anthony Hopkins
- "The Eternal Daughter" by Joanna Hogg (US/Britain) with Tilda Swinton
- "Beyond the Wall" by Vahid Jafarvand (Iran) with Navid Mohammadzadeh, Diana Habibi, Amir Aghaee
- "The Banshees of Inisherin" by Martin McDonagh (Ireland/Britain/US) with Colin Farrell, Brendan Gleeson
- "No Bears" by Jafar Panahi (Iran) with Jafar Panahi, Naser Hashemi, Vahid Mobaseri
- "All the Beauty and the Bloodshed" by Laura Poitras (US)
- "L'Immensita" by Emanuele Crialese (Italy) with Penelope Cruz
- "Saint Omer" by Alice Diop (France) with Kayije Kagame, Guslagie Malanda
- "Love Life" by Koji Fukada (Japan/France) with Fumino Kimura, Kento Nagayama
- "Athena" by Romain Gavras (France) with Dali Benssalah, Sami Slimane
- "Argentina, 1985" by Santiago Mitre (Argentina) with Ricardo Darin, Peter Lanzani
- "Chiara" by Susanna Nicchiarelli (Italy/Belgium) with Margherita Mazzucco, Andrea Carpenzano
- "Monica" by Andrea Pallaro (US/Italy) with Trace Lysette, Patricia Clarkson, Adriana Barraza
- "A Couple" de Frederick Wiseman (France/US) with Nathalie Boutefeu
- "Les Miens" by Roschdy Zem (France) with Sami Bouajila, Roschdy Zem, Maiwenn
- "Other People's Children" by Rebecca Zlotowski (France) with Virginie Efira, Roschdy Zem
- "The Lord of the Ants" by Gianni Amelio (Italy) with Luigi Lo Cascio, Elio Germano. —AFP



Rose of Tralee competitors dance the night away, during celebrations after the contest in Tralee Co. —AFP photos



Rose of Tralee winner Rachel Duffy (right) from Westmeath paraded through the town after her victory.

Traditional beauty pageant battles to keep pace in modern Ireland

As the Rose of Tralee beauty pageant concluded this week, the contestants in colourful ball gowns and silk sashes swayed as they sang the 19th-century ballad that inspired the competition. “She was lovely and fair as the rose of the summer,” they sang as this year’s winner was paraded through the town in County Kerry, southwest Ireland, which gave the contest its name. When all 33 contestants departed the stage, fireworks burst overhead and ticker tape ribbon fell from the sky.

The beauty pageant returned to Tralee and Ireland’s living rooms after a two-year absence due to COVID restrictions to fanfare from its legions of fans. But critics have raised questions about the pageant’s relevance in modern Ireland and the diversity of its contestants, not least because of the show’s all-white line up for 2022.

Created in 1959, the Rose of Tralee draws contestants, known as “roses”, from across Ireland and around the world from the Irish diaspora. All of them are winners of local selections that draw thousands of participants. New York Rose Cathrena Collins, a 24-year-old law student, told AFP it had been “really special” to represent her city’s Irish community, just as her grandmother had in 1965. “It was huge for me. Growing up, I always heard stories. She always talked about what an honor it was,” she explained.

Modern Ireland

The Rose of Tralee has been a major fixture on Irish television since it was first broadcast in 1967 and has had to adapt to the changing currents in Irish society to survive. Mary McGill, an Irish lecturer and author, said it originates from a time when a “puritanical notion of Catholicism” was a “huge part” of Irish identity. At the time, the church had an iron grip on Irish society and womanhood was put “under forms of extreme surveillance and extreme expectation around morality”.

“I think because of its origins, that baggage is still there,” she said, explaining, however, that Rose of Tralee is still “able to tap into the zeitgeist in a strange way”. “(It is) something that’s uniquely Irish and quite traditionalist. “It also has managed to have a new lease of life in the 21st century because of the connection it has to Irishness, nostalgia and the global

the EU. Most people still class themselves as white Irish but ethnic diversity is increasing. At the same time it has seen once unthinkable social change, including same-sex marriage and the liberalization of strict abortion laws.

Wexford Rose Joy Quigley, a 26-year-old sometime body-building competitor, showed off a sleeve tattoo on her right

Rule changes

Broadcast over two consecutive evenings in prime time, the pageant frequently revels in its own brand of Irish kitsch. During Tuesday’s finale, one rose was admonished by a popular children’s TV puppet after she revealed she had worked on a killing line in a poultry processing factory.

Grown men wept openly as a contestant from Queensland in northwest Australia read a poem about missing Ireland, including crisp sandwiches made with the nation’s beloved Tayto brand. Rose of Tralee also celebrates the bonds created by the competition in Irish communities.

Winning rose Rachel Duffy, from Westmeath in central Ireland, spoke of her pride in representing the rural community that had rallied around her following the death of her mother 14 years earlier. Maysen Tinkler from Toronto, Canada, was diagnosed with autism a little over a year ago, and spoke of how other contestants had supported her. In December, a series of rule changes were announced, allowing married women and trans-women to enter and raising the age limit from 28 to 29.

Despite the efforts, former Sydney Rose Brianna Parkins criticized the all-white line up during a radio debate for national broadcaster RTE. “There just seems to be a lack of diversity across the board. It isn’t just a racial issue here,” the 2016 contestant said. “We have some diverse people entering but I would love to see those numbers boosted because I don’t think they’re true reflections of Irish society at the minute.”

Executive chair of the Rose of Tralee Anthony O’Gara dismissed the criticism as “lazy” and “nonsense”, pointing out three of the last four winners had been of mixed ethnic origin. “Frankly, I’m fed up with people... finding a different angle every year to have a go at the Rose of Tralee Festival,” he added. —AFP



Rose of Tralee winner Rachel Duffy (center) from Westmeath smiles on stage.

community”. This year, the contestants wanted the pageant to reflect modern Ireland as much as possible.

Ireland, home to some five million people, has traditionally been a country of emigration but that began to change when its economy took off in the 1990s, notably with immigration from

arm as she demonstrated muscle poses for the audience in a sparkling green evening gown. “I think a modern Irish woman isn’t your typical glamorous pretty princess,” she said. “We are a bit rough around the edges, and it’s important to be relatable like that.”



Supporters cheer on contestants during the Rose of Tralee live show.



Rose of Tralee winner Rachel Duffy (center) from Westmeath smiles on stage during the Rose of Tralee live show.



Rose of Tralee contestants pose for a selfie in the green room as they prepare for the live show.

Christie’s to auction Microsoft co-founder Allen’s \$1bn-plus art collection

Christie’s announced plans on Thursday to auction the art collection of late Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen, which it estimated to be worth more than \$1 billion. The November sale of more than 150 pieces spanning 500 years of art will be “the largest and most exceptional art auction in history,” Christie’s said in a statement. The works will include “La montagne Sainte-Victoire” by French painter Paul Cezanne, valued at more than \$100 million, the auction house said. It is holding the auction with the late billionaire’s estate. Christie’s said all proceeds will go to charitable causes, as per the wishes of Allen, who was an avid art collector, innovator and philanthropist.

Allen, who died in 2018 at the age of 65, co-founded Microsoft with Bill Gates in 1975. Together, they came up with the PC operating system that made a fortune for the US technology giant. Allen left the company in 1983, due to health problems and a deteriorating relationship with Gates, who remained in charge of Microsoft until 2000. The auction record for a private collection was set this spring by the US couple Harry and Linda Macklowe, with \$922 million fetched in auctions conducted by Sotheby’s.

Other than the work by Cezanne, the Allen collec-

tion features a work entitled “Small False Start” by American painter Jasper Johns, valued at more than \$50 million, The New York Times reported. Christie’s did not detail what else is in the collection, but a traveling exhibit in 2016 gave a glimpse of the richness of the Allen art trove. It features works by Monet, Manet, Klimt and others. This year is shaping up as one of the biggest ever in the art market.

Besides the Macklowe auction, an Andy Warhol portrait of Marilyn Monroe sold in May for \$195 million—a record for a piece of 20th-century art. Christie’s CEO Guillaume Cerutti said the Allen auction will be like no other. “The inspirational figure of Paul Allen, the extraordinary quality and diversity of works, and the dedication of all proceeds to philanthropy, create a unique combination that will make the sale of the Paul G. Allen Collection an event of unprecedented magnitude,” Cerutti said.

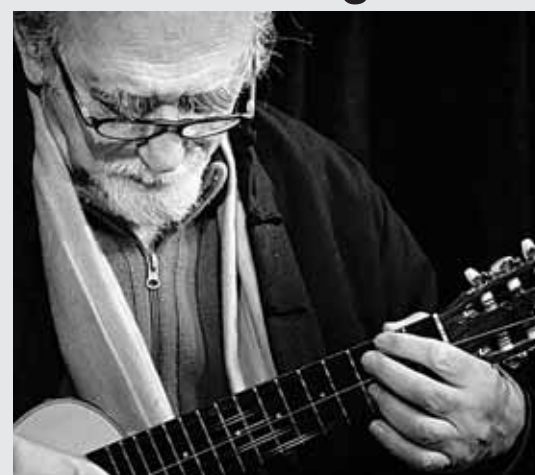
“To Paul, art was both analytical and emotional. He believed that art expressed a unique view of reality—combining the artist’s inner state and inner eye—in a way that can inspire us all,” said Jody Allen, the executor of the estate. “His collection reflects the diversity of his interests, with their own mystique and beauty.” —AFP

Musician Jorge Milchberg, known for ‘El Condor Pasa’, dies in Paris aged 93

The musician and composer Jorge Milchberg, best known for his 1960s arrangement of the Andean melody “El Condor Pasa”, has died in Paris at the age of 93, the Argentinean embassy said Friday. Milchberg was born in Buenos Aires in 1928 to Polish parents, and had lived in France since 1955. He died on August 20, but his death was not announced until Friday by his family and the embassy. A classically-trained pianist, Milchberg was also a world-renowned player of the charango, an Andean plucked-string guitar.

He was the founder of Los Incas—also known as Urubamba—an iconic Andean music group founded in the 1950s. Los Incas arranged and recorded the 1963 classic “El condor pasa”, later popularised with English lyrics by the New York folk rock duo Simon and Garfunkel on their 1970 album “Bridge over Troubled Water”. Initially, the theme of “El Condor Pasa” was taken from a 1913 musical play of the same name created for orchestra by Peruvian composer Daniel Alomia Robles.

The popularity of the Simon and Garfunkel adaptation contributed to the spectacular fame of “El Condor Pasa”, which went through countless versions, and led to a renewed interest in Latin American music. On the Los Incas website, the



Musician Jorge Milchberg

group said “the process of arranging and adapting traditional music to the modern ear, which has become known as world music, was not well-known in the 1960s and 1970s.” The website said Milchberg had created “a very personal way of interpreting these traditional songs”. —AFP

Sports

Argentina make history with upset victory over All Blacks

Playing with passion and physicality, Pumas win

News in brief

Lille bury PSG nightmare

AJACCIO: Lille buried the nightmare of their 7-1 rout at the hands of PSG last weekend by defeating Ajaccio 3-1 in Ligue 1 on Friday. "The most important thing after the last match was to show that we had the strength to react," said Lille defender Jose Fonte. "Good teams do not lose twice in a row. These are three important points." Paulo Fonseca's Lille side were in front after 16 minutes when Yusuf Yazici cleverly dinked the ball forward before volleying home. Ajaccio, still without a win so far this season, conceded again just before the break when Jonathan Bamba converted a cross from Jonathan David.

FIFA lifts India suspension

PARIS: The under-17 Women's World Cup will go ahead in India from October 11 after world governing body FIFA lifted a suspension on the All India Football Federation (AIFF) on Friday. The AIFF had been plagued by governance issues, and was subsequently suspended on August 19 by FIFA "due to undue influence from third parties" - member associations must be free from legal and political interference. The ban impacted all football there from men and women, from professional down to grassroots, including the scrapping of the under-17 Women's World Cup. But Friday the FIFA Council decided to lift the suspension after a temporary mandate of administrators proved successful. AIFF have now been handed back full control of daily affairs pending fresh elections, FIFA said.

Sasnovich, Samsonova advance

WASHINGTON: Seventh seed Aliaksandra Sasnovich and 45th-ranked Liudmila Samsonova advanced to the WTA Tennis in the Land final with victories on Friday in the US Open hard-court tuneup. Sasnovich outlasted French eighth seed Alize Cornet 6-7 (5/7), 7-5, 6-3 after two hours and 51 minutes while Samsonova dispatched American Bernarda Pera 6-1, 6-2 after 52 minutes in semi-final matches. World number 36 Sasnovich, a 28-year-old from Belarus, and Samsonova, a 23-year-old Russian, cannot represent their homelands due to tour rules imposed after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Sasnovich has lost all three of her WTA career finals, in 2015 at Seoul, 2018 at Brisbane and last January in an Australian Open tuneup event at Melbourne.

Storm-hit Canadian Open

OTTAWA: South Korea's An Na-rin fired a six-under par 65 to grab a two-stroke lead when darkness halted Friday's rain-hit second round of the LPGA Canadian Women's Open. The 26-year-old rookie, whose best season finish was third at Carlsbad in March, shook off a storm delay and hasn't made a bogey over the first 36 holes at Ottawa Hunt and Golf Club to stand on 13-under 129. "I don't have experience winning in the US," An said. "But I do have some experience in Korea, so it's not an unfamiliar feeling. It has been a while since I've played as a leader, so I think it'll be fun and I hope to put up another good round." South Korean Choi Hye-jin, who eagled twice in shooting a 63, and South African Paula Reto, the 18-hole leader who fired a 69, shared second on 131 with American Nelly Korda, who birdied three of the last four holes to shoot 64.

Everton sign striker Maupay

LONDON: Everton on Friday signed striker Neal Maupay from Premier League rivals Brighton for an undisclosed fee, hoping the Frenchman can supply the goals they are desperately missing. The 26-year-old, who scored 27 times in 110 appearances over three years at Brighton, penned a three-year contract. "Everton is a great club with unbelievable fans and I am so, so happy to be here," Maupay told evertontv. "It feels amazing. It was an easy choice for me when I started to talk with the club. I knew straight away I wanted to play for Everton and help the club to succeed. I'm excited and it's a new challenge for me." Maupay was not signed in time to face his former club Brentford on Saturday.

US PGA Tour Championship

WASHINGTON: Tokyo Olympic champion Xander Schauffele fired a seven-under par 63 to charge within two strokes of top-ranked Scottie Scheffler after Friday's second round of the US PGA's Tour Championship. Scheffler, the reigning Masters champion, began the day with a five-stroke lead and stretched his edge as high as eight in the season-ending showdown at East Lake in Atlanta. But fellow American Schauffele trimmed the gap to six strokes with a birdie at the 10th hole, matched playing partner Scheffler with a birdie at the 12th, then roared in with birdies at 16 and 17 and a closing eagle at the par-5 18th. — From AFP

CHRISTCHURCH: Argentina beat the All Blacks for the first time in New Zealand with a stunning 25-18 Rugby Championship win in Christchurch on Saturday, piling further pressure on coach Ian Foster. Playing with passion and physicality, the Pumas won the battle of the breakdown and benefited with 20 points from the boot of Emiliano Boffelli to lodge just their second win over the All Blacks.

The home side, who squandered an early 15-6 lead, have now lost six of their last eight Tests and can expect more severe criticism after the pressure had eased following their last-start 35-23 defeat of the Springboks in Johannesburg. They have lost three successive Tests at home for the first time following successive defeats against Ireland last month and it could be four on the trot if they succumb again to the Pumas in Hamilton next week.

Victory for Argentina followed their record-breaking 48-17 win over Australia in San Juan and extends their lead at the top of the Rugby Championship standings. Led by non-stop flankers Pablo Matera and Marcos Kremer, the latter playing his 50th Test, the Pumas tackled themselves to a standstill, including over the dramatic final minutes when they repeatedly denied the desperate hosts. It was a courageous performance eerily reminiscent of two years ago, when they stunned New Zealand for the first time 25-15 in Sydney.

On that occasion fly-half Nicolas Sanchez kicked six penalties and a conversion, a feat matched by the winger Boffelli, who landed all seven of his shots at goal. Matera, who was based in Christchurch this season with the Canterbury Crusaders, was emotional after the final whistle. "It's just too good, it's a dream come true to come back with my country and beat the All Blacks for the first time, it's even more special (than the Sydney win)," he said.

Ton-up Stokes, Foakes add to South Africa's agony in second Test

MANCHESTER: Ben Stokes hit his first century since being appointed England's full-time captain and wicketkeeper Ben Foakes also reached three figures as the hosts established a commanding lead over South Africa in the second Test in Manchester on Friday. Stokes made 103, with Foakes a Test-best 113 not out when his skipper declared England's first innings on 415-9, a lead of 264 runs, after South Africa had been dismissed for a meagre 151. That left World Test Championship leaders South Africa with a tricky nine overs to bat before the close of the second day at a sun-drenched Old Trafford.

But the Proteas, 1-0 up in this three-match series after a dominant innings and 12-run win in the first Test at Lord's, were 23-0 at stumps - still a deficit of 241. Sarel Erwee was 12 not out and South Africa captain Dean Elgar unbeaten on 11. Earlier, Stokes and Foakes shared an impressive partnership of 173 after coming together with England wobbling at 147-5 following a double strike by express fast bowler Anrich Nortje that removed both overnight batsmen - Jonny Bairstow (49) and opener Zak Crawley (38).

'Overjoyed'

"I was overjoyed getting a Test hundred," Foakes told Sky Sports after a second century in 16 matches at this level and first at home following his 107 on debut against Sri Lanka in Galle in November 2018. The 29-year-old Surrey gloveman, whose England



CHRISTCHURCH: Argentina's Tomas Cubelli (left) feeds the scrum during the rugby union Test match between New Zealand and Argentina at Orangetheory Stadium in Christchurch on August 27, 2022. —AFP

Captain Julian Montoya hoped big Test wins are becoming a norm for Argentina. "We're starting to believe in what we can do that it is not just a magic moment, like the first time (Sydney)," he said. "We just need to keep on working. Now we must enjoy this but we have another game in seven days. So yeah, I'm very, very proud. Very, very happy. "This is for all the people back home who woke up at 4:30 am to watch this. I'm very proud, this is a really special moment for us."

New Zealand Rugby can expect to come under

career has been interrupted by injuries and, more recently a bout of COVID-19, added: "When you go through a lean patch, it makes it even more special." "It's obviously not easy and they've got a fantastic bowling attack so it was tough out there."

Nortje, despite being the pick of the Proteas' attack with overall figures of 3-82 in 20 overs, was curiously underused by Elgar while bowling just nine overs in Friday's first two sessions. "Dean had a plan according to what the situation told him," Nortje told reporters. "We can't go too deeply into who bowled when. It was a good wicket to bat on and they did bat well."

By recalling Simon Harmer as a second spinner to their attack, in the hope the pitch at Old Trafford would offer more turn as the game went on, South Africa had almost been obliged to bat first upon winning the toss. But off-spinner Harmer, a prolific wicket-taker with county side Essex, and slow left-arm Keshav Maharaj could only manage three late-order wickets between them for a combined 151 runs in 45.4 overs.

Harmer's first delivery on Friday, a full toss, was stroked through the covers for four by Foakes and, three balls later, Stokes swept him for six. Left-handed batsman Stokes went into the 80s with a straight six off Maharaj. South Africa took the new ball as soon as possible, with England 288-5 off 80 overs, only for Stokes to glance the next delivery, from Lungi Ngidi, for four. But the second delivery with the new ball almost proved Stokes's undoing on 92 when a diving Aiden Markram at extra cover failed to hold what would have been a spectacular catch off a hard-hit drive.

All-rounder Stokes, 98 not out at tea, went to three figures in unusual fashion when a straight drive

the blowtorch from its critics after its decision last week to reappoint Foster, despite the head coach's dreadful record by All Blacks standards. A strong finish at Ellis Park was enough to convince the New Zealand Rugby board to confirm Foster's position through to next year's World Cup, a decision they insisted wouldn't be reviewed again. However, many of the same problems that haunted New Zealand in last month's series loss to Ireland and in the subsequent heavy defeat to the Springboks in Mbombela returned. — AFP



MANCHESTER: England's captain Ben Stokes turns to take another run during play on day 2 of the second Test match between England and South Africa at the Old Trafford cricket ground on August 26, 2022. —AFP

off Kagiso Rabada deflected off the fast bowler's shin to take him to a 158-ball hundred, including six fours and three sixes. But he fell soon afterwards when a leading edge off Rabada was well caught by the back-peddalling Elgar at mid-off. England, however, were now 320-6, having recovered well in this match after a loss at Lord's that represented their first defeat after four successive wins under the new leadership duo of Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum.

And for all the talk of a new 'Bazball' aggressive style, the 31-year-old Stokes's well-paced innings - his 12th hundred in 85 Tests and fourth against South Africa - was also a triumph of largely orthodox batting. Foakes completed a hundred of his own when he late cut Nortje for a ninth four in 206 balls faced. England's tailenders then chipped in with some extravagant shots before Stokes called a halt. —AFP

Rare India-Pakistan meeting in Asia Cup 'exciting' for Rahul

DUBAI: India's KL Rahul said on Friday his team is looking forward to playing Pakistan in a high-stakes Asia Cup clash this weekend with the arch-rivals only meeting each other in multi-nation events due to political issues between them. The neighbors have not played a Test since 2007, instead facing off only in the shorter versions of the game and at multi-team competitions on foreign soil, rather than head-to-head series at home. The Twenty20 tournament begins on Saturday in the United Arab Emirates but fans await the blockbuster clash between India and Pakistan a day later.

"We are all very excited. As players we always look forward to this India-Pak clash as we don't play each other anywhere else but these big tournaments," Rahul told reporters. "As we've seen there is a huge history, there has always been rivalry and the games have always been high intensity. As players we have always dreamt of playing India-Pakistan and it's a great opportunity for all of us to challenge ourselves." Matches ignite great fervour but they have also defused military tensions between the two nations, which have fought four wars since independence from Britain in 1947.

Recently pictures and videos of Pakistan skipper Babar Azam and India superstar Virat Kohli meeting on the sidelines of a practice session in Dubai went viral. "We can't run away from the rivalry and emotion that comes through as a player," Rahul said. "After the game or before, everything goes away you become normal people, learn from each other, share experiences, it's always been friendly." An India-Pakistan match is always a big draw among cricket fans with millions expected to watch the match across the globe. — AFP



Herrada escapes to razor-edge Vuelta triumph

CISTIerna: Jesus Herrada of Cofidis won stage seven of the Vuelta a Espana on Friday when an escape group beat the chasing pack over the 190km from Camargo to Cistierna in Castilla and Leon. The race ended in a razor-edge, five-way dash for the line with Samuele Battistella of Astana coming second and Britain's Fred Wright of Bahrain Victorious in third.

Remco Evenepoel maintained the overall lead as

the main contenders took it easy with two major mountain stages coming up over the weekend. Friday's main challenge was the Puerto de San Glorio climb with 22.4km at 5.5% incline to an altitude of 1600m where some of the sprinters were dropped, allowing the escape to make it home before the pack.

The 32-year-old Herrada was overwhelmed with joy that soon gave way to tears as he sat on the floor sobbing and was eventually helped away by his team unable to speak. When he reappeared from his bus, Herrada said he was still pinching himself over his win. "It's just wild, about 13km out they told us the peloton were catching us," he said. "We knew coming to the line it was going to be tough, I just built up my speed and then maintained it and that paid off. I can hardly believe it," he said. — AFP

Sports

Inter Milan slump to their first defeat of the season

Lazio overpower Inter 3-1; Monza slip to third defeat

MILAN: Inter Milan slumped to their first defeat of the season as Spanish duo Luis Alberto and Pedro Rodriguez struck late to guide Lazio to a 3-1 win on Friday which takes the Roman club to the top of Serie A. It marked another disappointing evening for Inter manager Simone Inzaghi who has yet to pick up a point at the ground he graced as a player for over a decade and where he managed until 2021.

The former Italy striker, instead, had to play second fiddle, as he did last year when Inter

were handed another 3-1 defeat, to Maurizio Sarri, the man who replaced him on the Lazio bench. "It was a very bad loss," Inzaghi told DAZN. "It was an even game. We had a good first half but Luis Alberto's goal shifted the balance." Sarri brought on Luis Alberto and Pedro just before the hour mark, shortly after Inter's Lautaro Martinez had cancelled out Felipe Anderson's 40th minute opener.

Luis Alberto restored the Lazio advantage in the 75th minute with a superb shot which left

Samir Handanovic stranded in the Inter goal before Pedro wrapped things up four minutes from time. "This victory is important for us, it's the path we need to follow to progress," said Pedro. With two wins and a draw in three matches, Lazio take over top spot in the table, one point ahead of Inter, who won their first two matches. In Friday's other game, promoted Monza slipped to their third defeat of the season when they lost 2-1 at home to Udinese who collected their first win.

Andrea Colpani put the Silvio Berlusconi-owned side ahead just after the half-hour but the lead only lasted four minutes before Beto leveled for Udinese. Monza were looking good for their first point of the season until 19-year-old defender Destiny Udogie, on loan from Tottenham, knocked in the winner 12 minutes from time. On Saturday, Juventus hosted Roma, who have won two out of two, while Bologna traveled to AC Milan. Napoli can also go three wins from three as they travel to Fiorentina on Sunday. —AFP

Freiburg go 2nd after narrow wet and wild win over Bochum

BERLIN: Freiburg continued their impressive start to the Bundesliga season, defeating a dogged Bochum 1-0 at home on Friday. In a game played in wet and wild conditions, Freiburg's Italian midfielder Vincenzo Grifo scored the only goal of the game when he headed in his own saved penalty, which had been saved two times by Bochum keeper Manuel Reimann. After the match, Freiburg coach Christian Streich said his side "at the end of the day were deserved winners, even if it could have also been a draw."

"From the amount of goal chances we had, (our win) is deserved and I'm really happy, that we've now got nine points after four games - that totally helps us."

Freiburg captain Christian Guenther acknowledged his team "got lucky in two or three moments, but we worked hard". "It's extremely important in a season to make it through such games," Guenther told broadcaster DAZN after the match. Bochum midfielder Kevin Stoecker said his side deserved more out of the game - and out of their season.

"This is really frustrating. We're still on zero points," a dripping wet Stoecker said after the match. "In terms of performance, we deserved a draw. We played a good game, but what's the point?" Neither team convinced in a first half played in torrential rain, with players struggling to gain rhythm as puddles grew across the field. Freiburg had the better of the chances but were kept at bay by an acrobatic Riemann and at the end of the opening half it looked as if the teams may play out a goalless draw for the first time in 16 Bundesliga meetings.

Reimann, who conceded seven at home against Bayern Munich just five days ago, was Bochum's best on the night and was unlucky to give away the penalty just a minute into the second half. Reimann tussled with Freiburg's Roland Sallai and was adjudged to have grabbed the Hungarian winger's shirt. After a brief VAR check on a rain-soaked monitor, the referee pointed to the spot.

Bochum, have lost three of their four games this season by just one goal, went close to equalizing in the 85th minute through Filipino winger Gerrit Holtmann, but the shot hit the post and was cleared by the home defense. Freiburg now sit second on goal difference, with the remainder of the weekend's fixtures to come. By contrast, Bochum are last. On Saturday, Bayern Munich can stretch their place on top of the table with a win at home against Borussia Muenchengladbach. Also on Saturday, Borussia Dortmund will look to get their season back on track away at Hertha Berlin. —AFP

Battling Australia topple SA in Rugby Championship

ADELAIDE: Coach Dave Rennie paid tribute to his forwards Saturday after the Wallabies shattered South

Arabi, Nasr draw 1-1, Al-Jahra stun Kuwait

By Abdelatif Sharara

KUWAIT: Kuwait "Zain" Football league kicked off its new (2022-2023) season on Thursday with high expectations. The newly elected Kuwait Football Association (KFA) Board of Directors introduced a new format along with new incentives to bring a spark to the league. In the first match, the popular team Al-Arabi managed to secure a 1-1 draw with their host Nasr at Sheikh Ali Sabah Al-Salem Stadium. The match started slowly and players seemed to be lost in the first 20 minutes. Al-Arabi were playing without a clear plan and that gave Nasr players a counter-attack opportunity.

At the 31st minute of the match, Nasr's veteran player Fahad Al-Enezi, who substituted Lafi Ammash made an excellent cross that was headed by Nigerian teammate Denis into the back of the net. The second half saw improvement in Al-Arabi's performance. At the 56th minute, Al-Arabi's Nigerian player Kingsley Eido equalized when he received a pass from Abdallah Ammar.

The 74th minute saw Al-Hadi squander an opportunity. He was alone in front of the goal post but acted slowly - allowing Nasr defenders to catch up with him as they send the ball away. The real excitement was at the end of the match when referee Abdallah Jamali awarded Nasr a penalty. Player Mohammad Deham kicked, and the goalkeeper Abdelghafour was able to block it. The match ended in a 1-1 draw. In the second match of the league, Salmiya managed to get out with a win as Mubarak Al-Funaii scored at the very end of the first half. Most of players were relying on their individual skills. The second half was characterized by missed opportunities on both sides. Salmiya's Brazilian Alex Lima had a direct shot at goal, following a foul. Tadhamon's Nigerian Moses Arokoma missed to score and the match ended.

In the third match of the first round, Qadisiya squeezed past Al-Sahel 3-2. The winning goal came at the 96th minute of match. Qadisiya's Udai Al-Saifi opened the score in the 18th minute when he received a pass from Eid Al-Rasfidi. In the 23rd minute, Qadisiya's Bader Al-Mutawa surprised Al-Sahel's goal keeper with a shot that ended in the back of the net. Al-Sahel cut Qadisiya's lead in half when they were awarded a penalty shot seven minutes into the added time of the first half.



Africa's hopes of snapping a nine-year winless streak on Australian soil with a bruising 25-17 Rugby Championship win in Adelaide. The home team took a 10-3 lead into the break, soaking up huge pressure, before piling on 15 points in the second half to once more deny the Springboks, who have not tasted victory in Australia since 2013, now spanning eight Tests.

They have another chance next week in Sydney. Two tries from Fraser McReight and one by the outstanding Marika Koroibete helped seal victory for Australia who bounced back from a shock 48-17



The performance of Al-Sahel improved significantly which gave Qadisiya a hard time and it was in the 85th-minute that French player Tarek Ajon equalized. Qadisiya was awarded a free kick not far from the goal that was taken by Patrick Malo (from Burkina Fasso) in the 96th-minute who scored the win-

ning goal. The fourth match saw the title holders Kuwait unexpectedly beaten by the newly elevated club Al-Jahra by 1-0. The goal was scored from the penalty spot in the 19th minute. Kuwait's defender Sami Al-Sane saw red when he tackled Jahra's Talal Al-Ajmi.



expectations, with a try in the opening minute.

They won the ball from their own kickoff and, on the front foot, strung together several phases before flanker McReight barged over and Noah Lolesio slotted an easy conversion. "We're very proud of the effort we showed today," said Australia captain James Slipper. "We started the game well and that put us in a good position. There were parts of that game where we had to show a lot of character, and we did that." The lead stretched to 10-0 minutes later after they won a breakdown penalty and Lolesio split the posts again. —AFP

Classifieds

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Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
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Liverpool demolish Bournemouth 9-0, equal Premier League record

Haaland hits Man City treble. 10-man Chelsea beat Leicester



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's Brazilian striker Roberto Firmino (center) shoots to score their fourth goal during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Bournemouth on August 27, 2022. — AFP

LONDON: Liverpool equaled the Premier League's record win with a 9-0 demolition of Bournemouth, while Erling Haaland's hat-trick inspired Manchester City's comeback 4-2 victory against Crystal Palace on Saturday. On a remarkable day in the top-flight, 10-man Chelsea beat Leicester 2-1, while Manchester United's revival continued with a 1-0 win at Southampton.

Liverpool stole the spotlight as they recovered from Monday's lacklustre 2-1 loss at Manchester United in astonishing style. After three games without a win, the Reds rebounded by equaling Manchester United's 9-0 wins against Ipswich in 1995 and Southampton in 2021, as well as Leicester's thrashing of Southampton in 2019. It took just three minutes for Luis Diaz to strike at Anfield as the Colombia winger headed home Roberto Firmino's cross.

Three minutes later, Liverpool moved further ahead as Harvey Elliott bagged his first Premier League goal with a 20-yard curler. Trent Alexander-Arnold rifled into the top corner from 25 yards in the 28th minute. After providing three assists, Firmino scored himself with close-range volley to put the result beyond doubt by the 31st minute. Virgil Van Dijk headed in

Andrew Robertson's corner on the stroke of half-time as Liverpool scored five in the first half of a Premier League game for the first time.

Chris Mepham's own goal from Alexander-Arnold's 46th minute cross was followed by Firmino grabbing the seventh in the 62nd minute. Fabio Carvalho's first goal since his summer move from Fulham made it eight in the 80th minute. Diaz notched the historic ninth from Kostas Tsimikas' corner with five minutes left as Liverpool equalled their biggest ever top-flight margin of victory, set against Palace in 1989. Champions Manchester City staged another impressive rally as they came from 2-0 down to beat Palace at the Etihad Stadium.

Palace went ahead in the fourth minute as Eberechi Eze's free-kick deflected off John Stones into the net for an own goal. City fell further behind in the 21st minute when Palace defender Joachim Andersen was left unmarked to head in Eze's corner. But the champions came from 3-1 down to draw at Newcastle last weekend and Bernardo Silva gave them hope of a repeat with a 53rd minute effort that deflected in off Jeffrey Schlupp.

City equalized in the 62nd minute when Phil Foden's cross reached Haaland and

the former Borussia Dortmund striker headed his first home goal since joining in the close-season. In the 70th minute, Haaland got his fifth in four games, prodding home from Stones' pass after a flowing move. The Norwegian sealed his hat-trick from Silva's pass in the 81st minute. Raheem Sterling scored his first goals for Chelsea in a dramatic win over Leicester.

Chelsea midfielder Conor Gallagher was sent off in the 28th minute for a needless foul on Harvey Barnes just moments after being booked. Sterling struck in the 47th minute, the former Manchester City forward's shot deflecting off Daniel Amartey into the net. Sterling doubled his tally in the 63rd minute as he tapped in from Reece James' cross before Barnes squeezed in a low shot three minutes later. Erik ten Hag said Manchester United have learned from their dismal start to the season after Bruno Fernandes clinched a hard-fought win against Southampton.

'More compact'

Ten Hag's side sat bottom of the Premier League after losing their opening two games. But United have recovered from that embarrassing start to secure successive league victories for the first time since February. Fernandes netted in



LONDON: Leicester City's Belgian defender Timothy Castagne (left) vies with Chelsea's Spanish defender Marc Cucurella during the English Premier League football match on August 27, 2022. — AFP

the 55th minute when he met Diogo Dalot's cross with a volley from just inside the area. "I think the players learnt some lessons from Brentford. We were more compact on the long balls. Of course we were really happy," Ten Hag said. Vitaly Janelt scored an 85th minute equalizer as

Brentford drew 1-1 with Everton, who took the lead through Anthony Gordon's 24th minute opener. Brighton beat Leeds 1-0 with Pascal Gross's 66th minute goal at the Amex Stadium. Arsenal will go back to the top if they beat Fulham in Saturday's late game. — AFP

Modeste header sees Dortmund win at Hertha

BERLIN: French striker Anthony Modeste headed in a first-half goal to get Borussia Dortmund's season back on track with a narrow 1-0 win away at Hertha Berlin on Saturday. Dortmund, who came under heavy criticism after throwing away a 2-0 lead in the 88th minute to lose 3-2 against Werder Bremen last Saturday, endured a nervy end to the match but held on to record their third win of the season.

Modeste headed in a cross from Salih Ozcan, who also arrived from Cologne this summer, in the 32nd minute to put Dortmund 1-0 up. Modeste, who is better known for his theatrical celebrations which often involve dancing and even props, ran emotionally to Dortmund manager Edin Terzic and embraced him after scoring.

The goal was Modeste's eighth against Hertha in 11 appearances. Dortmund have now



BERLIN: Dortmund's French forward Anthony Modeste and Hertha Berlin's Danish goalkeeper Oliver Christensen vie for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match on August 27, 2022. — AFP

scored 10 goals in competitive fixtures this season, each of which has come from a different scorer. Elsewhere, Union Berlin sit alone on top of the table, at least until Saturday's late game, after a 6-1 win away at Schalke. Braces from Sheraldo Becker and Sven Michel, along with strikes from Morten Thorsby and Janik

Haberer saw Union record a dominant victory.

The Berlin club, who will begin their first ever Europa League campaign in September, are unbeaten (four wins and a draw) after five competitive games in 2022-23. RB Leipzig got their first Bundesliga win of the season with a 2-0 home victory over Wolfsburg. — AFP

Westwood blasts 'hypocrites'

WASHINGTON: England's Lee Westwood says US PGA Tour changes announced for next season are simply copies of what the Saudi-backed LIV Golf circuit is doing.

PGA commissioner Jay Monahan said this week at the Tour Championship that tour players have agreed to compete in 20 events next season, included 12 "elevated" stops with \$20 million in prize money and minimum season pay amounts for fully exempt players.

Westwood, who jumped to LIV Golf for its record \$25 million purses and 54-hole events, told Golf Digest in an interview published Friday that he sees the PGA as trying to duplicate what LIV Golf has already done. "I laugh at what the PGA Tour players have come up with," Westwood told the magazine. "It's just a copy of what LIV is

doing. There are a lot of hypocrites out there. "They all say LIV is 'not competitive.' They all point at the no-cut aspect of LIV and the short fields. Now, funnily enough, they are proposing 20 events that look a lot like LIV."

"Hopefully, at some point they will all choke on their words. And hopefully, they will be held to account as we were in the early days." Several reports say as many as seven more players will jump from the PGA to LIV Golf after this week's Tour Championship in Atlanta. LIV Golf returns with events next month in Boston and Chicago. Three-time major winner Jordan Spieth said LIV Golf's formation was a spark to the PGA's changes, which will ensure top-ranked players face each other more often. — AFP