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New Assembly to meet on Oct 11 as Cabinet resigns

Lawmakers call for strong government that reflects poll results

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: After historic parliamentary elections, the government decided at an extraordinary meeting on Saturday to resign as required by the constitution and approved a decree setting the inaugural session of the new National Assembly for Oct 11. The Cabinet's resignation will be officially submitted today to HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who is expected to accept it and then reappoint HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah to form the new Cabinet.

According to the constitution, the new Cabinet must be formed before the Assembly's opening session, and then be sworn in by HH the Amir. Cabinet members will take another oath in the Assembly to become members of parliament, including those who are unelected. Kuwaiti law requires the Cabinet to step down immediately after announcing the results of the parliamentary elections, and a new Cabinet should be formed before the Assembly's first session, which must take place within two weeks of announcing the results.

Kuwaitis on Thursday elected a new National Assembly, dominated by opposition members, with the hope to restore political stability elusive for the past two decades due to political disputes between the govern-



KUWAIT: The Cabinet - chaired by HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah - meets on Oct 1, 2022 before tendering its resignation. — KUNA

ment and MPs. Under Kuwait's unique democratic system, a senior member of the ruling family heads the government. Also, unelected members of the Cabinet vote in parliament like elected MPs, except on a few issues.

New MPs called for forming a strong government

that reflects the outcome of the election and the desire of Kuwaiti voters to achieve political stability. The Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM), the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, called on the next premier to form a Cabinet of "statesmen" capa-

ble of understanding and dealing with the outcome of the election. In a statement, the ICM called on the next Cabinet to present "an ambitious but realistic reform program" of action.

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Iran students protest over crackdown



TOKYO: People chant slogans and hold pictures of Mahsa Amini during a "Freedom rally for Iran" event in Shibuya district on Oct 1, 2022. — AFP

PARIS: Students demonstrated in Tehran and other Iranian cities Saturday against an ongoing crackdown on dissent over the death last month of Mahsa Amini in the custody of the Islamic republic's notorious morality police. Iranians based abroad and their supporters gathered in cities around the world in solidarity. A wave of street violence has rocked Iran since Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd, died after her arrest by the morality police for allegedly failing to observe the Islamic republic's strict dress code for women.

Protests were held across Iran for a 15th consecutive night on Friday, despite a bloody crackdown that a rights group says has claimed more than 80 lives. "Woman, life, freedom" and "Death to the dictator", they chanted in the streets of Amini's hometown of Saqqez, in Kurdistan province. On Saturday, riot police massed at major road junctions across the capital, as students gathered in Enghelab (Revolution) Square near Tehran University in the city center to press for the release of arrested students.

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Iraqis mark 3rd 'versary of protests

BAGHDAD: Scuffles broke out between protesters and security forces injuring dozens as thousands gathered Saturday in Iraq's capital to mark three years since nationwide demonstrations erupted against endemic corruption. The latest protests in Baghdad come as Iraq has been mired in political paralysis since elections in October last year that have failed to bring in a new president, prime minister or government.

Protesters were heard chanting "the people demand the fall of the regime" as thousands gathered on

Saturday in Baghdad's iconic Tahrir Square, the epicenter of the protest movement, an AFP correspondent said. Many brandished portraits of the "martyrs" killed in the wave of rallies three years ago. "Today, it is essential to confront power," activist Ali Al-Habib said. "All the bridges and roads are blocked because the authorities are afraid of the protesters," he added, condemning "infighting within the political class, which completely ignores the will of the people".

The demonstrations seek to revive the unprecedented protests of Oct 2019 that condemned rampant unemployment and the country's decaying infrastructure.

Those protests raged for months before winding down under the shadow of coronavirus restrictions and a harsh crackdown that saw at least

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BAGHDAD: Iraqi protesters clash with security forces at Al-Jumhuriya Bridge leading to the high-security Green Zone on Oct 1, 2022. — AFP

Russia isolated after annexing Ukraine regions

KYIV: Russia was even more diplomatically isolated Saturday after President Vladimir Putin annexed four Moscow-held areas of Ukraine with Kyiv condemning the move and vowing to retake the territories. Putin staged a grand ceremony in the Kremlin on Friday to celebrate the annexation, hours after shelling killed 30 people in Ukraine's southern region of Zaporizhzhia. "I want to say this to the Kyiv regime and its masters in the West: People living in Lugansk, Donetsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia

are becoming our citizens forever," Putin said.

Washington announced "severe" new sanctions against Russian officials and the defense industry, and said G7 allies support imposing "costs" on any nation that backs the annexation. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky immediately urged the US-led military alliance NATO to grant his country fast-track membership. He also vowed never to hold talks with Russia as long as Putin was in power.

US President Joe Biden condemned Friday's ceremony in Moscow as a "sham routine" and pledged to continue backing Kyiv. NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg slammed the annexation as "illegal and illegitimate" but remained non-committal after Ukraine

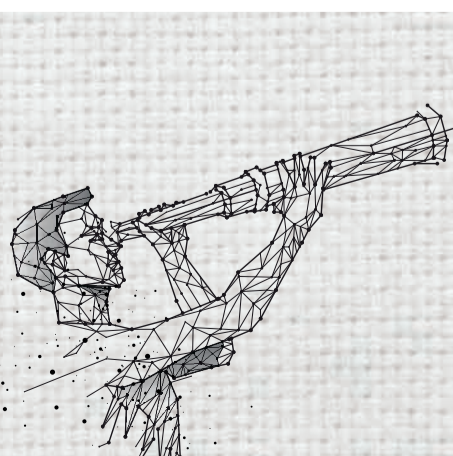
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MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin is seen on a screen in Red Square as he addresses a rally and concert marking the annexation of four regions of Ukraine on Sept 30, 2022. — AFP

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Local

Kuwait leaders congratulate new Members of Parliament



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has sent a cable of congratulations to the new members of Parliament after winning in the elections for the 17th legislative session of 2022. In his cable, His Highness the Amir expressed happiness to the new Members of Parliament after being granted the trust of the citizens - wishing them the best in their new responsibilities in serving their country.

Also, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah congratulated the new members of Parliament. His Highness the Crown Prince expressed gratitude to National Guard President, Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

He thanked Dr Rana Al-Fares, Minister of Municipal Affairs and State Minister of Communications and Information Technology and Acting Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Urban Development, Minister of Information, Culture and Minister of Youth Affairs, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi and Dr Ali Al-Mudahf, Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research and all the ministries.

His Highness thanked those who participated during the election process for their efforts. The way the elections took place reveals Kuwait's democratic celebration, and its citizen's devotion to the principles of democracy and the spirit of responsibility and cooperation to exercise their constitutional right that characterizes our society.

He also obliged the Supreme Judicial Committee supervising the conduct of these elections, and the efforts put forth to

facilitate the voting-polls in a proficient and transparent manner, asking God Almighty to bestow His hands of grace on all in service to this country under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah also sent similar cables of congratulations to the new members of Parliament.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah thanked Kuwaiti citizens for their response. The minister in a statement said that Kuwaitis manifested faithfulness and patriotism during the election, thus portraying the true democracy of Kuwait to the world. He expressed gratitude to all the departments, staff and personnel who made the parliamentary elections successfully. — KUNA

Cabinet congratulates Amir on anniversary of his coronation

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Cabinet congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the second anniversary of his coronation which fell on Thursday. During an extraordinary session on Saturday, the Cabinet said the country witnessed more progress, development and construction under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir, wishing everlasting wellbeing for His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince, and more prosperity for the country.

The meeting, held at Al-Seif Palace was presided over by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, said Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Dr. Mohammad Abdullatif Al-Fares. The Cabinet also congratulated Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman on the royal order appointing him as Prime Minister of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, expressing the best wishes for the Crown Prince under the wise leadership of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah briefed the Cabinet on the visit of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to Saudi Arabia and his meeting with Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Prime Minister of the Kingdom. During his

meeting with the Saudi Crown Prince, His Highness the Prime Minister handed a letter from His Highness the Amir to Saudi King on boosting the deep-rooted relations between the two countries.

Sheikh Ahmad Nasser also apprised the Cabinet of His Highness the Prime Minister's visit to the United Nations General Assembly HQ in New York where he delivered Kuwait's speech before the 77th session of the UNGA, as representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. In the speech, His Highness the Prime Minister reviewed the historical role of the organization in addressing challenges and chronic crises faced by the world and dangers facing humanity, Sheikh Ahmad Nasser said.

His Highness the Premier also reiterated Kuwait's adherence to the multilateral international system and objectives of the United Nations Charter to ensure the achievement of the mission of this organization in the service of humanity, the minister said.

The Prime Minister reviewed Kuwait's efforts to reach a just and comprehensive peace in various regional issues, stressing the necessity of preserving the sovereignty of countries and good neighborliness, in addition to combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, Sheikh Ahmad Nasser said. In addition, Sheikh Ahmad Nasser informed the ministers about his visit to Japan, as His Highness the Amir's representative, to attend the funeral ceremony of former Japanese premier Shinzo Abe and conveyed condolences of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince as well as Kuwaitis to Japanese officials.

Meanwhile, Minister of Justice, Minister of State for Nazaha (Integrity) Enhancement and Minister of Awqaf (Endowment) and Islamic Affairs Jamal Al-

Jalawi told the Cabinet about the ministerial resolution on terminating services of President of the Court of Cassation Counselor Ahmed Musaed Abdul Mohsen Al-Ajeel, as he reached the retirement age.

The Cabinet lauded Al-Ajeel's sincere efforts during his services, wishing him continued success. On the results of the National Assembly election, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah made a presentation to the Cabinet on the outcomes of the poll. The Cabinet extolled the tangible efforts and the distinguished organizing of the voting process, lauding all government bodies' personnel and officials, mainly Sheikh Talal Khaled, who harnessed all possibilities to help citizens vote.

The Cabinet expressed satisfaction about fraternal spirit and good competition amongst all candidates and voters that reflected the spirit of one family and practicing deep-rooted democracy in Kuwait. The Cabinet voiced its heartfelt congratulations to the MPs who gained the confidence of citizens. It wished the new MPs every success in their mission to serve their homeland and translate directives of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince to enhance constructive cooperation between the legislative and executive authorities for comprehensive development.

His Highness the Prime Minister briefed the Cabinet that he would submit the resignation to the political leadership on Sunday. Moreover, the Cabinet approved a draft decree, inviting the new National Assembly to hold the regular term of the 17th legislative session on October 11 (15 Rabi' al-Awwal 1444 of Hijra) and decided to refer it to His Highness the Amir. — KUNA

On North Korea, the conferees unanimously adopted a resolution calling on Pyongyang to totally adhere to the NPT and fully cooperate with the IAEA to ensure the safeguards' implementation. The IAEA has declared that nuclear activities in North Korea constitute a source of grave concern and its continuation of such activities is an explicit breach of relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council.

Moreover, they decided to beef up international cooperation at the level of nuclear, radioactive and waste transfer safety. They also expressed support for the IAEA director general's plan to safeguard premises of the Ukrainian nuclear plant in Zaporizhzhia. During the session, 11 states were elected as new members of the IAEA board of governors-including Saudi Arabia and Qatar, while 11 members had to relinquish their seats.

The IAEA wrapped up five days of hard deliberations on security and nuclear-arms nonproliferation and clearing the Middle East of deadly arms. Up to 175 delegations took part in the convention, representing the member states, diverse public and private establishments and institutions. The conference was originally set to conclude six hours earlier but ongoing disagreements between Russia and its western adversaries delayed its conclusion.

The Russians expressed ardent opposition to a Dutch proposed resolution, stipulating that nuclear facilities in Ukraine be preserved, drawing opposition, as well, from the Iranians and the Chinese. The conferees deliberated prospects of clearing the Middle East of nuclear arms, urged the Iranians to cooperate with the IAEA and acknowledge presence of uranium residues, recently discovered by the IAE experts.

In another development, the human rights organi-

zation Amnesty International has called on the European Union to hold Zionist leaders to account for their oppressive and apartheid policies against the Palestinians. "Zionist entity is committing the crime of apartheid against Palestinians. This is a crime against humanity requiring the EU to hold Zionist leaders to account, and to ensure it in no way supports their apartheid system," said Amnesty in a statement on the eve of EU-Zionist Association Council in Brussels.

"Any cooperation must focus on dismantling Zionist cruel system of oppression and domination. Zionist authorities are subjecting Palestinians to land seizures, unlawful killings, forcible transfers and severe movement restrictions while denying their humanity, equal nationality and status," said Amnesty.

"The EU cannot claim shared human rights commitments with a state perpetrating apartheid and which has in recent months shuttered the offices of renowned Palestinian civil society organizations, scaled up the demolition of homes in the occupied West Bank, and carried out apparently unlawful attacks in the Gaza Strip," it said. Ahead of the top-level EU-Zionist meeting, Amnesty International said it has outlined its key human rights concerns and recommendations to EU leaders in a letter sent to the EU Representative and the foreign ministers of EU member states.

Meanwhile, an EU press release today said the 12th meeting of the EU-Zionist Association Council will take place in Brussels on 3 October. The EU delegation will be led by EU High Representative Josep Borrell, and the delegation of Zionist entity will be led Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Yair Lapid. — KUNA

Kuwait pushes Zionist entity to join NPT

VIENNA: Kuwait has called on the international community to nudge Zionist entity to join the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and allow experts of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) examine its nuclear installations. The international community should shoulder its responsibilities and urge Zionist entity joint the NPT and subject all its nuclear installations to the IAE safeguard measures in the Middle East, said Talal Al-Fassam, Kuwait Ambassador to Austria and the Permanent Representative at the International Organizations in Vienna, who was addressing the IAEA 66TH annual conference that concluded early on Saturday.

Ambassador Al-Fassam called - during a debate regarding Zionist nuclear capacities to keep the topic under discussion at the IAEA policy making agencies. The conferees during the session adopted a draft resolution, proposed by Egypt, on applying the IAEA safeguard procedures in the Middle East, with 117 votes in favor, seven abstentions and Zionist opposition.

The resolution underscored the urgent need that all Middle Eastern countries accept implementation of the safeguards' regime as a step to build confidence among the regional countries, boost peace and security as part of the approach to render the Middle East clear of the nuclear weapons. It called on the stakeholders to consider "serious steps" to implement the plan in an effective manner.

Kuwait adhering to UNESCO contributions

KUWAIT: Kuwait has affirmed its commitment to pursue contributions to the UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, at various cultural levels. The State stand was demonstrated during the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development "Mondiacult 2022," held in Mexico City on September 28-30.

The Kuwaiti representative at the convention and the permanent delegate at the UNESCO, Dr Adam Abdullah Al-Mulla, affirmed its keenness on maintaining the contributions to the organization at diverse levels, a statement released by the Kuwaiti Embassy in Mexico said.

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Mexico Salah Al-Haddad said Kuwait's participation in the international cultural event was in line with its care for the sector and out of its belief in the necessity of culture for societies' evolution. Such participation,



Kuwait representative at the convention and the permanent delegate at the UNESCO, Dr Adam Al-Mulla, in the meeting. — KUNA

he has added, mirrors its active role for promoting culture, dialogue, cultural diversity and heritage protection. The convention tackles issues such as



protection of cultural diversity, heritage, culture's role in promoting development, backing economies, peace and dialogue. — KUNA

Income tax in Kuwait



By Atyab Al-Shatti

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It is well known that Kuwait does not impose tax on personal income and Kuwaiti companies, while other financial transactions are subject to taxes according to the income tax department of the Ministry of Finance in Kuwait. Despite the fact that Kuwaiti companies, including companies in which a foreign partner owns 49 percent of the capital, are not subject to taxation by the law, yet in practice we find that Kuwaiti companies are actually withholding five percent of the net income from their partnership and business executed with other Kuwaiti companies.

This means that consideration should be given to decree No 3 of 1955 regarding issuing legislation for Kuwaiti income tax amended in legislation No 34 for year 1970 and legislation No 2 for year 2008 according to Kuwaiti Cabinet resolution. This contractual relationship is crucial to secure and safeguard each company's interest even if it doesn't apply on certain legal structures.

While any foreign investor, business counterpart or partner doing business in Kuwait is obligated to follow the tax law to legalize their activity here, registering each agreement or business partnership before the Ministry of Commerce is the starting point for the Ministry to monitor and supervise foreign investments in Kuwait.

If it's not registered, then no court will consider this document as a valid document to structure a contractual relationship, furnish rights and obligations or even to secure financials. Moreover, the process of registering the agreement before the Ministry of Commerce will include the evaluation executed by the income tax department of the Ministry of Finance, which will consider at its sole discretion whether taxes shall apply on a certain transaction or not.

If the department sees that a certain transaction is subject to taxation, then the foreign partner, irrespective of whether he has his own establishment in Kuwait or not, will pay 15 percent out of the net income as income tax. This can only be evaluated through auditing firms, which will audit the company's financials and come up with the net income. It is important to say here that the Kuwaiti partner will withhold the five percent out of the net income till the foreign partner presents a tax clearance certificate issued by the Ministry of Finance. The Kuwaiti partner will then release the five percent.

The avoidance of double taxation will work in the favor of the foreign partner, as they need to open a file at the Income Tax Department at the Ministry of Finance to file returns on an annual basis. If the foreign investor is subject to tasks in their jurisdiction, they have to submit the tax returns filed in their jurisdiction to the audit firm in Kuwait to reconcile taxes. They will only be responsible to pay the difference.

Local

Profiles of election winners



1st constituency

Abdullah Al-Mudhaf
Born in 1983 - holds a Bachelors of Business Administration from Gulf University of Science and Technology in Kuwait - worked in the banking and investment sectors - Member of Kuwait Economic Society - 2020 National Assembly member.

Hasan Jowhar
Born in 1960 - PhD in Political Science - Professor of Political Science at Kuwait University (199-1996) - Member of National Assembly (1996, 1999, 2003, 2006, 2008-2020) - Member of the Association of Journalists - Amnesty International and the Arab Sports Club.

Osama Al-Zaid
Worked in the Petrochemical sector.

Ahmad Lari
Born in 1955 - Bachelor degree in Statistics - Free Trade and Business expert - former President of Kuwait Association for Protecting Public Funds - Kuwait Association for Democratic Development - Member of Municipal Council (1993, 2008, 2013) - Member of National Assembly (2006, 2008, 2013).

Essa Al-Kandari
Born in 1963 - Served as Minister of Transport, Minister of Municipal Affairs, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs - Specialized in bank affairs - Member of the Association of Journalists - Member of Human Rights Association - Member of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry - Member of National Assembly (2013, 2016, 2020).

Adel Al-Damkhi
Born in 1965 - Member of National Assembly (2012 invalidated, 2016) - PhD in Islamic Law.

Osama Al-Shaheen
Master of Law, Member of the National Assembly (2012 invalidated - 2016-2020) - Member of the Bar Association - Member of the Association of Parliamentarians for Jerusalem.

Saleh Ashour
Born in 1953 - Served in Kuwaiti Air Force - Member of National Assembly (1999, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2013, 2016).

Hamad Al-Medlej
Born in 1984 - Bachelor's degree in Military Sciences - Served as Officer in Defense Ministry - Member of Board of Directors of Mishref Co-op (2010-2013).

Khaled Al-Amairah
Bachelor's degree in Security and Intelligence Studies - Served as Officer in MOI.

2nd constituency

Bader Al-Mulla
Born in 1971 - PhD Law and Legal studies - Lawyer and Member at Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences - Head of Internal Investigation (MOI) - Member of National Assembly (2016, 2020).

Mohammad Al-Mutair
Born in 1969 - Bachelor's of Business Administration - Member of National Assembly (2003, 2006, 2008, 2016, 2020).

Shuaib Shaaban
Born in 1984 - Bachelor degree in Police Academy

from Saad Al-Abdullah Security and Science College, Officer in Interior Ministry, Deputy Director of Sulaibikhat Sporting Club in 2012, Member of Kuwait Association for Protecting Public Funds.

Hamed Al-Bathali
Bachelor degree in Law from Kuwait University, Professor of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training Law.

Khalil Al-Saleh
Born in 1958 - Diploma in Civil Aviation - Member of Society of Pilots and Flight Engineers - Member of Kuwait Airways Workers Association - Former Head of the Amiri Fleet Department - Member of National Assembly (2012, 2013, 2016, 2020).

Falah Al-Hajri
Director of Al-Atrujah Holy Quran recitation Center, Board Member of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training.

Alia Al-Khaled
Born in 1974- Bachelor of Communication from Kuwait University, Bachelor degree in Business Administration from Kuwait University.

Hamad Al-Mutar
Born in 1970 - PhD in Industrial Chemistry - Member at College of Graduate Studies - Ex-President of Kuwait Chemical Society (KCS) - Ex-President of Union of Arab Chemists (UAC) - Member of National Assembly (2012, 2020).

Abdulwahab Al-Essa
Born in 1988 - Bachelors in Political Science - Worked in field of Media and Commerce - Member of Kuwait Journalists Association (KJA).

Abdullah Al-Anbaie
Born in 1983 - Kuwait University Graduate - Certified Commercial Arbitrator - Member of British Chartered Insurance Institute (CII).

3rd constituency

Ahmad Al-Saadoun
Born in 1934, former National Assembly Speaker in 1985, 1992, 1996, and 2012. Also Deputy Speaker in 1975 and 1981. Worked as Assistant Undersecretary for the Post and Telephone Affairs until 1974. Founder of the Al-Nahda Sport and Kathma Sporting Club. In 1968 became Head of the Kuwaiti Football Association. Co-founder Member of Khaldiya Cooperative Society.

Muhalhal Al-Mudhaf
Born in 1971, Member of Parliament in 2020, Diploma in Mechanical Engineering, Board Member of the Industry Institute at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, Board Member of Kuwait Environment Protection Society, and Member of Kuwait Association for Protecting Public Funds.

Abdulkarim Al-Kandari
Born in 1981, Doctorate in Law and International Trade, Lawyer and Professor at Kuwait University, Board Member of Kuwait Society of Lawyers.

Muhammad Al-Sayer
Born in 1981, Member of Parliament in 2020, Master degree in Law, Lawyer, and Member of Kuwait Lawyer Society.

Abdulaziz Al-Saqabi
Born in 1986, Member of Parliament in 2020, Bachelor degree in Architect Engineer in Kuwait University 2008,

Master degree in Architect from US University of Cincinnati, Faculty Member in Kuwait University.

Jenan Bushehri
Born in 1973, Bachelor degree in Chemical Engineering from Kuwait University, Master in Chemical Engineering, and Doctorate from Ain Shams University in Egypt, 2009 Municipal Council Former Member, Advisor in National Assembly, Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs in 2018.

Ammar Al-Ajmi
Born in 1962, Bachelor degree in Commercial Aviation, pilot in Kuwait Airways, and former Member of Parliament in 2012.

Hamad Al-Obaid
Born in 1982, Bachelor degree from Kuwait University, Master Degree in Islamic Economics from Cairo University.

Fares Al-Otaibi
Born in 1974, Bachelor in Business Administration, General Supervisor in Kuwait Municipality, Former Member of Parliament in 2013-2020, Khaitan Cooperative Society Member.

Khalil Abul
Born in 1965, Doctorate in Program Engineering, Faculty Member of Kuwait University, former Member of Parliament in 2012-13.

4th constituency

Shuaib Al-Muwaizri
Born in 1959 - Bachelor's Degree in Police Science - Served Colonel in MOI - Ex. Minister of Housing Affairs - Ex. Minister of National Assembly Affairs - Member of National Assembly (2009, 2012, 2016, 2020).

Mohammad Hayef
Born in 1964 - Bachelors of Islamic Studies - Masters Degree in Islamic Studies - Imam and Preacher at Ministry of Endowment and Islamic Affairs - Ex Chairman of AlFirdaws Committee Charities - Member of Islamic Heritage Revival Society - Member of National Assembly (2008, 2009, 2012, 2016).

Mubarak Al-Tasha
PhD in Sharia Law - Professor at Kuwait University, Commercial Institute - Arbitrator to Arab Chamber of Conciliation and Arbitration, Kuwait Bar Association - Member of Kuwait Society for Human Rights (KSHR) - Ex Vice President of Arbitration Center at the Kuwait Bar Association.

Mubarak Al-Hajraf
Born in 1970 - Bachelor's in Law - Master's degree in Law - Served as Secretary-General of GCC - Member of Kuwait Journalist Association (KJA) - Member of National Assembly (2016,2022).

Thamer Al-Suwait
Born in 1976 - Bachelors in Architectural Engineering - worked for Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Public Works - Member of Kuwait Society of Engineers - Member of National Assembly (2016, 2020).

Marzouq Al-Khalifa
Born in 1961 - Masters in Military Sciences - Served as Officer in Military - Member of National Assembly 2020.

Saad Al-Khanfour
Born in 1965, Served in MOI - Member of National

Assembly (2008, 2009, 2012, 2013, 2016, 2020).

Obaid Al-Wasmi
Born in 1971, Doctorate in Law, Faculty Member in Law College at Kuwait University, former Member of Parliament in 2012- 2020.

Abdullah Fahhad Al-Enezi
Born in 1976, Bachelor in Mechanical Engineer from Kuwait University, Engineer at Islamic Affairs Ministry, Former Member of Parliament in 2009.

Yosuf Al-Bathali
Bachelor degree in Civil Engineer from United Kingdom, Master degree Engineer Management from Jordan, Employee in Municipal Council.

5th constituency

Hamdan Al-Azmi
Born in 1968 - Masters in Civil Law - Lawyer and Legal Researcher for MOI- Member of Lawyers Association - Member of AlOmariya and Rabia Co-op - Member of National Assembly (2013, 2016, 2020).

Saud Al-Asfour
Bachelor degree mechanical Engineer from the US, Master degree in mechanical engineer from the US, worked in media and press, member of Kuwait Civil Engineer Society.

Khaled Al-Otaibi
Born in 1966 - Bachelors of Police Science - Member of National Assembly (2016, 2020).

Al-Saifi Mubarak Al-Saifi
Born in 1961, member of Kuwait Municipality, Former Member of Parliament 2009, 2012, 2020.

Mohammad Al-Huwailah
Born in 1971 - Master's Degree in Political Science - Professor at Political Science Department - Member at Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences - Member of International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) - Member of Royal Institute for International Studies (Chatham House) - Member of National Assembly (2008, 2009, 2013, 2016, 2020).

Hani Shams
Born in 1970, Bachelor degree in Business Accounting from Kuwait University, Board Member of Social And Culture Society, Board Member of Al-Rumathiya Cooperative Society 2000.

Majed Al-Mutairi
Born in 1972, Bachelor degree in Business Administration, worked in Kuwait Oil Company, former Member of Parliament 2016.

Mohammad Al-Mahan
Diploma in Information Technology from Cambridge College in the United Kingdom, Bachelor degree in Mass Communication from Egypt, Master and Doctorate from Egypt, Lecturer in Saad Abdullah Security Science College.

Marzouq Al-Hubaini
Born 1952, Bachelor degree in Business Administration, Former Member of Parliament in 1996, 1999, 2003, 2006, and 2008.

Faisal Al-Kandari
Born in 1970 - Masters in Business Administration - Member of National Assembly (2013, 2016).

News in brief

Social insurance continues
to develop social services

KUWAIT: The Public Institution for Social Insurance confirmed on Saturday that it is continuing to develop its insurance and social services in accordance with the time frames set for the relevant objectives. The remark was made by the commissioning director general of the institution, Ahmed Hamad Al-Thunayan on the occasion of the 45th anniversary of the social insurance as an official institution in 1977. Al-Thunayan added that the institution takes into account the conditions of retired Kuwaiti and their children and seeks to consider the required reforms to improve its services in a way that guarantees a decent living for pensioners without affecting the sustainability of insurance system. He stressed that all the employees of the Social Insurance Institution spare no effort in order to develop the work of the institution and keeps the interests of the beneficiaries' services in mind as their duty dictates.

Kuwait attaches special
care to older persons

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of Social Affairs and Community Development Fahad Al-Shuraian affirmed that Kuwait attaches special care to the elderly. This came in remarks by the minister on the occasion of the World Day for Older Persons, aiming to strengthen the role of the elderly in society and raising awareness of the importance of providing health and psychological care for them. He noted that Kuwait's great priority for older persons comes through what was stipulated in Article (11) of the constitution, and accordingly, Law No 18 of 2016 was issued regarding social care for the elderly, which provides medical, social and psychological care. Moreover, he expressed his sincere thanks to all workers in the service of the elderly in the social care sector.

Kuwait oil price rises
to \$96.08 per barrel

KUWAIT: Price of the Kuwaiti crude oil rose by 56 cents to \$96.08 per barrel (pb) Friday vis-a-vis \$95.52 pb Thursday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation said on Saturday. In international markets, forward contracts of the Brent crude oil dropped by 53 cents settling at \$87.96 pb and those of the West Texas Intermediate crude fell by \$1.74 to \$79.49 pb.

Students attend classes
free from constraints

KUWAIT: Intermediate and high school students flock to schools on Sunday kicking off the new scholastic year (2022-2023) in an atmosphere free of constraints that had been enforced due to the coronavirus over the recent years. In preparation for the new scholastic year, the Ministry of Education personnel have recently become preoccupied with equipping the schools with necessary items and doing other works such as installations' maintenance. The schools had to be re-prepared after many of them were transformed into electoral centers for the parliamentary elections that concluded on Friday. The academic year kicked off at the start of the passing week, with more than 4,000 students showing up for Kuwait University classes. Kuwait, during the COVID-19 crisis, had to take a series of measures to ensure people's safety, namely adopting an online teaching regime.

Ministry, KUNA's coverage
commended for elections

KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi has commended the professional and objective coverage of Thursday's National Assembly elections by the Information Ministry and the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA)'s staff. Al-Mutairi, also Minister of State for Youth Affairs, ordered a thorough review of the election coverage to increase the positive aspects and avoid negative aspects in the future, the ministry Spokesperson Anwar Murad said in a statement to KUNA on Friday. She pointed out that Minister Al-Mutairi also instructed reshuffling of staff occupying supervisory posts in all the Information Ministry sectors. — From KUNA

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Cats gather around a bowl near Gulf Road. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

API, INP release sixth edition
of Arab development report

'Arab economic growth in light of crises: COVID pandemic and beyond'

CAIRO: The Arab Planning Institute (API) in Kuwait and Egypt's Institute of National Planning (INP) on Saturday issued the sixth edition of the Arab development report titled: "Arab economic growth in light of crises: the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond". The edition came during the opening of the 16th scientific conference of the Arab society for economic researches on boosting capabilities of Arab economies to face crises, said a statement issued by the API.

The conference was held in Egypt's Alamein City, under the patronage of Prime Minister Moustafa Madbouli. The statement said that the report is one of the most important reports issued by the API, in cooperation with the INP, and is a model for cooperation and joint Arab action. The report studies some varied key and contemporary economic and social issues that are essential to the Arab countries, and analyzes difficulties and challenges facing these countries, it noted.

In addition, the report suggests the best ways and policies aiming to improve the economic and social development of the countries of the Arab region. It touched upon the crises, mainly the COVID-19, and their impact on the countries and their economic growth. The 6th edition also presented some experiences of Arab countries in managing the crisis and proposed some recommendations regarding the economic growth problem in the post pandemic period.

Meanwhile, API Director General Dr Bader Malallah underlined the importance of this publication, which focuses on the crises, mainly the COVID-19 pandemic. He said this pandemic is one of the most outstanding issues that caught the global public opinion as it has major repercussions on Arab and global economic and social development. In his inaugural speech, Malallah pointed to the negative impacts made by the pandemic on economic growth in different countries across the

globe, including the Arab countries.

It got worse after the Russian-Ukrainian crisis as energy and agricultural commodities' prices soared and led to high inflation, he stressed. Furthermore, head of INP Ashraf Al-Arabi said the report is fundamental as it deals with the Arab economic growth problem after the COVID-19 pandemic which concerns the Arab countries and societies.

The pandemic and its consequences led to new challenges to the Arab countries that require searching for the best ways to recover effectively and overcome these repercussions. Al-Arabi pointed out that the sixth edition provides a reading of the pandemic and its impacts on economic growth in the Arab countries. The report touched upon the reality and path of economic development before the pandemic to analyze the economic and social consequences of this crisis, mainly on the economic growth. —KUNA



A folk dance event from the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh

India Embassy
launches 'Pravasi
Bharatiya Divas'
2023 campaign

KUWAIT: Indian Embassy, Kuwait launched 'Pravasi Bharatiya Divas' 2023 campaign on September 29 with an event titled 'Next Destination Indore'. 'Pravasi Bharatiya Divas', dedicated to the people of Indian roots settled abroad, is celebrated every year in India on the 9th of January to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community to the development of India. "The day commemorates the return of the greatest Indian pravasi (expatriate) of all times, Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa to India on 9th January, 1915," said Indian Ambassador Sibi George in his opening remarks.

Since 2015, PBD's format has been revised to celebrate it once every two years and to hold theme-based conferences during the intervening period with participation from overseas diaspora experts, policymakers, and stakeholders. "The 16th PBD was held during 21-23 January, 2019 in Varanasi. On January 9, 2023, our Indian diaspora across the globe will come together in Indore, one of the most beautiful cities of India," the Ambassador said.

The theme of PBD 2023 is 'Diaspora: Reliable partners for India's progress in 'Amrit Kaal'. Five plenary sessions on (i) Role of diaspora youth in innovation and new technologies; (ii) Harnessing the



Indian Ambassador Sibi George delivers his opening remarks

potential of women diaspora entrepreneurs towards an inclusive approach to nation building; (iii) Goodwill through craft, cuisine and creativity; (iv) Enabling global mobility of Indian workforce - Role of Indian diaspora; and (v) Trade and investment, he informed. "I am sure that our talented and experienced diaspora in Kuwait could contribute immensely in each of these sessions. I invite our Indian community in Kuwait to plan a visit to Indore in January," he added.

The Ambassador said, "Indore and Madhya Pradesh need no introduction. Indore is the largest city in Madhya Pradesh with a population of over three million people. It is also ranked as 'the cleanest city in India'. It is also the commercial capital of Madhya Pradesh and presents a happy blend of historical past and promises of rapid future modernization," he said. A cultural program based on music and dance from Madhya Pradesh was presented during the event.

OPEC+ member
states to meet

VIENNA: OPEC+ member states are scheduled to meet on Wednesday to set levels for the crude production. OPEC's information office said in a statement released on Saturday. The meeting will be the first to be held with the member states' representatives physically present at the venue since March 2020, it said.

Analysts believe that the coalition oil producers would maintain a cautious policy and tend to increase the oil output gradually despite fallouts of the war in Ukraine. They also think that the current situation would not affect the accord among the member states that would favor to continue monitoring market conditions without intervention except in cases where the need arises.

The representatives of 13 OPEC states and 10 non-OPEC countries are expected to work out a task paper on forecast supply and demand in second half of this year and producers' adherence to the output quotas. The meeting is due to be held amid dramatic conditions worldwide due to repercussions of the coronavirus, wars and inflation. It will be held two years after Kuwait became OPEC's chair, with the top post filled by the renowned Kuwaiti oil expert, Haitham Al-Ghais. Al-Ghais had pledged to work diligently to run the global oil affairs soundly.

Meanwhile, European Union energy ministers reached a political agreement on a regulation on an emergency intervention to address high electricity prices. The regulation will be formally adopted in the coming days, said an EU statement after the end of an extraordinary meeting of EU energy ministers in Brussels on Friday.

The regulation includes measures to reduce electricity demand during peak hours in order to decrease electricity prices for consumers. It also includes a solidarity contribution from the fossil fuel sectors' surplus profits, which will be used to alleviate the impact of high prices on final customers. Ministers held an exchange of views on further policy options to mitigate high gas prices and reiterated their call for a rapid and coordinated EU-wide response to address the high gas prices. — KUNA



Kabul classroom bombing toll rises to 35 as women protest 'genocide'

Troops in Burkina capital as World powers, AU condemn new coup

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KYIV: Relatives of Ukrainian prisoners involved in the battle of the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol, attend a demonstration demanding to speed up their release with Russia, downtown Kiev, on October 1, 2022, amid the Russian military invasion of Ukraine. —AFP

Russian attack on Ukraine convoy kills 24

Ukraine forces 'entering' Lyman, key town in Donetsk

KYIV: Ukraine on Saturday accused Russian forces of gunning down 24 civilians including children in an attack on a road convoy near the recently recaptured town of Kupiansk. On Friday, Ukrainian troops had shown AFP reporters a group of vehicles riddled with bullet holes and several corpses in civilian clothes outside the village of Kyrylivka, a short distance east of Kupiansk.

Kharkiv regional governor Oleg Synegebov put the preliminary death toll at 24 including, he said, a pregnant woman and 13 children, alleging: "Russians fired on the civilians at close range." The Kharkiv region prosecutor's office said: "On September 30 prosecutors, investigators of the Security Service and the police discovered a convoy of seven cars that had been shot."

"The car queue was shot by the Russian army on September 25, when civilians were trying to evacuate," the statement alleged. "Two cars have burnt completely with children and their parents

inside—they burnt alive," it said. Ukrainian officials have launched an investigation and allege that the Russian forces that were driven out of Kyrylivka last Sunday were behind the war's latest apparent massacre.

"The occupiers are being defeated on the battlefield and desperately respond by killing civilians," said the head of the Security Service of Ukraine, Vasyl Malyuk. "We will find everyone and hold them accountable for committed atrocities," he said. "Several people had managed to escape from Hell. Now they're testifying to the investigators." Governor Synegebov's spokeswoman told AFP the site of the killings was still unsafe for investigators, being a short distance from the still active frontline between Ukrainian and Russian forces.

On Friday, AFP reporters counted the bodies of at least 11 civilians in the wrecked cars, some burned beyond recognition. Ukrainian troops oper-

ating nearby said they had found the dead on an exposed section of road alongside a rail track, as defeated Russian forces retreated from the area.

Bullet holes

On Friday the bodies remained where they had died in and around the vehicles on a road running southeast from Kyrylivka 70 kilometers (43 miles) east of Kharkiv, in the direction of the Russian retreat. A small van or minibus was completely burnt out, with the carbonized remains of four people within. At least one of these corpses appeared small enough to have been a child.

"The vehicles were moving all together as a civilian convoy. We can see that there is almost no distance between the vehicles," said "Filya", a Ukrainian soldier who guided AFP to the scene.

"And obviously they were attacked by gunfire because you can see the bullet holes ... One car was set on fire and it's impossible to recognize the peo-

ple without an expert," he said.

Russia's February invasion allowed Moscow to seize a swathe of northern and eastern Ukraine, but this month a lightning Ukrainian counteroffensive in the Kharkiv region has driven them back.

Russian occupations forces have been accused of brutalizing and murdering civilians several times during the seven-month-old war, and have hit cities with deadly missile strikes.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's defense ministry said Saturday its forces were "entering" the key town of Lyman in the eastern Donetsk region that Russia annexed a day earlier.

"Ukrainian Air Assault Forces are entering Lyman, Donetsk region," the ministry said on Twitter, posting a video of soldiers holding up a yellow and blue Ukrainian flag near a sign with the town's name. Lyman lies in the north of Donetsk, which Moscow annexed despite only controlling part of the region. —AFP

Nicaragua breaks ties with Netherlands, bars US envoy

MANAGUA: Nicaragua found itself even more isolated on the international stage Saturday after saying it would deny entry to the ambassador appointed by the United States and then broke off diplomatic relations with the Netherlands.

President Daniel Ortega's government is facing mounting diplomatic pressure over what the United States has called "a dramatic deterioration" of human rights—which has seen the jailing of dozens of political opponents, students and journalists. The latest Nicaraguan moves came a day after the European Union's ambassador was also notified of her expulsion from the Central American country.

Managua cut ties with the Dutch government on Friday evening, describing The Hague as "interventionist" and "neocolonialist" after its ambassador, Christine Pirenne, said her country would not fund the construction of a hospital. In a letter sent to AFP on Saturday, the Dutch foreign ministry condemned the "regrettable" and "disproportionate" response.

The Netherlands said it had decided to permanently end funding for the construction of a hospital in Nicaragua—on hold since 2018—because of the "deteriorating situation in the field of democracy



MANAGUA, Nicaragua: This handout picture released by the Nicaraguan Presidency shows Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega (center), Vice President and First Lady Rosario Murillo (left) and General Director of the National Police, First Commissioner Francisco Diaz Madriz (right), arriving to the Revolution Square to participate in the commemorative act of the 43rd anniversary of the foundation of the National Police in Managua, on September 28, 2022. —AFP

and human rights." It said it had given Managua several warnings but now Nicaragua was "closing the door". The Nicaraguan government had on Friday blamed the "repeated meddling, interventionist and neocolonialist position of the Kingdom of the Netherlands" for the row.

Earlier in the day, Ortega had lashed out at the European nation. "Those who come to disrespect our people, our homeland, they should not appear again in Nicaragua. And we do not want relations with that interventionist government," Ortega said in reference to Pirenne, who is based in Costa Rica.

for security reasons, said that together with the street noise, the drones create an unbearable cacophony. "At night I try to review the lessons for my exams, but I can't read because of this annoying racket," she said from the cramped Gaza City apartment she shares with her parents and five siblings.

Each month, Zionist entity uses drones above Gaza for 4,000 flying hours—the equivalent of deploying five of the unmanned aircraft permanently in the sky—the military told AFP. The drones "collect intelligence data 24 hours a day", said Omri Dror, a commander from Zionist entity's Palmachim airbase where the aircraft take off.

During an 11-day war in May 2021 between Zionist entity and Gaza militants, the Zionist entity army deployed 25 drones for 6,000 flight hours to constantly monitor the territory, according to army data. It intensified that presence during a three-day conflict in August this year, using 30 drones for a total of more than 2,000 flight hours. Bissam's mother Rim said she struggles to calm her children when the drones fly overhead, fearing a Zionist air strike could follow even if there is no active conflict. —AFP

The Netherlands closed its offices in Managua in 2013 and conducts all its Central American diplomatic work from Costa Rica. Before Ortega's remarks, his wife, Nicaraguan Vice President Rosario Murillo, said on Friday that new US envoy Hugo Rodriguez "will not under any circumstances be admitted into our Nicaragua." "Let that be clear to the imperialists," she added, reading a statement from the foreign office on state media. The US Senate confirmed Rodriguez's ambassador posting Thursday, despite Nicaragua having previously said it would reject him. —AFP



In this file photo an Elbit Systems Skylark 1 unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV or drone) of the Zionist army takes off near the border with the Gaza Strip in southern Zionist region as part of monitoring operations in the area. —AFP

Incessant Zionist drones heighten Gaza anxiety

GAZA CITY: Gaza teenager Bissam says she has trouble sleeping and concentrating as the buzzing sound of Zionist entity's military drones above the crowded Palestinian enclave drives her to distraction.

When she is at home in the cramped family apartment, the 18-year-old said she feels that "the drone is constantly with me in my bedroom—worry and fear don't leave our homes. "Sometimes I have to put the pillow on my head so I don't hear its buzz," she said, adding that the drone noise gives her headaches.

Unmanned surveillance aircraft have become an integral part of Zionist entity's 15-year-old blockade of the impoverished enclave, and 2.3 million Palestinians endure their incessant hum. Bissam, whose family requested their surname be withheld

Long COVID remains a mystery, though theories emerging

PARIS: Millions of people around the world are believed to suffer from long COVID yet little remains known about the condition—though research has recently proposed several theories for its cause. Between 10 to 20 percent of people who contract coronavirus are estimated to have long COVID symptoms—most commonly fatigue, breathlessness and a lack of mental clarity dubbed brain fog—months after recovering from the disease. The US-based Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) estimates that nearly 145 million people worldwide had at least one of those symptoms in 2020 and 2021.

In Europe alone, 17 million people had a long COVID symptom at least three months after infection during that time, according to IHME modeling for the World Health Organization (WHO) published earlier this month. These millions "cannot continue to suffer in silence", WHO Europe director Hans Kluge said, calling for the world to act quickly to learn more about the condition. Researchers have been racing to catch up but the vast array—and inconsistency—of symptoms has complicated matters. More than 200 different symptoms have been ascribed to long COVID so far, according to a University College London study.

"There are no symptoms that are truly specific to long COVID but it does have certain characteristics that fluctuate," said Olivier Robineau, the long COVID coordinator at France's Emerging Infectious Diseases research agency. "Fatigue remains in the background," he told AFP, while the symptoms "seem to be exacerbated after intellectual or physical effort—and they become less frequent over time".

One thing we do know is that people who had more severe initial cases, including needing to be hospitalized, are more likely to get long COVID, according to the IHME. Researchers have been pursuing several leads into exactly what could be behind the condition. A study published in the journal Clinical Infectious Diseases in September found that COVID's infamous spike protein—the key that lets the virus into the body's cells—was still present in patients a full year after infection. —AFP

International

Troops in Burkina capital as World powers, AU condemn new coup

Fate of junta leader unknown after junior leaders stage coup

OUAGADOUGOU, Burkina Faso: Soldiers blocked main roads and gunfire was heard in the capital of Burkina Faso on Saturday, as world powers condemned the second coup this year in the deeply poor and restive West African country.

Junior officers toppled a junta leader on Friday, saying he had failed to fight jihadist attacks in the country. On Saturday, several witnesses told AFP they heard gunfire in the centre of the capital Ouagadougou, after which troops once again blocked the main roads in the city, including around the presidency. Helicopters hovered above the city and shops that had opened for business in the morning shut their doors.

The European Union and the African Union added their voices to a chorus of global condemnation to the change in power. "The chairperson calls upon the military to immediately and totally refrain from any acts of violence or threats to the civilian population, civil liberties, human rights," the AU said in a statement, calling for the restoration of the constitutional order by July 2024.

AU chief Moussa Faki Mahamat said he was deeply concerned about the resurgence of unconstitutional ousters in the West African nation and elsewhere on the continent.

The European Union warned that the coup put in danger efforts undertaken to restore constitutional order by July 1, 2024 and called for the new authorities to respect

previous agreements.

"The European Union also deplores the degradation of the security and humanitarian situation in the country," the bloc's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said in a statement. The Economic Community of West African States regional bloc "condemned in the strongest possible terms" the latest seizure of power, calling it "inappropriate." Burkina Faso's former colonial ruler France told its citizens in Ouagadougou-believed to number between 4,000 and 5,000 — to stay home.

The United States called "for a return to calm and restraint by all actors".

On Friday, pre-dawn gunfire erupted in the dusty and spread-out capital around the presidential palace and culminated in the latest coup. Just before 8:00 pm (2000 GMT) on Friday, more than a dozen soldiers in fatigues appeared on the state television and radio broadcaster to announce the removal of Lieutenant-Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba.

They proclaimed 34-year-old Captain Ibrahim Traore in charge.

"We have decided to take our responsibilities, driven by a single ideal: the restoration of security and integrity of our territory," they said. "Damiba failed. Since he came to power, the zones that were peaceful were attacked. He took power but then he betrayed us," Habibata Rouamba, a trader and activist said on Saturday.

With most of the Sahel region battling a



Lieutenant-Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba

growing Islamist insurgency, the violence has prompted a series of coups in Mali, Guinea and Chad since 2020.

In January, Damiba installed himself as leader of the country of 16 million after accusing elected president Roch Marc Christian Kabore of failing to beat back the jihadist.

Damiba accused of failure

But with more than 40 percent of the



OUAGADOUGOU: Young men demonstrate in Ouagadougou on September 30, 2022. Shots rang out before dawn on Friday around Burkina Faso's presidential palace and headquarters of the military junta, which itself seized power in a coup last January. — AFP

country outside government control, the latest putsch leaders said Damiba, too, had failed. "Far from liberating the occupied territories, the once-peaceful areas have come under terrorist control," the new military leaders said.

They then suspended the constitution, sealed the borders, dissolved the transitional government and legislative assembly and instituted a 9:00 pm to 5:00 am curfew.

New strongman Traore was previously head of anti-jihadist special forces unit "Cobra" in the northern region of Kaya.

Damiba's fate remains unknown. Though he had promised to make security his priority when he took charge on January 24, violent attacks have increased since March. In the north and east, towns have been blockaded by insurgents who have blown up bridges and attacked supply convoys.—AFP

NASA eyes November for launch attempt of Moon rocket

CAPE CANAVERAL: NASA said Friday it would try to launch its Moon mega-rocket in November, without committing to a precise date for the much-delayed Artemis 1 mission. The US space agency, which was forced to postpone its latest liftoff attempt due to massive Hurricane Ian which hammered Florida this week, announced it was preparing its next launch window for between November 12 and November 27.

"Over the coming days," NASA said in a blog post, the team will assess conditions and necessary work and "identify a specific date for the next launch attempt." Officials had so far refused to completely shut the door on an earlier attempt in October. The SLS rocket, the most powerful ever designed by NASA, had to be returned to its storage hangar at Kennedy Space Center on Tuesday in order to shelter it from the approach of Hurricane Ian.

The storm devastated parts of Florida but the rocket itself suffered no damage, NASA said.

Planning efforts for the November launch window will allow "time for employees at Kennedy to address the needs of their families and homes after the storm" and in the run up to the next mission attempt. Raising the 98-meter-high (320 foot) rocket and transporting it to its launch pad, before configuring it for takeoff, will also take days.—AFP

After devastating Florida, Ian begins to wind down

FORT MYERS, US: Deadly Hurricane Ian, one of the most powerful storms ever to hit the United States, was still dumping rain on parts of the country early Saturday, but was beginning to wind down after walloping Florida. The National Hurricane Center (NHC) said Ian made landfall on Friday afternoon near Georgetown, South Carolina, as a Category 1 hurricane with maximum sustained winds of 85 miles (140 kilometers) per hour.

It was later downgraded to a post-tropical cyclone, and by 5 am Saturday (0900 GMT) its sustained windspeeds had decreased to near 35 miles per hour as it passed through North Carolina, according to the NHC.

Though the NHC said heavy rains continued and "limited" flooding was still possible across the central Appalachians and Mid-Atlantic as Ian moved north, the storm was expected to continue weakening and was "forecast to dissipate over south-central Virginia" by Saturday night. As for storm-ravaged Florida, President Joe Biden said Friday: "We're just beginning to see the scale of the destruction. "It's likely to rank among the worst in the nation's history," he said of Ian, which barreled into Florida's southwest coast on Wednesday as a Category 4 storm, a tick shy of the most powerful on the Saffir-Simpson wind scale.

The death toll from the storm stood at 23, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement said Friday evening. News outlets quoting county officials have given even higher tolls, with CNN saying 45 fatalities have been blamed on Ian.

Mir Hossein Mousavi, a former prime minister who has been under house arrest for more than a decade, urged security forces to halt the violence, in a message on the Instagram account of opposition group Kaleme. "I would like to remind all the armed forces of their pledge to protect our land, Iran, and the lives, property, and rights of the people," he said.

Iran's intelligence ministry said Friday that "nine foreign nationals", including from France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Poland, were arrested "at or behind the scene of riots", along with 256 members of outlawed opposition groups. Unrest also erupted on Friday in Iran's southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan province, which borders Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said two of its colonels were killed, bringing the official toll to 20 dead during clashes in the province where three police stations were attacked.

"Several chain stores were looted and set on fire, and a number of banks and government centers were also damaged," said Sistan-Baluchestan governor Hossein Khiabani. Poverty-stricken Sistan-Baluchestan is a flashpoint for clashes with drug smuggling gangs, as well as rebels from the Baluchi minority and Sunni Muslim extremist groups. Iran has blamed outside forces for the nationwide protests.

On Wednesday, the Revolutionary Guards launched cross-border missile and drone strikes that killed 14 people in autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan, accusing rebel groups in the region of fueling the unrest. The US said one of its citizens was killed in the strikes. Fifty-four countries have signed a statement "urging Iran to stop using force against peaceful protesters", the US special envoy for Iran, Robert Malley, tweeted.—AFP

reports that she was joining the next Cabinet. The former minister expressed hope the prime minister will select a competent team capable of reforms and countering corruption.

Meanwhile, Ahmad Al-Saadoun, 87, who won a seat in the Assembly after ending a 10-year boycott of the election, announced he will contest the speaker's post. Many MPs have said they will vote for him, as MP Essa Al-Kandari called for unanimously electing Saadoun. Opposition MPs Hasan Jowhar and Mubarak Al-Hajraf announced they will run for the deputy speaker's post. Both posts and members of Assembly committees will be elected during the opening session.



ORLANDO, US: Residents wade through water to get to their house in a flooded neighborhood following Hurricane Ian on October 1, 2022 in Orlando, Florida. Deadly Hurricane Ian, one of the most powerful storms ever to hit the United States, was still dumping rain on parts of the country early Saturday, but was beginning to wind down after walloping Florida. —AFP

Seventeen migrants also remain missing from a boat that sank during the hurricane on Wednesday, according to the Coast Guard. One person was found dead and nine others rescued, including four Cubans who swam to shore in the Florida Keys. With damage estimates running into the tens of billions of dollars, Biden said it's "going to take months, years to rebuild." "It's not just a crisis for Florida," he said. "This is an American crisis."

CoreLogic, a firm that specializes in property analysis, said wind-related losses for residential and commercial properties in Florida could cost insurers up to \$32 billion while flooding losses could go as high as \$15 billion. "This is

the costliest Florida storm since Hurricane Andrew made landfall in 1992," CoreLogic's Tom Larsen said.

Rescue teams were assisting survivors Friday in devastated Florida communities and the US Coast Guard said it had made 117 rescues using boats and helicopters of people trapped in flooded homes. Governor Ron DeSantis said hundreds of other rescue personnel were going door-to-door "up and down the coastline." DeSantis said the coastal town of Fort Myers, where the hurricane first made landfall, was "ground zero" but "this was such a big storm that there are effects far inland," including serious flooding in the city of Orlando.—AFP

Iran students protest over...

Continued from Page 1

Police clashed with the protesters who were chanting slogans and arrested some of them, the semi-official Fars news agency reported. Video footage shared by the Oslo-based Iran Human Rights group also showed student protests in other cities, including second city Mashhad and Karaj, west of the capital. The protesters were seen chanting and women having removed their headscarves.

Demonstrations of support were called in 159 cities across the globe - from Auckland to New York and Seoul to Zurich, the Iranians for Justice and Human Rights group said. In Tokyo, demonstrators waved pictures of Amini and other women who had defiantly burned their headscarves and cut their hair during the Iranian protests. In Rome, a half dozen women cut their hair in solidarity.

The protests flared in Iran on Sept 16, when Amini was pronounced dead three days after falling into a coma following her arrest. Iran Human Rights group says at least 83 people have been killed in the crackdown. Amnesty International says it has confirmed 52 fatalities, while Iran's Fars agency has put the death toll at "around 60". It is the bloodiest unrest in Iran since a ruthless crackdown on demonstrations in Nov 2019 over a sudden hike in fuel prices that killed at least 304 people, according to Amnesty.

New Assembly to meet on Oct 11...

Continued from Page 1

Newly elected opposition MP Saud Al-Asfour said the country needs a "salvation" government, adding "we are looking for the prime minister to have a Cabinet capable of reading the change introduced by the Kuwaiti people". New MP Jenan Bushehri denied

Russia isolated after annexing...

Continued from Page 1

said it was applying to join the Western alliance. The United States and Canada voiced support for Ukraine's membership but steered clear of promises to fast-track it. Turkey on Saturday said Russia's annexation was a "grave violation of the established principles of international law".

Despite warnings from Putin prior to the annexation that he could use nuclear weapons to defend the captured territories, Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said Kyiv would "continue liberating our land and our people". Kuleba also said Ukraine brought the annexations to the International Court

Iraqis mark 3rd 'ersary...

Continued from Page 1

600 demonstrators killed and tens of thousands more wounded. The protesters on Saturday gathered at Al-Jumhuriya Bridge, where they attempted to overcome a series of barriers set up by security forces to block access to the fortified Green Zone that houses government buildings and diplomatic missions. Protesters threw the iron barriers into the river, according to an interior ministry official who reported 18 minor injuries among riot police resulting from stones and glass bottles being thrown at them. Police retaliated by throwing smoke grenades at the crowd to disperse them, the AFP correspondent said. At least 28 protesters suffered from breathing difficulties as a result, according to an interior ministry official.

Rival Shiite factions in parliament have for months vied for power and the right to select a new prime minister and government. The impasse pits the powerful cleric Moqtada Sadr against his rivals the Iran-backed Coordination Framework, which

of Justice and urged the Hague-based court to hear the case "as soon as possible".

US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said Friday that Washington would announce an "immediate" new weapons shipment for Kyiv next week. Sullivan also said that while there is a "risk" of Putin using nuclear weapons, there is no indication that he would imminently do so. Hours ahead of the annexation ceremony, an attack in Zaporizhzhia in the south killed at least 30 people and wounded dozens as civilians were preparing to leave to pick up relatives, Ukrainian officials said.

Bodies in civilian clothes were strewn across the ground after the attack and windows of cars blown out. On Saturday, Ukraine's nuclear agency said a "Russian patrol" detained the director general of the Moscow-held Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. Ihor Murashov was detained on Friday as he was leaving the plant and was "driven in an unknown direction" while blindfolded, Energoatom said.—AFP

includes lawmakers from the party of his longtime foe, ex-prime minister Nuri Al-Maliki. Sadr wants snap elections and the dissolution of parliament but the Coordination Framework wants a new head of government appointed before any new polls are held.

Tensions boiled over into clashes on Aug 29 between the Sadrists, rival Iran-backed factions and the army in which more than 30 Sadr supporters were killed, after their leader said he was quitting politics. A teacher at the protest on Saturday lashed out at the "quarrels and confrontations between leaders" in the country. "We will not remain silent in the face of injustice," she said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

On Wednesday, three unclaimed rockets were fired at Baghdad's Green Zone, wounding seven security force personnel, as parliament held its first session in two months, Iraq's security forces said. In parallel with the political impasse in the country, Iraq has also been gripped by deep economic and environmental crises. After decades of war, the oil-rich but conflict-ravaged country has struggled to rebuild. It has also repeatedly found itself caught in the crosshairs of geopolitical tensions stemming from neighboring countries, making it a target of frequent cross-border strikes from Turkey and, more recently, Iran.—AFP

International

Kabul classroom bombing toll rises to 35 as women protest 'genocide'

Women dare Taliban, chant 'stop Hazara genocide'

KABUL: The death toll of a suicide bombing on a Kabul classroom has risen to 35, the UN said Saturday, as Shiite Hazara women who bore the brunt of the attack staged a defiant protest against the "genocide" of their minority community. On Friday a suicide attacker blew himself up in a Kabul study hall as hundreds of pupils were taking tests in preparation for university entrance exams in the city's Dasht-e-Barchi area.

The western neighborhood is a predominantly Shiite Muslim enclave and home to the minority Hazara community—a historically oppressed group that has been targeted in some of Afghanistan's most brutal attacks in recent years. "The latest casualty figures from the attack number at least 35 fatalities, with an additional 82 wounded," the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said in a statement.

More than 20 of the killed were girls and women, it said. The UN mission's casualty figure is higher than the toll Kabul authorities have given. An interior ministry official told AFP anonymously on Saturday that 25 people were killed and 33 wounded in the attack on the Kaaj Higher Educational Centre—updating an earlier toll of 20 killed and 27 wounded. Since returning to power last August, security has been a sensitive topic for the Taliban and the hardliners have often been keen to downplay attacks challenging their regime.

Meanwhile on Saturday dozens of Hazara women defied a Taliban ban on rallies to protest the latest bloodshed in their community. Around 50 women chanted, "Stop Hazara genocide, it's not a

crime to be a Shiite", as they marched past a hospital in Dasht-e-Barchi where several victims of the attack were being treated. Dressed in black hijabs and headscarves, the protesters carried banners that read: "Stop killing Hazaras", an AFP correspondent reported.

Witnesses have told AFP that the suicide attacker detonated in the women's section of the gender-segregated study hall. "Yesterday's attack was against the Hazaras and Hazara girls," protester Farzana Ahmadi, 19, told AFP. "We demand a stop to this genocide. We staged the protest to demand our rights."

Regular target

Protesters later gathered in front of the hospital and chanted slogans as dozens of heavily armed Taliban, some carrying rocket-propelled-grenade launchers, kept watch. Since the hardline Taliban returned to power, women's protests have become risky, with numerous demonstrators detained and rallies broken up by Taliban forces firing shots in the air.

No group has claimed responsibility for Friday's attack. But the jihadist Islamic State (IS) group regards Shiites as heretics and has previously claimed attacks in the area targeting girls, schools and mosques. The Taliban also regard the Hazara community as heathens, and rights groups often accused the Islamists of targeting them during their 20-year insurgency against the former US-backed government.

Since returning to office the Taliban have



KABUL: Members of the Taliban security forces arrive as Afghan women march during a demonstration they call 'Stop Hazara genocide' a day after a suicide bomb attack at Dasht-e-Barchi learning centre, in Kabul on October 1, 2022. — AFP

pledged to protect minorities and clamp down on security threats. However, Amnesty International said Friday's attack was "a shameful reminder of the inaptitude and utter failure of the Taliban, as de-facto authorities, to protect the people of Afghanistan".

In May last year, before the Taliban's return to power, at least 85 people—mainly girls—were killed

and about 300 were wounded when three bombs exploded near their school in Dasht-e-Barchi.

Again, no group claimed responsibility, but a year earlier IS claimed a suicide attack on an educational centre in the same area that killed 24. IS has emerged as a key security challenge for the Taliban, but officials claim their forces have defeated the jihadists. —AFP

North Korea fires ballistic missiles, 4th time this week

SEOUL: North Korea fired two ballistic missiles early on Saturday, South Korea's military said, the nuclear-armed country's fourth launch this week as Seoul, Tokyo and Washington ramp up joint military drills to counter Pyongyang. South Korea, Japan and the US staged anti-submarine drills Friday—the first in five years—just days after Washington and Seoul's navies conducted large-scale exercises in waters off the peninsula.

US Vice President Kamala Harris was in Seoul Thursday and toured the heavily fortified Demilitarized Zone that divides the peninsula, on a trip that aimed to underscore her country's "iron-clad" commitment to South Korea's defense against the North.

With talks long stalled, Pyongyang has doubled down on its banned weapons programs, conducting a record-breaking blitz of tests this year and revising its laws to declare itself an "irreversible" nuclear power. South Korea's military said it had "detected two short-range missiles between 0645 and 0703 fired from the Sunan area in Pyongyang into the East Sea", referring to the body of water also known as the Sea of Japan.

The missiles "flew approximately 350 km (217 miles) at an altitude of 30 km at speed of Mach 6", Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement, calling the launches "a serious provocation".

Tokyo also confirmed the launch, saying the missiles had landed outside Japan's exclusive economic zones. Toshiro Ino, Japan's vice defense minister, said the missiles "appear to have flown in irregular trajectories". Experts say the irregular trajectories indicate the missiles are capable of manoeuvring in flight, making them harder to track and intercept.



US Vice President Kamala Harris (right) uses a pair of binoculars while being briefed by a member of the military at a military operation post as she visits the demilitarized zone (DMZ) separating North and South Korea, in Panmunjom on September 29, 2022. — AFP

The US Indo-Pacific Command said in a statement that the latest launch "highlights the destabilizing impact of the DPRK's unlawful WMD and ballistic missile programs", using the official abbreviation for North Korea.

Harris trip

North Korea marked Harris's trip to Seoul with a flurry of missile launches—firing off short-range ballistic missiles on Sunday, Wednesday and Thursday, the latter test just hours after the vice president flew out of South Korea. Washington has about 28,500 troops stationed in South Korea to help protect it from the North. Under South Korea's President Yoon Suk-yeol, who took office in May, the two countries have boosted joint exercises, which they insist are purely defensive.

Just before Harris arrived in Seoul, Washington

sent the nuclear-powered USS Ronald Reagan aircraft carrier to South Korea to conduct a large-scale joint naval exercise in a show of force against Pyongyang.

Such drills infuriate North Korea, which sees them as rehearsals for an invasion. "North Korea's short-range ballistic tests are less important than a nuclear test but still violate UN Security Council resolutions," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul, adding that the timing was "provocative". North Korea is "rapidly modernizing weapons and taking advantage of a world divided by US-China rivalry and Russia's annexation of more Ukrainian territory", he said. "Pyongyang's actions again make clear the need for Washington and Seoul to reinforce military deterrence, tighten economic sanctions, and increase policy coordination with Tokyo," he added. —AFP

One dead, dozens injured after quake hits Sumatra island

JAKARTA: A 5.9-magnitude earthquake hit Indonesia's Sumatra island early Saturday, according to the US Geological Survey, killing at least one person and injuring dozens as locals rushed out of buildings seeking safety. The quake hit at a relatively shallow depth of 13 kilometers (eight miles) just before 2:30 am (1930 GMT), about 40 kilometers from the town of Sibolga in North Sumatra province, according to the USGS.

A man in his 50s died from a heart attack triggered by the quake and at least 25 other people were injured, regional disaster mitigation agency official Febrina Tampubolon told AFP. Authorities are still gathering reports on damage but electricity poles and telecommunication towers have been hit, knocking out services, said Tampubolon.

More than 50 aftershocks were recorded by the Indonesian Meteorology and Geophysics Agency (BMKG). BMKG head Dwikorita Karnawati advised residents to watch for further tremors and urged people to seek shelter on safe ground. "For those whose houses were damaged, it is advised to not stay inside as possible aftershocks could worsen the damage," Karnawati said in a virtual press conference.

Aftershocks could also trigger landslides, she added. Indonesia experiences frequent earthquakes due to its position on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", an arc of intense seismic activity where tectonic plates collide. In 2018, a 7.5-magnitude quake and subsequent tsunami in Palu on Sulawesi island killed more than 2,200 people. In 2004, a 9.1-magnitude quake struck Aceh province, causing a tsunami and killing more than 170,000 people in Indonesia. —AFP

US judge rejects Mexican lawsuit against gun makers

WASHINGTON: A US judge on Friday dismissed a \$10 billion lawsuit by Mexico against American gun manufacturers, which it accused of fueling drug trafficking and violence in that country. Judge Dennis Saylor of a federal court in Boston said the nation's claims failed to overcome the extensive protections offered to firearm makers by the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act, passed by the US Congress in 2005.

"Unfortunately for the government of Mexico, all of its claims are either barred by federal law or fail for other reasons," Saylor wrote in a 44-page decision. "While the court has considerable sympathy for the people of Mexico, and none whatsoever for those who traffic guns to Mexican criminal organizations, it is duty-bound to follow the law."

Mexico filed the suit in August 2021 against nine US gun manufacturers and two distributors—including Smith & Wesson, Beretta, Colt, Glock, Century Arms, Ruger and Barrett—for what it deemed a "negligent and illicit" trade that encourages drug trafficking and violence in its territory.

The Mexican government maintains that 70-90 percent of the weapons recovered at crime scenes in Mexico have been trafficked from the United States. The litigation sought compensation for the damage caused by the firms' alleged "negligent practices," as well as the implementation of adequate standards to "monitor and discipline" arms dealers. After learning of the judge's dismissal, Mexico's Foreign Ministry said it would continue to pursue the case. "The civil suit for damages against those who profit from the violence suffered by Mexicans goes to a second stage, in which the Foreign Ministry will continue to insist that the negligence of these companies seriously affects our country," the ministry said in a statement. —AFP

UN peacekeeper killed in DR Congo

BUKAVU, DR Congo: A United Nations peacekeeper has been killed in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, the UN and Congolese officials said on Saturday, in the latest violence to hit the conflict-torn region. The UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC, known as MONUSCO, stated that suspected members of the Twirwano militia conducted the attack on Friday night in the Minembwe area of South Kivu province.

"A peacekeeper was killed by armed men who approached the base after having contacted MONUSCO for a surrender," MONUSCO said. "Attacks against peacekeepers may constitute a war crime," it added, calling on Congolese authorities to hold the perpetrators responsible. The Twirwano militia is one of over 120 armed groups in volatile eastern DRC. It claims to represent the interests of the Banyamulenge, a Congolese Tutsi community.

A Congolese army spokesman in the Minembwe area, Lieutenant Jeremie Meya, also said that Twirwano militiamen had killed the UN peacekeeper under the "ruse" of turning themselves in.

"These thugs shot the victim at close range and (he) died on the spot, they fled after this crime and disappeared," Meya said. Kibibi Saint Cadet, the head of a civil-society group in Minembwe, told AFP that the UN peacekeeper who had been killed was Pakistani.

MONUSCO was unable to immediately confirm the nationality of the slain peacekeeper, however. —AFP

Bolsonaro, Lula hold final rallies before Brazil vote

SAO PAULO: Brazil's polarizing presidential campaign will wrap up Saturday as incumbent Jair Bolsonaro and front-runner Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva hold rival rallies within spitting distance of each other. With a day to go to Sunday's election, Bolsonaro, the 67-year-old far-right president known for his gloves-off style, is planning to lead one of his trademark motorcycle rallies from the north side of Sao Paulo to the city's Ibirapuera park.

Around five kilometers (three miles) from there, Lula, the 76-year-old leftist who led Brazil from 2003 to 2010, will hold his own final rally on the economic capital's main avenue, Avenida Paulista.

With the country deeply divided, tension is running high heading into the election, which Lula is gunning to win outright on Sunday, without the need for a runoff on October 30. A poll from the Datafolha institute released Thursday put the charismatic but tarnished leftist on the cusp of a first-round win, with 50 percent of valid votes, to 36 percent for Bolsonaro. To win outright, he would need 50 percent plus one vote. The margin of error was plus or minus two percentage points.

Bolsonaro has repeatedly signalled he could challenge the result if he loses, saying "only God" can remove him from office and alleging, without evidence, rampant fraud in Brazil's electronic voting system. Lula said Friday he feared the incumbent would create "turmoil" if he lost. Many people are bracing for a Brazilian version of the unrest that rocked the United States last year after Bolsonaro's political role model, former president Donald Trump, refused to accept his election defeat.



BRASILIA, Brazil: This file combination of pictures shows ex-Brazilian president and presidential candidate Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (left) and Brazilian President and re-election candidate Jair Bolsonaro. — AFP

The final hours of the campaign "will be very tense—all eyes will be on the slightest detail that could tip the balance one way or the other," said political scientist Jairo Nicolau of the Getulio Vargas Foundation. The campaign homestretch already descended into mud-slinging Thursday night when Lula and Bolsonaro faced off in a final debate, seeking to scrape up the few undecided voters and woo those voting for the nine other candidates—all of whom are polling in single digits.

Bolsonaro wasted no time pouncing on the corruption charges that have long dogged Lula and controversially landed the ex-president in jail for 18 months, until the Supreme Court annulled his convictions last year. "You liar, ex-inmate, traitor," Bolsonaro spat at Lula. Lula, a former metalworker who rose from destitute poverty to become the most popular president in Brazilian history, responded in kind. "It's ugly for the president of the republic to blatantly lie all the time... That's why the people are going to send you packing," he said in his trademark gravelly voice. —AFP

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2022

Business

Ninth eGovernment Forum to be held from Oct 23-25 in Kuwait

Forum under the motto 'eGovernment is a Pillar of Comprehensive Development Renaissance'

KUWAIT: Under the patronage of Dr Rana Abdullah Al-Fares, Minister of State for Municipal Affairs, Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology Affairs, and Acting Minister of State for Housing and Urban Development, the 9th eGovernment Forum will be held from 23 to 25 October under the motto "eGovernment is a Pillar of Comprehensive Development Renaissance."

EGOV9 is organized by NoufEXPO and the Federation of Kuwait Engineering Offices and Consultants Houses in cooperation with the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) at Al-Baraka Ballroom at Crowne Plaza Hotel.

On this occasion, the Director General of CAIT, Haya Al-Wadaani, expressed her profound thanks to Minister Dr Rana Al-Fares for her sponsorship of this vital forum that supports CAIT's efforts to implement the political leadership direction to achieving Kuwait Vision 2035. Expressly, Al-Wadaani referred to developing intelligent government services in cooperation with all other parties. Al-Wadaani pointed out that eGovernment is a joint responsibility between the various government agencies and leaderships, noting that the val-



Dr Rana Abdullah Al-Fares



Haya Al-Wadaani



Dr Ammar Al-Husseini

ue of the eGovernment mission is increasing daily due to Kuwait society's openness to technological adoption in all aspects of daily life.

Al-Wadaani stressed that CAIT spares no effort to assume its full responsibilities, as the development of government services was and remains one of the main objectives for which CAIT was established. She also stressed CAIT's belief that eGovernment is the pillar and basis for the comprehensive and sustainable development renaissance. She highly valued CAIT's efforts made to

move towards developing advanced stages of the eGovernment program in the State of Kuwait to keep pace with its modern and renewable concepts.

Al-Wadaani praised and thanked NoufEXPO and the Federation of Kuwait Engineering Offices and Consultants Houses for their efforts in organizing EGOV9.

She welcomed government institutions, private sector institutions, and speakers participating in the forum. She hoped that EGOV9 would come up with conclusions and recommendations that reflect positively on establishing a new and effective dynamic to unite the efforts of developing the eGovernment Program with the efforts to implement Kuwait's Development Plan.

For his part, the Deputy Director General CAIT, Dr Ammar Al-Husseini, expressed his happiness at the launch of EGOV9, pointing to the influential

and remarkable role played by the forum in its previous sessions and so far in directing attention towards the importance of eGovernment for the development and growth of societies.

Dr Al-Husseini added that we look forward to active participation in EGOV9 by government agencies. We are all concerned with this vital topic, primarily since this year's forum discusses an important issue related to the integration, coordination, and synergy of efforts to develop the eGovernment Program and implement the Development Plan projects. He pointed out that this new proposal will open new horizons that everyone needs to reach better levels of effectiveness and competitiveness for our beloved country while saving a lot of burdens.

Dr Al-Husseini explained that this proposal might require us to continue the discussions and research after EGOV9 to explore all the potential and generate the desired benefits. Al-Husseini thanked the global and local technology companies and consultants for supporting EGOV during all its sessions. He also appreciated CAIT's partners for continuously supporting its efforts to achieve its eGovernment mission.

UK housing market hit by budget fallout

LONDON: Britain's housing market has been rocked by the UK government's costly budget, as retail banks pull mortgage rates in anticipation of more costly products, sparking fears of tumbling home prices. Homebuyers are gripped by panic after the Bank of England declared it would not hesitate to lift its main interest rate in response to the government's anticipated borrowing splurge that many see as further fuelling sky-high inflation.

'Torrid week'

"It has been a torrid week for the mortgage market," Sarah Coles, personal finance analyst at broker Hargreaves Lansdown, told AFP. Home-loan providers, which offer mortgages based on the central bank's rate, have scrapped about 40 percent of available products since the budget on September 23, according to data provider Moneyfacts.

That equates to more than 1,600 mortgage rates offered for a fixed period of time. Coles said "the market struggled to function normally" as the pound struck a record-low against the dollar following the economic plan announced by the government of new Prime Minister Liz Truss.

The central bank reacted by launching emergency purchases of long-dated UK government bonds as soaring yields put pension funds at risk of collapse. "Lenders withdrew (mortgage) rates for new customers while they waited for the dust to settle," said Coles. "Once things feel more functional, they will be back but at a higher rate."

Major UK bank Barclays said that "due to high



LONDON, United Kingdom: An estate agents' "For Sale" sign is pictured outside of a residential property in north London on September 30, 2022. —AFP

demand" it "withdrew a small number of mortgage products from sale for new customers". For some time, the average mortgage rate has hovered around two percent for a fix lasting between two and five years, according to Moneyfacts. However, those same mortgage deals are now approaching five percent, more than doubling monthly repayment costs.

Added costs

Tom Bill, head of UK residential research at Knight Frank, told AFP that mortgage holders could find themselves paying an additional "hundreds of pounds per month, that they're going to have to find", adding to the cost-of-living crisis. The removal of mortgage deals "is a bitter pill to swallow for those who want to move and those with fixed terms due to end", said Tim Bannister, a director at online property firm Rightmove. "And it will

impact buyers' budgets, especially those who were already stretching themselves."

Richard Donell, executive director of online property group Zoopla, said rising mortgage rates "have been brewing for some time". The Bank of England has in less than a year hiked its interest rate to 2.25 percent from a record-low 0.1 percent in a bid to cool decades-high inflation.

Experts are predicting the BoE's rate will peak close to six percent in the first half of next year. Before the budget, the market consensus forecast had been for a four-percent pinnacle. Analysts are meanwhile predicting that British house prices are heading for a protracted slump after soaring in recent times as demand outpaces supply. The average British home price surged 9.5 percent in September from a year earlier, home loans provider Nationwide revealed on Friday. — KUNA

No Terminator: Musk teases 'useful' humanoid robot

SAN FRANCISCO: Elon Musk on Friday showed off the latest version of a humanoid robot that the world's richest man said could one day eliminate poverty.

An Optimus prototype wheeled on stage during an annual Tesla AI Day presentation was mounted to a small platform. The robot, which remains a work-in-progress, waved to the audience and raised its knees. "Our goal is to make a useful humanoid robot as quick as possible," the billionaire tech pioneer Musk told the audience at the event in Silicon Valley.

"There is still a lot of work to be done." Tesla is adapting its autonomous car technology to give Optimus capabilities such as walking safely or working on a factory floor, company engineers said during the presentation. Another version of the robot, built with off-the-shelf components rather than Tesla-made parts like Optimus, walked slowly onto the stage, pumped its fists and thrust its hips briefly in time with music as if dancing.

"The robot can actually do a lot more than we just showed you, we just didn't want it to fall on its face," Musk quipped. Tesla is designing Optimus robots to be produced at high rates, pushing the price perhaps lower than \$20,000, Musk said.

"This means a future of abundance; a future where there is no poverty, a future where you can have what you want in terms of products and services," Musk said.



SAN FRANCISCO: This video screen grab made from Tesla AI Day 2022 livestream shows Elon Musk standing on stage next to Optimus the humanoid robot in Palo Alto, California on September 30, 2022. —AFP

"It really is a fundamental transformation of civilization as we know it," he said.

Musk, who once warned of artificial intelligence being a threat to humanity, said that Tesla wants to make sure the transition to a society in which robots do the work and people reap the benefits is a safe one. "We always want to be careful we don't go down the Terminator path," he cautioned, referring to a blockbuster film about a killer cyborg and noting that Tesla is building in safeguards including a stop button that can't be tampered with.

He said Tesla will begin testing Optimus on factory floors, doing simple tasks like carrying parts, and that the general public should be able to pur-

chase the robots in three to five years.

Musk contended that Tesla, as a publicly traded company, would be held accountable by its shareholders if they think it isn't being socially responsible. "It's very important that I can't just do what I want. Tesla's structure is ideal for that." Musk was reprimanded by the Securities and Exchange Commission after posting a tweet in 2018, in which he said he had acquired funding to take Tesla private, but did not provide proof or file paperwork with the SEC. Musk is now in a court battle with Twitter over his effort to terminate a \$44 billion deal he made to take the messaging platform private. —AFP

Saudi projects \$297 billion spending in 2023

RIYADH: The Saudi finance ministry projected Friday that the Kingdom will spend about SAR 1.114 billion (approx \$297 billion) in 2023. The preliminary budget, published by the Saudi Ministry of Finance on Saturday, also expected that the total revenues will be about SAR 1,123 billion (about \$299).

It projected a surplus of about SAR 9 billion (nearly \$2 billion), about 0.2 percent of the total GDP, in 2023. The ministry stressed that it continues work to raise the efficiency and effectiveness of spending and fiscal control and to strengthen the Kingdom's fiscal position, through implementing economic and fiscal reforms to materialize goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030.

It argued that the pre-budget statement for the fiscal year 2023 reflects progress in implementing programs and projects that support economic growth and diversification, improving public services, and enhancing programs for welfare and social protection systems. Minister of Finance Mohammad bin Abdullah Al-Jadaan pointed to the development of the public finance structure in the Kingdom over the past years, as the government success in achieving the main objective of fiscal reforms in its first phase within the Fiscal Balance Program, which aimed to control high rates of deficit to reach fiscal balance in the medium term.

The second phase of fiscal reform was launched under the name of the Fiscal Sustainability Program, which aims in the medium and long term to maintain sustainable fiscal indicators, through spending levels that are stable and directed to strategic spending that supports structural change in the economy to achieve the objectives of the Kingdom's Vision 2030.

He added that despite the fears and crises the world is witnessing and the accompanying challenges and their impact on the global economic slowdown affected by the increasing inflationary pressures resulting from the repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic and geopolitical tensions that cast a negative shadow on global supply chains, the strength and durability of the Saudi economy enabled the Kingdom to confront these crises.

The decline in growth rates during the pandemic was limited compared to other countries in the world during 2020, followed by a positive growth of 3.2 percent during 2021, and high growth rates during the first half of 2022, which is the highest in more than ten years, with the expectation of continuing to achieve positive growth rates in various economic activities, as a reflection of many structural reforms and sectoral strategies within the Kingdom's Vision 2030. He stressed that the government attaches great importance to enhancing the social support and protection system to protect citizens from local and global repercussions. He explained that the remarkable and expected recovery in the Kingdom's economy and the continuation of the implementation of the initiatives and structural reforms during the past years will lead to an improvement in economic activity and ensure its sustainability in the medium term. — KUNA

Business

Exhibition of Chinese cars 'Dragon Gear 2022' opens at 360 Kuwait

All Chinese car brands showcased under one roof • Exhibition to run until Oct 8



KUWAIT: China's Economic and Commercial Counselor in Kuwait Cheng Yongru, Chinese officials and representatives of Chinese car brands in Kuwait during the 'Dragon Gear 2022' exhibition at 360 Kuwait. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Chinese cars on display at 'Dragon Gear 2022' exhibition

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: An exhibition of Chinese cars titled 'Dragon Gear 2022' commenced on Sept 28 and will continue until Oct 8 at 360 Kuwait. The exhibition was inaugurated in the presence of Chinese Embassy representatives, including Economic and Commercial Counselor in Kuwait Cheng Yongru. 'Dragon Gear 2022' exhibition is an important concept in Kuwait's car market as the international car market has undergone significant changes over the last few years, with considerable increase in export of cars from China.

Regarding trade relations in the automotive sector between China and Kuwait, Cheng told Kuwait Times that the market value of the exported vehicles from China to Kuwait increased to reach 15 percent compared to the previous years, with 17,859 cars exported to Kuwait in the same year.

"In the first half of 2022, the value of Chinese cars exported to the GCC countries reached \$2.44

billion, an increase of 81 percent, while market volume in the GCC reached 148,000 cars, an increase of 60 percent," Cheng said on the sidelines of the exhibition. "Last year, China produced 26 million cars, while in the same year, China exported more than two million cars worldwide, including new energy vehicles," he added.

"On behalf of the Chinese Embassy, we are happy to see for the first time in Kuwait that all Chinese car brands have come together at one exhibition in this luxurious place, at a time when Chinese cars are becoming more popular in GCC countries and particularly in Kuwait. China has become one of the major global car exporters today," he pointed out.

Cheng expressed his happiness in attending the inauguration of this important exhibition. Chinese cars have achieved outstanding performance and gained good reputation in the Kuwait market, with the presence of 22 car brands in the country. The market share of Chinese cars in Kuwait has increased remarkably over the last few years, overtaking similar



Cheng Yongru

markets. Chinese cars have achieved remarkable performance as far as technology, sturdiness, security and specifications are concerned, making them a main draw for customers and gaining a good reputation in Kuwait.

Most famous international brands are participating in 'Dragon Gear 2022' through local agencies and displaying all the new models for 2022/2023. 'Dragon Gear 2022' showcases new models of the most prestigious brands in China under one roof, as visitors can experience the most modern achievements of China in the automobile sector. At 'Dragon Gear 2022,' the most advanced models of Chinese cars are being exclu-

sively displayed in Kuwait for the first time.

Meanwhile, Pride Media Company, the organizer of the exhibition, in the presence of Director General Usama Abdullah, Executive Director Naseeb Saab, Regional Director Emad Ammar and Marketing Manager Usama Al-Ayassen, expressed happiness in organizing the exhibition, thanking representatives of the Chinese Embassy and Counselor Cheng Yongru for their support and participation in the exhibition.

The company also thanked owners of all car agencies for participating in the exhibition, as well as Gulf Bank, the sponsor of the exhibition. Saab thanked the media and 360 Kuwait for the facilities provided and help extended to ensure the success of the exhibition. Saab said he is proud of the Chinese car agencies that participated in the exhibition, as 'Dragon Gear' is the first-of-its-kind exhibition of Chinese cars in Kuwait. It has the potential to become an annual event, where citizens and residents can find an ideal platform to choose models of Chinese cars according to their needs, he added.

UK finance minister vows 'credible plan' to reduce debt

LONDON: Britain's under-fire finance minister Kwasi Kwarteng has promised to unveil "a credible plan" to lower government debt as he defended his contentious mini-budget that led to market turmoil.

Last month's controversial tax-slashing plans, which will dramatically increase government borrowing, went further than many expected, abolishing the top rate of income tax and lifting a cap on bankers' bonuses. It led to immediate upset in the financial markets, with the pound dropping to its lowest ever level against the dollar.

Kwarteng insisted his ministry will next month unveil a "medium-term fiscal plan" that will set out a path to reducing borrowing, alongside "new fiscal rules and a commitment to spending discipline".

In an article for the Daily Telegraph published late Friday, he noted a full forecast from the country's fiscal watchdog, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), would also accompany the plan on November 23. The lack of an OBR forecast has been cited as one of the reasons for the market tumult that followed the September 23 release of the mini-budget, which cut taxes for the wealthiest amid a cost-of-living crisis.

The turmoil forced the Bank of England to make an emergency intervention to stabilise the situation, amid fears of a collapse in UK pension funds. Opposition politicians, independent analysts and even some Tory lawmakers have assailed the plans as reckless and counter-productive.

But Kwarteng has insisted the package is essential to return the UK, which is tipped to fall into recession imminently, to economic growth. "Not all the measures we announced last week will be universally popular. But we had to do something differ-



LONDON: A member of the public looks at residential properties displayed for sale in the window of an estate agents in London on September 30, 2022. — AFP

ent. We had no other choice," he reiterated in his Telegraph article.

'Iron grip'

However at the same time the article was published online, the S&P ratings agency said it had revised its outlook for the UK from "stable" to "negative" following the fallout from the mini-budget. It cited the risk that "the UK's economic growth turns out weaker due to further deterioration of the economic environment, or if the government's borrowing costs increase more than expected". It comes days after rival ratings agency Moody's warned that Kwarteng's fiscal strategy was "credit negative" and could "permanently weaken the UK's

debt affordability".

Prime Minister Liz Truss has also faced searing criticism over the economic package. After nearly a week of silence, she faced a gruelling round of BBC radio and regional television interviews Thursday, before penning her own newspaper article in The Sun published overnight.

In it, she conceded for the first time that the plans had prompted "short-term disruption", but vowed to press on with them and handle public money with "an iron grip". A poll Friday found half of Britons think she should resign-less than four weeks after taking office-while support for the mini-budget has been in the single digits in some surveys. —AFP

Malaysia flight safety rating with US upgraded

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's aviation safety rating with the United States has been upgraded, an official said Saturday, enabling airlines based in the Southeast Asian country to open new US routes.

The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) downgraded Malaysia in 2019 for failing to meet international standards. A demoted country's carriers cannot expand services to the United States, with airlines flying existing routes there placed under "heightened" surveillance, according to the FAA.

Malaysian Transport Minister Wee Ka Siong said authorities appointed new heads and reformed its civil aviation regulator soon after the downgrade. "Steps were taken to make serious changes," he told a press conference on Saturday. Wee said FAA officials reassessed Malaysia in 2021 and again in mid-July this year, leading to the upgrade.

With the barriers gone, Wee said it was up to airlines to open new routes. Low-cost carrier AirAsia lauded the news, saying it would create more opportunities for expansion to the United States and other countries. "After an industry reset following the pandemic, this announcement could not have come at a better time," said AirAsia Group chief executive Bo Lingam in a statement.

Malaysia currently serves only one route to the United States with AirAsia X, AirAsia's long-haul unit, which flies to Honolulu via the Japanese city of Osaka. —AFP

Hurricane Ian damage toll in the billions, will slow US growth

WASHINGTON: With homes and infrastructure wrecked by wind or flooding and businesses shut down, the destruction left in the wake of Hurricane Ian is expected to cost Florida tens of billions of dollars and hit the broader US economy.

The devastation will weigh on insurance companies in the southern US state, and poses a danger to uninsured homeowners as well. After making landfall on the southwest coast of Florida on Wednesday, Ian brought strong winds and torrential rains, sometimes turning streets into rivers.

The damage estimates remain very preliminary, but it is clear "the hurricane is expected to severely disrupt economic activity over 10 days, with power cuts, flight cancellations, suspension of energy production, impact on farms agricultural crops, in particular oranges," Gregory Daco, economist at EY-Parthenon, told AFP.

He predicted that Ian will slow Florida's economic activity by six percentage points in the third quarter, and shave three-tenths off US GDP. As with all natural disasters, this economic impact will grad-

ually lessen over time, especially when reconstruction efforts get underway, he said.

CoreLogic, a firm that specializes in property analysis, said wind-related losses from residential and commercial properties could cost insurers up to \$32 billion while losses related to flooding could go as high as \$15 billion.

Top 10 list

"This is the costliest Florida storm since Hurricane Andrew made landfall in 1992 and a record number of homes and properties were lost due to Hurricane Ian's intense and destructive characteristics," CoreLogic's Tom Larsen said in a statement. Fitch Ratings and S&P Global Ratings estimate the total cost could amount to \$40 billion.

Meanwhile, Moody's projects losses for insurers could reach \$55 billion, and economic activity lost in Florida could total \$10 billion. The average damage estimate, adjusted for inflation, is \$46 billion, making Ian among the top 10 most costly hurricanes in the United States, according to Moody's, led by Katrina in 2005 (\$160 billion), and Harvey (\$124 billion) and Maria (\$111 billion) in 2017.

These initial estimates do not take into account properties without flood insurance, which represent the vast majority of real estate in Florida, where insurance premiums outstrip those in many other states. Many large insurance companies have reduced their exposure in the state, while smaller



FORT MYERS BEACH, United States: An aerial picture taken on September 30, 2022 shows destroyed houses in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian in Fort Myers Beach, Florida. —AFP

firms have gone bankrupt. National and state agencies often provide emergency aid, such as temporary housing, for impacted families, but the help is limited.

According to data from risk-management firm Milliman provided to AFP on Friday, only 18.5 per-

cent of houses in the counties subject to evacuation orders have policies with the National Flood Insurance Program. The federal government program is available in areas prone to flooding, and offers coverage many private insurance companies do not provide. —AFP

Business

Strong US dollar an unstoppable force endangering other currencies

Fears of a possible currency crash reverberate around the world

NEW YORK: The dazzling rise of the US dollar, which has hit one record after another, is raising fears of a currency crash of a severity not seen since the 1997 Asian financial crisis reverberated around the world. The Federal Reserve's rapid, steep interest rate increases and the relative health of the US economy has caused investors to flood into the dollar, driving the greenback up and sending the British pound, Indian rupee, Egyptian pound and South Korean won and others to uncharted depths. "The moves are definitely getting extreme," said Brad Bechtel of Jefferies, warning that the exchange rates could fall further creating a "dire situation."

Most other major central banks also are forcefully tightening monetary policy to bring down inflation, but so far the moves have not helped stabilize the currency market, nor has Japan's direct intervention to support the yen last week. Many fear that the same will be the case with the Bank of England's plan announced Wednesday to conduct emergency purchases of government bonds to support the pound.

"We have our doubts that the BoE's plan will be the silver bullet to kill all of the angst that has been pressuring the pound... considering its plan doesn't have permanency," said Patrick O'Hare of Briefing.com. Others, especially emerging market countries, are even worse off. The Pakistani rupee has lost 29 percent of its value against the US dollar in the past year, and the Egyptian pound has weakened by 20 percent.

Those countries, and others like Sri Lanka and Bangladesh which "benefitted from cheap and plentiful liquidity," when interest rates were low during the pandemic, "are all suffering from tighter global liquidity," said Win Thin, head of currency strategy at BBH Investor Services.

"Those countries with the weakest fundamentals

are likely to be tested first but others may join them," he warned. Those countries rely on imported oil and grain which have seen prices soar, widening their trade deficits and fueling inflation, massive blows to their currencies.

The appreciation of the US currency has exacerbated the problem, since many commodities are denominated in dollars. Already in a fragile position, Pakistan was hit with historic flooding in August, which prompted the government to discuss a restructuring of its debt.

"There are severe pressures on the financial system now. And it's only a matter of time until there's a larger crisis somewhere in the world," warns Adam Button of ForexLive.

Bad memories

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen earlier this week said she has not yet seen signs of "disorderly" financial market developments amid the interest rate hikes. For countries like Taiwan, Thailand or South Korea, which also dependent on energy imports, China's zero-Covid policy has caused their exports to this key trading partner to plummet.

Larger economies like China and Japan have contributed in recent weeks to the turbulence on the foreign exchange market. The Japanese yen plunged its lowest level in 24 years, while the Chinese yuan hit its weakest in 14 years.

Fear of destabilization brings back memories of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, which was triggered by the devaluation of the Thai baht. Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia followed, which panicked foreign investors and led to massive outflows of capital, pushing several countries into a severe recession and South Korea to the brink of default.

At the time, the collapse of the baht was in part linked to its fixed parity with the dollar, which forced the Thai government to support its currency,



WASHINGTON: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen speaks at the Atlantic Festival. —AFP

depleting its foreign exchange reserves, which was unsustainable in the face of market forces.

Argentina eventually was forced to abandon its peg to the dollar and defaulted in late 2001 — the largest sovereign default in history. Erik Nelson of Wells Fargo said that is a key difference between 2022 and 1997. "Now there's not a lot of fixed exchange rates," he said. "I'm frankly more worried about developed markets right now."

Lebanon, one of the few to still peg its currency

to the greenback, on Thursday announced a drastic devaluation, taking the country's pound to 15,000 to the dollar from the previous fixed value of 1,507.

In the United States, by contrast, where inflation has soared to a 40-year high "the Fed sees strong dollar as a blessing," said Christopher Vecchio of DailyFX, noting that it helps "insulate the economy from more significant price pressures." A strong currency means the country pays less for its imported products. —AFP

Biden ramps up aid in Pacific Islands summit

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden has announced \$810 million in new funding for Pacific Islands at a first-of-a-kind summit with their leaders in Washington, vowing a closer partnership with a strategic but sparsely populated region where China is making inroads.

Addressing leaders of South Pacific states including 12 heads of state or government, Biden said Thursday he wanted to show an "enduring commitment." "The security of America, quite frankly, and the world depends on your security," he said. Alluding to China's rise in Asia, Biden said, "A great deal of the history of our world is going to be written in the Indo-Pacific over the coming years and decades, and the Pacific Islands are a critical voice in shaping that future."

The United States has been the key player in the South Pacific since its World War II victory. But with Washington often seen as taking the region for granted, China has asserted itself strongly through investment, police training and, most controversially, a security pact with the Solomon Islands.

Among US pledges at the summit was \$20 million for Solomon Islands to develop tourism. In contrast to China's hands-off mercantilism, the four-year US program will focus on empowering women and finding alternatives to logging. China on Friday brushed off questions about the deal, but said Pacific island nations "should not become pawns in the games of great powers."

"We hope the US can sincerely provide support for Pacific island countries to face climate change and achieve development... instead of playing geopolitical games in the name of cooperation," Beijing's foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a briefing.

'Existential' climate threat

The bulk of the new funding, at \$600 million, will be in the form of a 10-year package across the South Pacific to clean up and develop dirty waters to support the tuna industry. The United States will also step up support to adapt to climate change, with Biden telling the leaders, "I know your nations feel it acutely—for you all, it's an existential threat."

Biden separately announced that the United States would recognize Cook Islands and Niue, a self-governing territory whose foreign and defense policies and currency are linked to New Zealand. The step will allow the United States to increase its diplomatic footprint in the Cook Islands and Niue, which have fewer than 20,000 inhabitants but constitute a sprawling economic zone in the South Pacific.

Launching a new strategy for engagement, Biden also designated a veteran US ambassador in the region, Frankie Reed, as the first-ever US envoy to the Pacific Islands Forum. The United States earlier announced the restoration of an embassy in the Solomon Islands and the White House said Thursday that US embassies would also open in Tonga and Kiribati. —AFP

Mixed day for stocks as European inflation soars

NEW YORK: Global stocks finished mixed after another volatile week, with European bourses rallying despite troubling inflation data and Wall Street continuing to retreat. Eurozone consumer prices skyrocketed by a record 10 percent in September, official data showed, reaching double digits amid soaring energy prices caused by Russia's war on Ukraine.

Stoked by a staggering 40.8 percent rise in energy prices, the yearly inflation rate in the 19-country single currency area hit its highest level since records began, according to Eurostat.

Nevertheless, markets in Paris and Frankfurt ended the day with gains of over one percent, pushing higher after recent losses. London stocks also ended the day with a small gain as the British pound advanced again following the Bank of England's surprise intervention in the bond market Wednesday after sterling sank to an all-time low against the dollar.

"Sterling has been all over the place this week," said Fawad Razaqzada, analyst at City Index and Forex.com. "For traders, the pound is a confusing arena to be in right now."

A poll Friday showed 51 percent of people think new UK Prime Minister Liz Truss should quit after championing a large tax cut in a bid to boost the economy that drew an unusual public rebuke from the International Monetary Fund. The controversial economic package, which will dramatically increase government borrowing, also unusually lacked an accompanying cost analysis forecast from the country's fiscal watchdog, the Office of Budget Responsibility.

Back in New York, major indices again finished decisively lower to conclude another difficult week defined by worries over inflation and the worsening Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Meanwhile, a closely-watched measure of US inflation released Friday showed the annual pace of price increases slowed slightly in August compared with the prior month. However, the inflation rate still exceeded analyst expectations, a dynamic that will likely keep the Federal Reserve on its current path to hike interest rates aggressively. The yield on the 10-year US Treasury note, a proxy for interest rates, rose closer to four percent. In Asia, Shanghai dropped as data showed China's manufacturing and



BEIRUT: A money changer counts notes at his shop in the Lebanese capital Beirut on September 22, 2022.

services sectors struggled again in September from COVID lockdowns in parts of the country that have battered the world's number-two economy. There was also little reaction to news that Beijing would allow some cities to reduce mortgage rates for first-home purchases as it tries to support the property market.

Market sentiment continues to be eroded by rising fears about developments in the Ukraine war, as Russia annexed four occupied regions of its neighbor Friday, with President Vladimir Putin threatening to use nuclear weapons to defend the territories. —AFP



LuLu Hypermarket holds LuLu World Food Fest 2022

KUWAIT: LuLu Hypermarket, the premier destination for discerning shoppers in the region, organized the LuLu World Food Fest 2022 promotion, a mega celebration of global foods, from 28 September to 4 October at all outlets of the brand. The event was inaugurated on 28 September at the Al-Rai outlet of LuLu Hypermarket by renowned Indian actor, TV host, global traveler and chef, Raj Kalesh, and the famous chef and influencer Jameela Allenquawi in the presence of top management of LuLu Hypermarket in Kuwait and the representatives of sponsors of the event.

Adding to the excitement of the inauguration event were a series of activities, including a live-demo by leading chefs; street-food counters at all outlets of the hypermarket; a Desi Dhaba, which featured the best of North Indian cuisine, a Malabar Chayakada and Thattukada, where one could taste the authentic flavors of Kerala; and, a Bakery Bread House selling oven-fresh bread and other baked specialties.

The LuLu World Food Fest promotion was inau-



gurated at the other outlets of the brand with a cake cutting ceremony, and with a variety of incredible events. Some of the crowd-attracting activities lined up at the various outlets, included the cutting of the largest pizza; the biggest shawarma, and the biggest burger, as well as the largest sandwich.

Amazing discounts and special offers on a wide range of food products from around the world was the highlight of the week-long promotion. Several side events were held as part of the LuLu World Food Fest promotion, including a cake mixing ceremony that was held on 29 September at the AlDajeej branch. The ceremony saw the chief guest Kalesh joining LuLu chefs to mix-in the exotic fresh fruits, dried fruits, juices and flavors that go into LuLu's famous Xmas and New Year plum

cakes each year. Other contests and competitions that were held during the week-long LuLu World Food Fest promotion included a 'Wow the Master Chefs' contest that was held on 28 September at the Al-Rai outlet. On the occasion, the chief guest Kalesh interacted with the contestants and judged the competition to pick the winner.

A Junior Chef contest, a 'Taste and Win' competition, a 'Health Food' competition, and a 'Cake Challenge' contest was also held at LuLu outlets during the promotion period. The food festival competitions continued until 4 October with exciting prizes provided to the winners of the competitions and contests. The main sponsors and supporters of the week-long LuLu World Fest 2022 were Al-Wazan, Country, IFFCO, KITCO, Seara and Americana.



Karim Kerawala watches as people play pickleball at a public court in Brooklyn, New York. A game that's easy to pick up and more accessible than tennis, pickleball is all the rage in New York, as the sport snags investors and grows increasingly professionalized across the United States. —AFP photos



Karim Kerawala poses for a photo.

Pickleball phenomenon takes over New York

A game that's easy to pick up and more accessible than tennis, pickleball is all the rage in New York, as the sport snags investors and grows increasingly professionalized across the United States. On a recent weekday evening at the foot of the Brooklyn Bridge, dozens of players ranging from thirty-somethings to retirees shared the four new courts at Brooklyn Bridge Park, which recently replaced the bocce ball courts.

Teams form spontaneously as players wait their turn at the park space that offers a unique view of Manhattan's brightly lit skyscrapers. "You come here, put your paddle over there, and you get to play with a range of people, beginner and intermediate," said 52-year-old Amy Zhao with a smile.

With its neon perforated plastic ball, flat paddle rackets and obligatory underhand serve, pickleball is a kind of "mini tennis," especially due to its smaller-sized court. It's also much cheaper: David Masters took up pickleball when he realized it cost \$100 to snag a spot to play tennis at a New York public park.

"And also, you had to wake up at like 6:00 am just to reserve a court," said the 31-year-old software engineer. Beyond tennis, pickleball takes on airs of both badminton and ping-pong, with lightning-fast exchanges that demand quick reflexes.

What's more, players must strategically



People play pickleball at a public court.

position on the court: competitors can't hit the ball before it bounces if it lands in a non-volley zone that's just in front of the net. The game was invented in 1965 by three fathers in the state of Washington.

In February, the Sports & Fitness Industry Association deemed it the fastest growing sport in the United States, with 4.8 million regular or casual players in 2021, up

39 percent from 2019.

Professionalization

The growth in New York is visible, with new courts popping up throughout the city and where private coaches have even become in demand, some running upwards of \$75 per hour. "During the pandemic, people wanted to get activities. And it felt like pickle-



A perforated plastic ball used to play pickleball is displayed.

ball was one that checked a lot of boxes," said 33-year-old Karim Kerawala.

"It let them be outside and let them compete in something that didn't require a ton of exercise, unless you wanted... higher level play," Kerawala said. Calling pickleball his "new obsession," he said a meet-up app saw membership numbers go from around 200 to nearly 2,000 in one year.

A number of "professional" circuits have already arisen, including the APP tour that was founded in 2019. At the end of May the league organized a tournament at Flushing Meadows, on the grounds of the US Open.

According to Ken Herrmann, founder of the APP Tour, interest and skill is such that qualifying tournaments are starting to become necessary for professional events. The competing PPA Tour, founded in 2018, signed exclusive contracts with the 24 best players in the sport, both men and women.

They distributed \$3 million in prize money in 2022, a sum that could double in 2023, said Hannah Johns, the PPA Tour's content director. "It's been absolutely crazy, how much it's taken off. And a lot of that is because we were able to get bigger sponsors and broadcast partners involved," Johns said, citing CBS, NBC and ABC among the networks and the car rental company Hertz as a brand.

And with the already announced takeover of the PPA Tour by the private investment firm founded by businessman Tom Dundon—who already owns the Carolina Hurricanes ice hockey team—Johns vows future partners in the world of alcohol and gambling to come.

Major League Pickleball announced this week it's joining forces with NBA phenom LeBron James, who is purchasing a team as part of an ownership group that includes fellow basketball champions Draymond Green and Kevin Love. —AFP

Genies not genius: Turkey's low-budget horror flicks boom



Film critic and Istanbul Kultur University academic Dr Gizem Simsek Kaya poses for a photograph during an interview with AFP, in Istanbul. —AFP photos

Knelling before a chalk star outside his tumbledown house, an old man performs a ritual to rid himself of evil spirits—which many superstitious Turks believe exist. Perched behind the camera, director Metin Kuru tries to encourage the actor to convey the sheer agony of being possessed by a genie.

But there won't be many takes, because Kuru needs to finish his film fast to feed Turkey's voracious appetite for low-budget horror flicks, with a new supernatural chiller released every week. "At the end of the day, I try to produce films with as few technical issues as possible," Kuru told AFP between scenes of "Muhr-u Musallat 2 — Yasak Dugun" ("Sealed Invasion 2 — Forbidden Wedding").

Filming many of the scenes in the dark helps. "The colour palette of horror movies is not as varied, which allows filmmakers to shoot with cheaper cameras, less light and smaller crews," Kuru said. This year alone, 60 new homegrown horror movies will hit screens in Turkey, where demand for entertainment has not waned despite—or maybe because of—the economic crises gripping the country.

Few horror films were made until the 1990s, their growth coinciding with the rise of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Islamic-rooted AKP party.

Superstitions

Its coming to power in 2002 after decades of more secular governments helped let the genie out of the bottle, with more religious Turks—and plenty of secu-



Members of the crew and actors work on "Forbidden Wedding" during filming in Buyukorhan, on the outskirts of Bursa.

lar ones—lapping up superstitious tales that were previously frowned on.

Film critic Gizem Simsek Kaya believes there may be a link between the horror boom and broader social shifts in Turkey. "The drive to brush aside superstition and come closer to science (of modern Turkey's founders) began to regress in the late 1990s," Kaya said.

Religious-themed horror movies became popular with "Buyu" ("The Spell") in 2004, and reached an even bigger audience with the launch of the big-budget "Dabbe" series in 2006. Director Hasan Karacadag made six "Dabbe" films, the last in 2015, breaking Turkish box office records.

Other blockbusters followed from the equally popular "Siccin" franchise from director Alper Mestci. "Some Islamic tendencies and the rising tide of conservatism play a role in this," Kaya said.

False idols

Turkish horror films mostly revolve around jinns or genies—potentially mischievous spirits that are a part of Islamic myths and theology. This can be tricky for makeup artists like Yesim Vatansever. Not only are genies supposed to be invisible, but there are also more than 70 types, making depicting them a challenge.

"It would be much easier to visualise, say, an alien," Vatansever said. Film critic Kaya, who teaches at Istanbul's Kultur University, said vampire movies do not work in Turkey because of religious sensitivities. The idea of the living dead "in Islam is



Members of the crew work on "Forbidden Wedding".

equal to committing shirk," or the sin of idolatry, she said. It may not have helped either the inspiration for the Dracula, the mediaeval Romanian ruler Vlad the Impaler, got his gory nickname from impaling Turks. Ghosts and zombies also have issues.

"In Islam the dead body is only seen covered in a shroud. When you try to resurrect something, it has to remove the shroud and walk naked," Kaya said. In one movie, Kaya recalled, a resurrected man who threw off his shroud put on some trousers he found on the street. "The moment he did that, the movie turned into a comedy," she said.

Tiny budgets

These limitations can make Turkish horror movies look dreadful, Kaya lamented. "They are shot in a few days, the equipment is poor, and the film can come out blurry," she said. "I had never seen the words 'error code' accidentally appear in a movie" until it turned up in a Turkish horror flick this year, she said. Screenwriter Ozlem Bolukbasi conceded that the films were not cinematic masterpieces. "The budgets and production values are not high," she said. "But do we still draw audiences? Yes, we do," she added.

Back on set with the old man possessed by a jinn, local villagers had flocked to see the filming. "It's fun. The whole town is here at the moment," said Huseyin Aydemir, who runs a local restaurant in Buyukorhan, near Bursa in northwestern Turkey. "A cemetery scene was shot here two days ago. The locals went to the scene hours before the film crew." —AFP



Trevor Noah

Trevor Noah to leave The Daily Show

The Daily Show host Trevor Noah will leave the satirical news program after seven years, he said Thursday, giving no timetable for his exit. "My time is up," the 38-year-old said in video on the show's Twitter account.

The South African comedian said he missed traveling after being grounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. "I spent two years in my apartment, not on the road," he said. "I realized there's another part of my life that I want to carry on exploring."

The show rose to prominence under former host Jon Stewart, who hosted the show for 16 years before leaving in 2015. It came as a surprise to many when relatively unknown Noah was announced as Stewart's replacement.

There have been no indications of who will take over from Noah. "With no timetable for his departure, we're working together on next steps," said Paramount Global cable network, which owns the Comedy Central show, in a statement to US media. Noah detailed his upbringing in apartheid-era South Africa as the son of a black South African mother and a white Swiss-German father in "Born a Crime," his 2016 best-selling memoir.

"I've loved hosting this show, it's been one of my greatest challenges and one of my greatest joys," Noah said. —AFP

Victoria Beckham makes star-studded debut in Paris



Models present creations for the Victoria Beckham Spring-Summer 2023 fashion show during the Paris Womenswear Fashion Week, in Paris, on September 30, 2022. —AFP photos



Victoria Beckham made her debut at Paris Fashion Week on Friday with a five-star cast of models, her family on the front row and a collection filled with edgy sophistication. The former Spice Girl, 48 — who has been away from the catwalk for two years—is hoping that joining the most prestigious date in the fashion calendar can help pull her business out of debt.

She sent superstar model Bella Hadid out in an elegant green dress with long latex gloves, while her sister was dressed in a black trouser suit. Beckham herself did not appear on the catwalk at the end of the show as is normal at fashion week.

Instead, she mixed with the crowd afterwards in the courtyard of the venue, the Val-de-Grace abbey, on the arm of husband David Beckham—a rare move in the usually cordoned-off world of high fashion, and underlining her down-to-earth approach.

“It’s London coming to Paris, and it’s cool,” she was heard saying to the crowd as she posed for pictures with son Brooklyn and his new wife Nicola Peltz. On the catwalk, it was all heightened femininity: Stilettos, cutouts, sheer tops, tight dresses—and presented with a very traditional array of rake-thin models, not far from the stylist’s own image. Pink, blue, mauve and lilac—there were spring colours among the black that is most dear to Beckham.

French makeover

Beckham’s sophisticated office and evening wear has been a surprise hit with fashionistas ever since her debut show in 2008, confounding those who expected her to be another celebrity dilettante. She has mostly presented her clothes in New York, apart

from a brief dalliance with London.

But despite having 250 global outlets selling her clothes, 30 million followers on Instagram and one of the most famous husbands in the world, Beckham’s company has always struggled to turn a profit.

In a bid to turn things around, she has recruited top French talent: her chairman is Ralph Toledano, ex-president of the French Federation for Haute Couture and Fashion, and her CEO is Marie Leblanc de Reynies, former lead buyer at Paris shopping mecca Printemps.

“Victoria is not from the fashion world. She threw herself into the business and at a certain point, she needed to structure, organise and bring some order to the house, which is what we’ve been doing for the past four years,” Toledano told AFP.

Chic office and evening wear was always going to struggle during the pandemic, and reports this summer showed the label had £54 million in debt, and had to cut prices and staff to stay afloat.

But a successful cosmetics line, launched in 2019, has helped trim losses, and the team hopes to break even in the coming months. “We’ve defined a strategy, combined two pret-a-porter lines, found the right price-point... now it’s time to enter the big league,” said Toledano.

Paris Fashion Week is a way for Beckham to validate her status “as a designer and not just a celebrity,” said Benjamin Simmenauer, a professor at the French Institute of Fashion. She joins fellow Brits Vivienne Westwood and Stella McCartney in the official Paris calendar, as well as rising stars such as Craig Green. —AFP



Photo legend Martin Parr compares himself to amateurs in expo

His kitschy colour-saturated images have made him one of the most beloved figures in photography, and at 70, Britain’s Martin Parr is still having fun. Parr’s latest exhibition, at the Magnum Gallery in Paris, is an excellent example of his playful approach—setting his pictures alongside those of amateur photographers without telling visitors which is which.

“Photography is very democratic. These people are taking just as good pictures as me, almost by coincidence, but they’re doing it because they want to record it—and that’s partly my motive as well,” Parr told AFP. The exhibition was born from “The Anonymous Project” by curator Lee Schulman, who has collected and examined some 800,000 ama-

teur slides taken between 1950 and 1980. Schulman narrowed the selection down to 25,000, which were digitised, with 64 finally selected for the exhibition. Each is paired with a photo by Parr, but there are no captions to tell them apart. They mirror the sort of everyday life that has been Parr’s bread and butter: Bathers asleep in the sun, old men dancing with balloons, cakes and plates of fries forgotten on a table. “I feel connected to the history of satire and humour in the UK. It’s something we do quite well,” said Parr. “There’s a bit of mischief in my pictures, and I think that’s why people in France like them, because they get an opportunity to poke fun at the English. “And I’m very happy to provide that catalyst,” he added with a smile.

‘Another planet’

Parr has been a member of the renowned Magnum agency since 1994, but his light-hearted attitude disguises the fact that he ruffled many feathers in his early days. He began fairly conventionally in the 1970s, taking formal black-and-white shots that aped the great masters of the time such as France’s Henri Cartier-Bresson.

But he found himself drawn to the amusing seaside postcards and other kitsch items of everyday Britain. His focus changed, and also his style. “Once I tried colour, I never looked back,” he said. Parr began using flash, even outdoors, giving a raw tint to his photos.

The results often bemused his established peers.

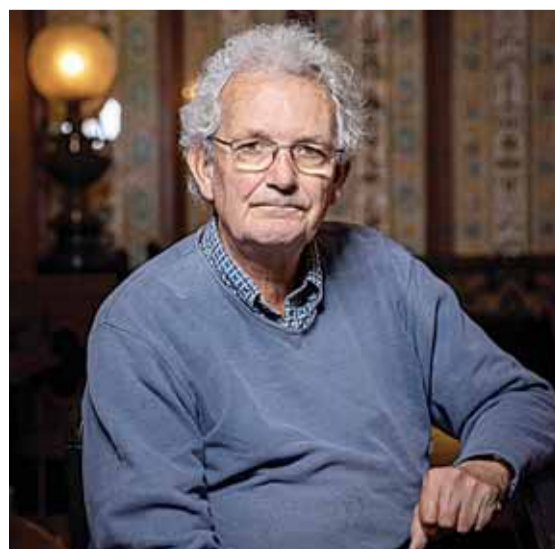
“Cartier-Bresson came to a show I did, and he wrote that he didn’t like the show. It was in colour,” recalled Parr. “He said I came from another planet and I wrote back to him and said: ‘I understand your feelings, but don’t shoot the messenger’”

Cartier-Bresson was among several photographers who tried to block Parr’s entry into the Magnum agency. But Parr had supporters and he squeaked through the vote—and years later, he would end up chairing the organisation.

The story of this little dispute and its happy ending will be the subject of another exhibition opening in Paris in November entitled “Reconciliation”, at the Cartier-Bresson Foundation. —AFP



A woman takes a picture of a photograph displayed at the “Deja view” exhibition featuring the Anonymous Project and Martin Parr at the Magnum Photo Gallery in Paris.



British photographer Martin Parr poses at the Bourg Tibourg Hotel in Paris.



A woman visits the “Deja view” exhibition featuring the Anonymous Project and Martin Parr at the Magnum Photo Gallery in Paris. —AFP photos

Fast and furious no more? Bangkok's infamous No. 8 bus



File photo shows a row of No.8 buses waiting to leave the Saphan Phut bus stop in Bangkok. —AFP photos



Passengers seen on the No.8 bus in Bangkok.



Bus conductor Arunee On-sawats with her two sons as she takes a break at the end of the route.

A “Pink Devil” roars down Bangkok’s busy streets, furiously overtaking tuk-tuks, cars and motorbikes, narrowly avoiding a collision as it slows to allow passengers to scramble on before veering back into the capital’s hectic traffic. Welcome aboard the No. 8 bus.

Infamous in the Thai capital, the No.8 route has spawned parody songs, viral TikToks, horrified YouTube videos and even a feature-length Fast & Furious-style film. Now the old-fashioned diesel buses are being phased out and replaced with cleaner electric models.

But the hair-raising antics of the “Pink Devils”, as Thais call them, mask the tough conditions for overworked drivers incentivised to complete their routes as fast as possible. “It is a competition,” said driver Aphisak Sodmui, who has helmed his “hot” bus-as the non-airconditioned, usually open-windowed models are known-for the past decade.

Roughly 60 such buses work the 30-kilometre (18-mile) route, charging passengers 10 baht (\$0.27) going north-south-part of Bangkok’s wider network that carries roughly 700,000 people a day.

A succession of high-profile No.8

deaths in recent years have raised calls for reform and now new firms are overhauling the system, promising an improved service and replacing the buses with electric vehicles.

But with a global ranking of ninth-highest in road fatalities according to the World Health Organization, Bangkok’s new governor Chadchart Sittipunt has a long journey ahead in his attempts to clean up the traffic-choked megalopolis.

And it does not look like the No.8 will shake its reputation so easily-one of the newly inaugurated buses has already crashed, though no one was injured.

‘Not frightening’

The problem, according to Thai transport expert Sumet Ongkittikul, lies with the private firms who lease the route concession from the central Bangkok Mass Transit Authority (BMTA). Under their management, drivers are given a share of the ticket sales for each journey, on top of their salaries.

“So it is very logical that each driver tries to rush to get as many passengers as possible,” he explained. “Even within the company the drivers are racing each other to get the passengers.”

No.8 driver Aphisak supplements his daily wage of between 150-200 baht (roughly \$5) with 10 percent of the daily ticket sales. “We have to com-

plete the route at least four times a day for us to have enough money to live,” Aphisak said.



Bus driver Aphisak “Boy” Sodmui and his wife, bus conductor Arunee On-Sawats, behind him in the mirror as he drives the No.8 bus in Bangkok.

But Sumet believes this sort of

behaviour is on the way out with the upgrade. “What we hope is that the new operator will give more attention to training their drivers... to behave better,” he said. Denying the No.8’s reputation, Yothin Wuttisakchaikul-whose family manages one of the routes-blamed it instead on online commenters who have

“never used this bus service before”. “Actual passengers would know the actual service of Bus No.8,” he said, adding that while drivers competed, “it is not to a frightening degree”.

‘Definitely improved’

It’s 3:30 am at a bus depot in the city’s northeast, and Aphisak and his family are preparing for the day. He starts his shift at 4:00 am, clambering aboard with partner and bus conductor Arunee On-sawats and-on the day AFP accompanied them-their two boys, 11-year-old Phan and eight-year-old Mon.

As a No.8 driver he will not finish until 9:00 pm or later if there is rain or heavy traffic-two near-daily guarantees in Bangkok. Aphisak-who like his children grew up on buses with his conductor father-said he has never collided with cars, but admits that “pick-up trucks mostly crashed the bus I was driving in”.

Customer Sai Pin, 47, said she had seen a change since the transition to the new buses-which now have a slightly higher fare of 15 baht (\$0.39). “With the old buses, you might encounter lots of fast driving. The new buses have definitely improved on that,” she told. —AFP

Nature’s cleaners: Cyprus returns rare vultures to wild



A Griffon vulture flies after being released alongside seven others into the skies from a holding pen in the village of Korfi in the highlands of Limassol district in southern Cyprus. —AFP photos



Wildlife vet Constantinos Antoniou holds a Griffon vulture.



A Griffon vulture sits inside a holding pen before its release.

With a wingspan as wide as a basketball hoop is tall, it took just a few flaps for the vulture to soar to freedom towards the glittering seas off Cyprus. Griffon vultures, birds that perform the vital job of clearing carcasses that could otherwise spread disease, are on the “brink of extinction” on the Mediterranean island due to poisoning, experts warn.

But 15 have been returned to the wild in recent weeks in a bid to boost numbers, nearly tripling the population to an estimated 23, helping restore an iconic species critical to the health of the ecosystem. “They are nature’s clean-up crew,” said Melpo Apostolidou, from BirdLife Cyprus, an environmental group coordinating the vulture reintroduction programme.

“They provide an efficient, cost-effective and environmentally beneficial carcass disposal service.” With a white head and graceful sand-coloured wings stretching up to 2.8 metres (over nine feet) they are as majestic as eagles.

The eight birds released on Wednesday were the last of a batch of 15 birds, rehabilitated after being injured as juveniles in Spain before being brought to Cyprus. Since December, they were acclimatizing in an aviary in the hills some 15 kilometres (10 miles) from the port city of Limassol.

‘Nothing to be afraid of’

Vultures are scavengers not hunters, neatly cleaning up fallen carcasses before they rot in the sun. A dozen birds-known collectively as a “wake” of vultures-can clean a single sheep carcass in an hour. They do have an image problem: their eating habits of dining on the dead means some see their sinister harbingers of doom.

But wildlife vet Constantinos Antoniou said there

was no cause for alarm. “They are an integral part of our ecosystem, and have been for thousands of years,” Antoniou said, who provided technical support for the release, including fixing GPS trackers to their backs.

“Unless you are dead, you have nothing to be afraid of, because vultures feed only on carcasses: they have no interest in humans or pets.” Once they were a common sight over Cyprus. In the 1950s, there were several hundred birds across the island.



Vets attach a GPS tracker onto the back of a Griffon vulture.

But amid poisoning, hunting, habitat loss, disturbance of breeding colonies and birds flying into electricity wires, numbers had crashed to just eight earlier this year. “Poisoning is a big problem,” said Andreas Christoforou, a government wildlife protection officer, who with sniffer dog Sophie searches for illegally-laid poison placed by farmers and hunters to kill foxes and feral dogs.

“Those laying poison face punishment, but it is

hard to catch them.” Christoforou and Sophie, a border collie, have located some 10 poisoned baits in the past six months.

He explained that since vultures often feast together, one poisoned carcass can wipe out several. In May, at least three vultures were found dead after eating poison.

‘Flagship species’

If vultures went extinct, it could impact our own health and well-being in the long-run, said Haris Hadjstyliis, from the Game and Fauna Service. “In the past they were seen as very helpful because they were so important in clearing carcasses, removing sources otherwise of bacterial disease,” Hadjstyliis said.

“We cannot ignore history, for we never know what we might face in the future... everything that exists has a reason to exist, with a role to play in the ecosystem.” Today, livestock carcasses are collected for cremation, but feeding them to vultures could provide a simpler and eco-friendlier way, even reducing greenhouse gas emissions, experts from BirdLife argue.

In time, conservationists hope the vultures could bring in revenues through tourism, noting that feeding platforms in Spain have become popular for visitors. The birds were released as part of a wider 1.3 million euro programme, largely from the European Union’s environment and climate action fund, to boost key species in a bid to restore ecosystems.

As the birds were freed, another vulture released in a previous batch soared on the other side of the valley, as if waiting for the rest to join. “These are a flagship species, and if we are losing a flagship species, what is happening to the rest of biodiversity?” said Apostolidou. “It is a huge battle.” —AFP

Tribute to Issey Miyake at Paris Fashion Week

Japanese label Issey Miyake paid tribute to its late founder at Paris Fashion Week on Friday with the sort of choreographed dance show that he pioneered. A black and white portrait of Miyake, who died last month at the age of 84, was projected on the walls and the show began solemnly with sober monochrome outfits.

But the dancers turned to floatier, lighter outfits and a more dreamlike atmosphere as the show went on-reflecting the label’s trademark style. It was in the 1990s that Miyake teamed up with famed choreographer William Forsythe to put dancers among the models for a catwalk show.

It was unprecedented at the time-but is now common, as seen at the Dior show earlier this week. Miyake, who was focused on clothes that allowed freedom of movement, also worked with the choreographer on costumes for his ballet “The Loss of Small Detail” in 1991.

The collection presented on Friday was inspired by sculpture, with three-dimensional silhouettes made with a single piece of fabric and prints created from clay shapes applied by hand to the fabric to provide relief and texture.

The house also introduced a new material, called “vegetable polyester”, which does not use petroleum products. —AFP

Sports

Rusty Warriors beat Wizards in Japan to open pre-season

Warriors overpower Wizards in NBA's first overseas game

SAITAMA: Golden State Warriors head coach Steve Kerr said it was "fun to be part of" Friday's pre-season opening win over the Washington Wizards in Japan, despite a rusty performance from the NBA champions. The Warriors beat the Wizards 96-87 in front of a packed arena in Saitama, north of Tokyo, in the NBA's first overseas game since the pandemic began.

The reigning champions missed more than two-thirds of their attempted three-point shots but Kerr said he saw "a lot of good stuff" from his team, who will attempt to win their fifth title in nine years when the new season begins next month. "It looked like a game where both teams had had three or four practices - it was a typical first game of pre-season," said Kerr. "The players don't have their legs underneath them yet but there's a lot of good stuff that happened for us."

Last season's NBA Finals Most Valuable Player Stephen Curry and forward Draymond Green both started for the Warriors but managed only 10 points between them. Klay Thompson, who missed more than two years through injury and returned to action in January this year, did not play. Kerr said

Thompson would also take no part in Sunday's second game against the Wizards as a precaution against further injury.

"It's just common sense, coming off the two years with the injuries," said Kerr. "This is really unique to play a game after three and a half practices, so we're just being cautious and trying to do the smart thing." The Wizards started with Japanese star Rui Hachimura in their line-up and he was given a rapturous welcome by the home crowd. Hachimura scored a team-high 13 points and he said it "meant a lot" to play in front of a crowd after competing at last year's pandemic-affected Tokyo Olympics in an empty arena.

"I was dreaming about it since I was a kid," said the 24-year-old. "I was so happy and it was a big moment for me and for this country." Kerr, who was a coach on the United States team that won Olympic gold at the same venue last year, also enjoyed the occasion. "It was beautiful - every seat was packed and the crowd was so into it," he said. "Before the game, when the players went out onto the floor, seeing all the flashbulbs and the people so excited was a great moment." —AFP



SAITAMA: Washington Wizards Daniel Gafford (2nd left) goes for the basket during the NBA Japan Games 2022 pre-season basketball game between the Golden State Warriors and the Washington Wizards at the Saitama Super Arena in Saitama on September 30, 2022. —AFP

News in brief

Bezzecchi grabs MotoGP pole

BURIRAM: Italian rookie Marco Bezzecchi clinched his first MotoGP pole position on Saturday as he scorched his way to a lap record in Thailand, with title contender Francesco Bagnaia qualifying third. It will be an all-Ducati front row for Sunday's 26-lap race at Buriram after Bezzecchi, 23, set a best time of one minute 29.671 seconds, pipping Spaniard Jorge Martin by 0.021 seconds and Bagnaia (0.104 sec). World champion Fabio Quartararo was fourth-fastest on his Yamaha. "I didn't know that I was pole position because I couldn't see the big screen in the sun," Bezzecchi said after qualifying in style late in the second session. "It's unbelievable, big emotions. I'm very proud to make it." Italy's Bagnaia, who is second in the standings at 18 points behind France's Quartararo with four races left, was in confident mood. "We did a good job. We had a good pace, we are ready for tomorrow," he said.

Athletic thrash Almeria

BILBAO: Ernesto Valverde said it was Athletic Bilbao's players who deserved the praise after a thumping 4-0 win over Almeria on Friday night, which saw the team rise to third in La Liga. The coach returned for his third spell at the helm under new president Jon Uriarte in the summer and has enjoyed a strong start to the season. Athletic also scored four goals against Cadiz and Elche, racking up 16 goals in the first seven matches and increasing optimism they could finish in the upper echelons of the table. "The players have found the solution, it is them who score the goals, not me," said Valverde. "If you generate chances in the top flight, given the quality of the players, it's normal that they score goals. The hard thing is to generate the chances, that's why I was calm when sometimes goals haven't gone in." Brothers Inaki Williams and Nico Williams were on target, while Oihan Sancet and Mikel Vesga also scored in the San Mames romp.

Tallawahs romp to CPL title

PARIS: West Indies opener Brandon King smashed 83 not out to help the Jamaica Tallawahs win the Caribbean Premier League title with an eight-wicket victory over the Barbados Royals on Friday. Chasing 162 to win, the Tallawahs eased to their target with 23 balls to spare as King hit 13 fours and two sixes in his 50-ball innings. It was the team's third CPL triumph, but first since 2016, and left the Royals on two titles. King's international teammate Shamarh Brooks made a 33-ball 47 as the pair put on 86 for the second wicket. Earlier, Barbados could only post 161-7 after tight Jamaica bowling saw Jason Holder battle to 17 off 19 balls and Afghan batter Najibullah Zadran muster just six from 12 deliveries. The Royals had been given a flying start, with Raheem Cornwall falling to Windies all-rounder Fabian Allen for 36 to leave them already 63-1 at the end of the powerplay.

Hull surges into lead

LOS ANGELES: Charley Hull maintained her blistering recent form to surge into a two-shot lead Friday at the halfway stage of the LPGA Tour's Volunteers of America Classic. English star Hull fired a seven-under-par 64 - the lowest round of the tournament so far - to move to 11 under after 36 holes at The Colony, Texas. Teeing off on the back nine, Hull picked up three birdies before the turn and then added five more down the stretch to take the lead. The 26-year-old is chasing her second LPGA Tour victory after her maiden win at the 2016 Tour Championship. Friday's 64 was Hull's fifth straight round in the 60s. She finished tied for fifth at last week's NW Arkansas Championship. Hull credits her recent resurgence with her decision to take a two-week break from the tour after back-to-back missed cuts at the CP Women's Open and Dana Open. Hull used that time to recharge and play golf with her friends. —AFP

Sainz leads Ferrari as Verstappen struggles in Singapore

SINGAPORE: Carlos Sainz and Charles Leclerc powered their Ferraris to a one-two in second practice Friday for the Singapore Grand Prix, while runaway championship leader Max Verstappen and Red Bull struggled on Formula One's return to Asia. The Dutchman celebrated his 25th birthday Friday with a cake in the Red Bull team hospitality before the first session, then spent most of the second in the garage with mechanics working on his front suspension set-up.

Verstappen, who can retain his Formula One world championship with a race win on Sunday if other results go his way, did emerge late in the hour-long session for one qualifying simulation lap. His time of 1min 42.926sec was good enough only for fourth, 0.339sec behind Sainz who clocked 1:42.587 around the Marina Bay street circuit. "I think it started off quite well and the car was working quite well in FP1, and then for FP2 we wanted to try a few things," said Verstappen.

"They just took a bit longer to change, first of all, and then we wanted to try something else, and that took quite a long time to change again, so we couldn't really run a lot." "That's why it's not really representative of what we showed in FP2," Verstappen added. "But there is room for improvement." Leclerc posted a time of 1:42.795, 0.208sec behind his teammate, and the Mercedes of George Russell was third at 1:42.911. Earlier Lewis Hamilton had sprung a surprise with the quickest time in the opening practice session of the first Singapore race weekend since 2019 because of the COVID pandemic.

Japanese quartet bid to land Arc 'Holy Grail'

PARIS: A record four Japanese horses will line up for Sunday's Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe with one of the quartet's jockeys Christophe Lemaire saying Japan winning the race widely regarded as the greatest in Europe would be the "Holy Grail". The 43-year-old Frenchman, who has been crowned Japan's champion jockey on multiple occasions since moving there in 2015, rides the outsider of the four in veteran Stay Foolish.

He, Deep Bond, who was tailed off last in the 2021 Arc, and the more fancied duo Japanese Derby winner Do Deuce and serial Group One winner Titleholder will battle it out with 16 of Europe's finest thoroughbreds at Longchamp. Germany's defending champion Torquator Tasso returns with the formidable presence of Frankie Dettori on board-bidding for a record-extending seventh win-but has a difficult draw on the outside. Vadeni and Westover, winners of the French and Irish Derby's respectively, also feature with the former's jockey Christophe Soumillon facing a long time on the sidelines later in the month.

The apologetic Belgian ace received a 60 day

Rovanpera on the verge of clinching World Rally title

AUCKLAND: Finland's Kalle Rovanpera celebrated his birthday on Saturday by dominating the third day of Rally New Zealand, moving him to the brink of becoming the youngest-ever world champion. The 22-year-old Toyota driver thrived in wet conditions north of Auckland and will take a 29-second lead over French eight-time world champion Sebastien Ogier into the final four stages on Sunday. Championship pacesetter Rovanpera is

guaranteed to claim his maiden world title with two rounds remaining in the 13-leg series if he finishes the rally seven points ahead of second-ranked Ott Tanak. Estonian Tanak sits 46.4 seconds behind the Finnish driver in third place. Rovanpera will become the youngest champion in WRC history on Sunday if he can clinch what would be his sixth rally win this season.

The lead has changed hands eight times this week but Rovanpera showed his class from the outset on Saturday, leaping from fourth overnight to first by winning three of the six stages. He capitalized on a host of problems to beset his rivals, most notably a spectacular roll from Gus Greensmith on the 10th stage which forced the Ford driver to retire.

Hamilton 'headache'

It was the first time Hamilton had topped the timesheets this season, giving him hope of being able to score a first grand prix victory in 2022 and maintain his run of winning a race in every season since his 2007 debut. But the seven-time world champion later struggled with stability over the bumps and kerbs which caused him to run wide on the last corner of his final flying lap to leave him fifth, 0.595sec adrift of Sainz.

"It started off well," Hamilton told reporters. "It wasn't as great in the second session but pretty much like every other weekend. The car is as it is and is bouncing around like crazy but it doesn't feel like we're massively off this weekend." The Singapore event is termed the most demanding on the calendar by drivers because of the nature of the street circuit, with 23 corners and around 91 gear changes a lap. Couple that with the heat and humidity of the tropical city-state and even Hamilton, who has won in Singapore four times, was suffering.

"I definitely felt a little bit dehydrated after that session and very hot," he said. "But the biggest problem was literally just that you're bouncing so much that you just have a headache all of the time and this is a very bumpy track." Sixth fastest was Esteban Ocon's Alpine, ahead of Alfa Romeo's Valtteri Bottas. Spain's Fernando Alonso, who will start a record 350th grand prix on Sunday, one more than Kimi Raikkonen's previous all-time mark, was eighth fastest in his Alpine.

Red Bull had looked more competitive early but both cars suffered with set-up issues under lights in the night session with Sergio Perez ninth, 1.3sec behind Sainz. Verstappen has an almost unassailable lead in the title chase but must win Sunday's race and see his closest rivals falter to clinch with five races to go, or the fight will move on to Japan next week. Single-lap pace in qualifying is crucial



SINGAPORE: Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen drives during a practice session ahead of the Formula One Singapore Grand Prix night race at the Marina Bay Street Circuit in Singapore on October 1, 2022. —AFP

at Singapore, where pole position is a huge advantage on a tight track that affords few opportunities to overtake.

Alex Albon was encouraged by completing two sessions in his Williams less than three weeks after appendicitis and complications from surgery. The British-born Thai driver was 16th fastest in both, a severe test of his fitness in the heat and humidity of Singapore. There was drama at the AlphaTauri garage when Pierre Gasly had to leap from his car with flames coming above his head. They were quickly extinguished by the pit crew and the Frenchman returned to the track a few minutes later unharmed. —AFP



PARIS: Photo shows German jockey Rene Piechulek celebrating while riding on 'Torquator Tasso' after winning in The Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe horse race at The Paris Longchamp racecourse in Paris. —AFP

a French jockey it has a particular flavour. I live in Japan and I understand the determination they have of winning the Arc. "To win an Arc would be the Holy Grail knowing what it represents for the Japanese." —AFP

all so bad," he said. Toyota team principal Jari-Matti Latvala said Rovanpera had the temperament needed to wrap up the championship on Sunday. "He's very calm now. The only point I saw him a little bit nervous was before the rally started. But once we started, no more nerves after that," Latvala said.

Standings: 1. Kalle Rovanpera/Jonne Halttunen (FIN/Toyota) 2hr 28min 26.3sec. 2. Sebastien Ogier-Benjamin Veillas (FRA/Toyota) at 29.0sec. 3. Ott Tanak-Martin Jarveoja (EST/Hyundai) 46.4. 4. Thierry Neuville-Martijn Wydaeghe (BEL/Hyundai) 1:41.4. 5. Oliver Solberg-Elliott Edmondson (SWE-GBR/Hyundai) 3:34.9. 6. Lorenzo Bertelli-Lorenzo Granai (ITA/M-Sport Ford) 9:18.3. 7. —AFP

Arsenal show title mettle as Potter gets first Chelsea win

Trossard hat-trick denies Liverpool in De Zerbi's bow as Brighton boss



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's French goalkeeper Hugo Lloris is beaten by Arsenal's Ghanaian midfielder Thomas Partey for the first goal during the English Premier League football match between Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur on October 1, 2022. — AFP

LONDON: Arsenal underlined their credentials as genuine Premier League title contenders with a 3-1 win over arch rivals Tottenham, while Chelsea's dramatic 2-1 victory at Crystal Palace gave Graham Potter his first success as Blues boss on Saturday. As the Premier League returned with a bang after the international break, Liverpool were rocked by Brighton forward Leandro Trossard's hat-trick in a 3-3 draw at Anfield.

But it was Arsenal who stole the spotlight as Mikel Arteta's side made it seven wins from eight league games, moving their four points clear at the top of the table. Thomas Partey put Arsenal ahead early in the first half of the north London derby at the Emirates Stadium.

Harry Kane equalized with a penalty but third-placed Tottenham imploded after the interval as Hugo Lloris's mistake allowed Gabriel Jesus to restore Arsenal's lead. Tottenham defender Emerson Royal was sent off for an ugly foul on Gabriel Martinelli before Granit Xhaka's goal ensured Arsenal would avenge the 3-0 defeat against their hated neighbours

last season that cost them a Champions League place.

Ending Tottenham's 13-match unbeaten run in the league was a significant statement of intent from Arsenal. "They were phenomenal. We went from it and we created great energy in the stadium and deserved to win the game," Arteta said. "We were free, courageous and brave. This is what we demand from the players."

At Selhurst Park, Chelsea left it late to give Potter his first win in his second match since arriving from Brighton to replace the sacked Thomas Tuchel. Chelsea, who drew 1-1 with RB Salzburg in the Champions League in Potter's first game, suffered a nightmare start on seven minutes as Wesley Fofana squandered possession and Jordan Ayew fed Ousmane Edouard to fire into the top corner. Chelsea defender Thiago Silva escaped a red card when he was only booked for stopping Ayew's attack by deliberately handling.

Gallagher strikes late

Silva made the most of that escape as he provided

the assist for Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's 38th minute equaliser. The Brazilian headed the ball towards Aubameyang and he let it bounce across his body before swivelling to fire a half-volley into the bottom corner from just inside the area.

It was Aubameyang's first Chelsea goal since signing from Barcelona on transfer deadline day. Conor Gallagher, who spent last season on loan at Palace, won it for Chelsea in stoppage-time when the substitute curled a fine finish into the top corner. Potter's replacement at Brighton, former Shakhtar Donetsk boss Roberto De Zerbi, enjoyed a memorable introduction to the Premier League.

Trossard fired Brighton ahead inside four minutes after punishing sloppy Liverpool defending. With Liverpool in disarray, the Belgian forward struck again in the 18th minute. Roberto Firmino gave Liverpool a 33rd minute lifeline when he turned in Mohamed Salah's flick. And Firmino grabbed Liverpool's leveller with a 54th minute equaliser as the Brazilian side-stepped his marker to convert Luis Diaz's pass.

Jürgen Klopp's men looked to have completed an epic comeback in the 63rd minute when Albion keeper Robert Sanchez punched a corner that hit Adam Webster and deflected into his own net. But Trossard sealed his treble with a close-range finish from Kaoru Mitoma's cross to silence Anfield with seven minutes left. Newcastle ended their six-match winless run in the league as Eddie Howe's men swept to a 4-1 rout of 10-man Fulham at Craven Cottage. Fulham's Nathaniel Chalobah was sent off after eight minutes for a reckless lunge on Sean Longstaff.

Callum Wilson volleyed home after 11 minutes before Miguel Almirón fired into the top corner in the 33rd minute. Longstaff bagged the third goal three minutes before half-time and Almirón struck again in the 57th minute. Bobby De Cordova-Reid's 88th minute goal was no consolation for Fulham. Everton won 2-1 at Southampton as Conor Coady and Dwight McNeil both scored their first goals for the club after Joe Aribo put the hosts in front. Bournemouth and Brentford shared a goalless draw at Dean Court. — AFP

AFC Futsal Asian Cup: Saudi, South Korea face off

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The Group round of the AFC Futsal Asian Cup Kuwait 2022 will be concluded on Sunday. The matches will decide the standings of the third and fourth groups, and the teams who qualify for the quarter finals. Saudi Arabia will play South Korea; Japan will play Vietnam in the fourth group, while Chinese Taipei will play Indonesia followed by a match between Iran and Lebanon.

Saudi Arabia must defeat South Korea to keep their hopes of qualifying as Saudi team have 3 points in third place with Korea still pointless. Meanwhile, Vietnam are on top of the standings with 6 points and need just one point to qualify, but these ambitions will face a strong determination by the Japanese team who have three points and wants to qualify also. Saudi Arabia lost to Vietnam 1-3 in the second round, while Japan defeated South Korea 6-0 on Friday.

Saudi Coach said the Vietnam experience overcame the Saudi's particularly in the second half. Vietnam Coach on his part, was happy with the victory. Iran defeated Chinese Taipei 10-1 on Friday, while Lebanon lost to Indonesia 2-7. Iran's coach said the preparation for each match has its special philosophy due to the differences of team levels, adding that there are several teams who are candidates to win the championship including Japan, Vietnam, Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.



USA crush China to win 11th women's basketball WCup

SYDNEY: Tournament MVP A'ja Wilson poured in 19 points as the all-conquering United States crushed China 83-61 to win their fourth straight women's basketball World Cup and 11th overall in Sydney on Saturday. Kelsey Plum added 17 points and Jewell Loyd 11 as the Chinese were overpowered by a formidable team that stretched their unbeaten streak in the competition to 30 games.

The US went to half-time with a 43-33 lead and there was no stopping them in front of 15,895 fans at Sydney SuperDome—the biggest-ever crowd for a women's basketball match in Australia. The 22-point differential was the highest in World Cup final history, reinforcing their dominance. "Some great players, five-time Olympians, were not part of this team and there was probably some around the world thinking, 'now's the time to get the USA,'" said US coach Cheryl Reeve, after the retirements of Sue Bird and Diana Taurasi.

"I think we showed the depth of talent we have, and it was on display. "I thought we just had a really good tournament, particularly defensively," she added. "They're hard to play against and we had some really great moments." In front of the watching Chinese basketball legend Yao Ming, the odds were heavily stacked against China, who were led by Li Yueru with 19 points and took home their first medal since 1994.

On top of being 10-time champions, the USA were coming off a record-breaking 83-43 semi-final victory against Canada, the biggest win ever in a World Cup last four, and they had beaten China 77-66 in the group phase. The Chinese had also lost all

seven previous World Cup clashes with the American juggernaut, and by an average 22 points. "We came on a mission and we played pretty good," said Wilson, who won the Most Valuable Player award to go with the WNBA title she won last month with the Las Vegas Aces. "This is what you live for, this is my job and I love my job and what I do."

'Moving forward'

China were again without star player and leading points scorer Li Meng, who has a fever, but Li Yueru and Wang Siyu both scored early buckets as they started strongly. But the USA soon found their stride to close out the first quarter with an 18-13 advantage, although it was scrappy with the Americans only shooting at 44 percent. They began finding the hoop as they lifted the tempo and pulled out to a 13-point lead, before Jin Weina netted outside the arc on the siren to pull it back to 43-33 at the break.

Refreshed, the relentless USA shifted up a gear in the third frame with aggressive defense and built it into a 68-47 lead heading into the home stretch, where a ragged China had nothing left in the tank. Despite the defeat, China coach Zheng Wei said their performance boded well for the Paris Olympics in 2024. "For us it was a really good result (making the final) and we will keep moving forward and improving and we are looking forward to Paris," she said. "We have learned a lot, but there is still a gap between us and our opponent. But we have gained a lot of experience and improved a lot mentally."

Earlier, Lauren Jackson produced a vintage performance to end her international career on a high, 25 years after making her debut, as Australia swept past Canada 95-65 to win bronze. Jackson, 41, turned back the clock with a huge all-round effort, ending with a game-high 30 points, seven rebounds and one assist. The seven-time WNBA all-star ended her fifth World Cup—and first in 12 years—tied as the all-time leader in games played, on 43 with Brazil's Janeth Arcain. — AFP