

Amir calls to adhere to law, constitution as PM named

Sheikh Nawaf hails efforts of Crown Prince
Sheikh Ahmad reappointed as prime minister

New Cabinet announced with nine new faces
New minister quits in protest over lineup



KUWAIT: (Left) HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Dar Yamama Palace on Oct 5, 2022. (Right) HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah presents the list of ministers in the new Cabinet to HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal. — KUNA

By B Izzak and Agencies

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah stressed on Wednesday keenness to adhere to the constitution and the law and meet the needs of the Kuwaiti people. This came during HH the Amir's reception of HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who briefed him on the consultations to form the new government.

HH the Amir was briefed on the talks HH the Crown Prince had with former National Assembly speakers Marzouq Al-Ghanem and Ahmad Al-Saadoun, and former prime ministers HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, HH Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and

HH Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah; and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

HH the Amir praised the efforts of HH the Crown Prince, providing him with sagacious instructions and expressing good wishes to all officials involved in serving the dear homeland's higher interests. Earlier Wednesday, the Amiri Diwan announced HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah was renamed as the head of the Cabinet. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal later received HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad, who presented to him the list of ministers in the new Cabinet.

An Amiri decree was issued late Wednesday

announcing the formation of the new Cabinet with nine new faces including new oil and commerce ministers, and two women, while retaining six old ministers. But the new Cabinet began with a dilemma when one minister quit immediately over objections to some ministers.

Ammar Al-Ajmi, the only elected MP in the Cabinet, was named as Minister of Electricity and Water and Public Works, but he immediately said he was leaving the Cabinet because "some of the ministers do not respect the constitution". His shocking announcement came minutes after the names of the ministers were announced.

Ajmi said on Twitter the new government team "includes some members who have lost public trust

and I am sure they do not respect the constitution". As a result, "I apologize for not being able to work with them," he said, adding that he had asked for the names of the full Cabinet but it was not given to him.

The exit of Ajmi means the prime minister must find another lawmaker to replace him, because under Kuwaiti law, the Cabinet must include at least one elected MP. Contrary to expectations of many MPs, the premier retained some ministers from the old Cabinet who were grilled by the opposition.

Former MP Mohammad Al-Dallal said it was an unsuccessful start to the new government as it came well below the ambitions of the people and failed to reflect the message of the election's outcome.

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OPEC+ agrees major cut, Biden 'disappointed'

VIENNA: OPEC and its Russia-led allies agreed on a major cut in oil production to boost crude prices on Wednesday, irking the United States which warned that it would hurt countries struggling with soaring energy prices. The 13-nation OPEC cartel and its 10 Russian-led allies agreed to reduce two million barrels per day from November at a meeting in Vienna, the group said in a statement.

It is the biggest cut since the height of the COVID pandemic in 2020, raising fears that it will turbocharge oil prices at a time when countries are already facing soaring

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Local

Profile of Kuwait Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah

KUWAIT: An Amiri Decree was issued on Wednesday re-appointing His Highness the Prime Minister (ret. General) Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah as Prime Minister of the Kuwait Government. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah was born in Kuwait in 1956 and is

the son of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Graduated from Kuwait University where he studied commerce, Sheikh Ahmad had climbed the Ministry of Interior hierarchy echelon until he earned the General rank. He had also served as the

Assistant Undersecretary for Nationality and Passports and the Assistant Undersecretary for Education and Training at the Ministry of Interior. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad, after resigning from the Ministry of Interior was named Hawally Governor and later held a chain of

high-profile positions. In November 2020, an Amiri Order was issued appointing Sheikh Ahmad as the Deputy Chief of the National Guard. In March 2022, another decree was issued naming him as the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior. —KUNA



Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah

WHO discusses low breastfeeding rate in Kuwait

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The World Health Organization (WHO) in Kuwait, in collaboration with the Public Authority for Food & Nutrition (PAFN) and the Ministry of Health, organized on Wednesday the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) orientation seminar at United Nations House. In a press statement, Dr Assad Hafeez, WHO Representative for Kuwait, said: "Breastfeeding is very important and we realized that effort is needed in Kuwait to put in place the structures to improve breastfeeding rates."

Hafeez noted that the event focused on private hospitals, where more than 70 percent of deliveries take place every year. "All private maternity hospitals were invited to participate and give their inputs. We are hoping that in the near future, we will be able to implement the BFHI program to enhance breastfeeding," he said. "The low rates of exclusive breastfeeding in Kuwait are strong signs that we must cooperate across all sectors to address optimal infant nutrition."

He revealed the main recommendation of the seminar was how to implement the BFHI in a manner acceptable to the institutions and how WHO can assist private hospitals to attain this accreditation and sustain it over the years. "We find evidence in other countries that the more BFHI hospitals, the better the breastfeeding rates and better the health of children," Hafeez said. "To implement the program, there are certain standards to meet and ten steps to achieve. Usually, hospitals take a few months to achieve those steps, and then an external committee visits the hospitals and assesses through certain applications and forms whether they were able to achieve the standards or not. Once they achieve the standards, the committee holds regular visits and follows up to ensure that they sustain them," he pointed out.



Dr Fatma Al-Najjar



Dr Mona Al-Sumaie

Meanwhile, Dr Mona Al-Sumaie, Director of Community Nutrition Promotion at the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition, opened the technical program with an overview of the mandates of the national breastfeeding committee and its key role in advancing public-private partnerships to promote better nutrition for infants and children across Kuwait.

"We are now focusing on getting private hospitals on board the BFHI program. We already have baby-friendly public hospitals, like Adan Hospital, and Taiba Hospital (private)," she said, affirming they are aiming to boost exclusive feeding rates, in which mothers should only give breast milk to their babies from birth to the age of six months.

Assistant Undersecretary of Private Medical Services Dr Fatima Al-Najjar reiterated statistics from the national nutrition surveillance report. "Only eight percent of newly born babies are breastfed for six consecutive months in Kuwait. These figures are much lower than the rates in other countries on the regional and global level. Investment in early childhood has shown a substantial impact on health, edu-



Dr Assad Hafeez



KUWAIT: Participants at the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

ational attainment and productivity for a person's lifetime," she said. It is noteworthy to mention that the WHO Kuwait Country Office in partnership with the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition will be partnering on more activities throughout October and November 2022 to address breastfeeding rates in Kuwait.

The orientation program is a stepping stone toward a nation-wide scale-up of the BFHI in Kuwait to promote better rates of exclusive breastfeeding through the empowerment of families and facilities. This joint seminar succeeded in disseminating the latest evidence and guidance on the BFHI's Ten Steps to 11 private hospitals across Kuwait; there was high-

level participation from the management, maternity, nursing and pediatric departments of these hospitals.

In 1991, WHO and UNICEF launched the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI), which aims to ensure that mothers and newborns receive timely and appropriate care before and during their stay in a facility providing maternity and newborn services, to enable the establishment of optimal feeding of newborns, which promotes their health and development. Given the proven importance of breastfeeding, the BFHI protects, promotes, and supports breastfeeding, while enabling timely and appropriate care and feeding of newborns who are not breastfed. This is based on the ten steps to successful breastfeeding.



National Guard launches unified crisis center

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Guard launched an integrated center for operations, security system and crisis management on Wednesday. Lieutenant General Hashim Al-Rifai, Undersecretary of the Kuwait National Guard said that the center will connect with other state bodies including ministries to ensure a prompt and effective response to crisis situations. He also conveyed to the audience the

greetings of the ceremony's patronize and chief of the National Guard, His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, Major General Falah Shujae, Assistant for Training and Operations, highlighted the importance of the center. "The newly formed center is expected to provide an advance surveillance system to the existent sites protected by the National Guard."

He said that the National Guard had previously participated in collaborative efforts to counter crisis situations such as the pandemic, disasters caused by heavy rains and fire, which necessitated the need for a unified center for emergency responses. The launching ceremony was attended by senior officials from the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Interior and other state bodies. —KUNA



Congratulations to the Amir!

On behalf of the Mexican government and its people, Ambassador Miguel Angel Isidro has the honour to convey his sincere congratulations and best wishes on the occasion of the second anniversary of His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's accession to power as the Amir of Kuwait and His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as the Crown Prince of Kuwait.

Ambassador Isidro would also like to express to their Highnesses, every success in the fulfillment of their noble and important roles. The Mexican government is committed to closely work with the Government of Kuwait for the mutual benefit of both countries and its people.

He said that, "over the last 46 years, Kuwait and Mexico have built a strong structure of understanding, based on our broad cultural simi-



Ambassador Miguel Angel Isidro

larities. Mexico is a country with enormous potential in the field of culture. This has facilitated the promotional work that the Embassy has carried out in recent years in Kuwait. Through different activities such as exhibitions, music concerts and gastronomic shows, it has been possible to offer Mexico's best letter of introduction, which has, in turn, increased the interest of Kuwaiti tourists".



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Local



The late Queen Elizabeth with Tawfiq Al-Nassar on the cover of a German magazine in 1979.



KUWAIT: Late Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and the late Queen Elizabeth with Tawfiq Al-Nassar.



KUWAIT: Late Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and former US President late George Bush Sr. with Tawfiq Al-Nassar.

Kuwait Translation Society remembers Tawfiq Al-Nassar on Int'l Translation Day

By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

KUWAIT: Kuwait Translation Society held a remembrance day for Tawfiq Al-Nassar on Tuesday at Kuwait National Library, with the attendance of Dr Tareq Fakher Al-Deen, Fatimah Al-Mufarreh, Sanaa Taqi and his son Khaled Al-Nassar. Tawfiq Al-Nassar was a translator at the Amiri Diwan during the reigns of three different Amirs - Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Nassar was close to the late founder and owner of Kuwait Times Yousuf Al-Alyan, who appointed him as a part time senior editor at Kuwait Times in 1964, when it was the only English newspaper in the GCC. He was then appointed as a translator by the late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem at the Amiri Diwan on the recommendation of Al-Alyan.

Throughout his 40-year career at the Amiri Diwan which lasted until his retirement in 2006, Nassar accompanied Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem, until his death. He then



Tawfiq Al-Nassar



Yousuf Saleh Al-Alyan

thought of returning to the oil sector, but Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah retained him. Nassar rose through the ranks, becoming a consultant in 1969, and later assistant undersecretary to the minister in 1976.

During the reign of Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and specifically during the Iraqi invasion, Nassar went to Taif where the Kuwaiti government was in exile. He worked not only as a translator, but also as a speechwriter for all meetings and letters to interna-

tional heads of states and their ambassadors, as well as international and Arab organizations, following which Queen Elizabeth II honored him with the Order of St Michael and St George - Grand Cross. Moreover, Nassar was the Amir's representative at many important institutions, such as Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research and Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development.

"I am happy to honor all those involved in instituting, building and supporting Kuwait

Translation Society, which was founded by Dr Ayid Al-Juraid, which helped improve translation in the country. I am happy to choose during this event a personality like the late Tawfiq Al-Nassar," said Dr Tareq Fakher Al-Deen, head of Kuwait Translation Society. "Everything I have heard about him represented him to me as almost a perfect person. What is important to us at the society is the humanitarian side and professional side. We have already written the first part of his biography, and we are about to publish two more books about his professional career at the Amiri Diwan, and one about his influence on translation," he said.

"He was a unique character throughout his 40-year experience. His constant thrive for education and openness towards different cultures allowed to him to store much knowledge, which is an important skill for any translator," Fakher Al-Deen added.

Sanaa Taqi, head of the translation department at the Amiri Diwan, said: "Al-Nassar is the godfather of translation. During my time as the only French translator at the Diwan, I always asked for his advice and assistance when translating, even though he did not speak the language. Despite that, his help was tremendous, as all of my articles in French were reviewed by him after I finished them, to the point where he would find an error in an article and would know it. He was someone who trusted us and supported us throughout our careers, until we reached where we are."

Tawfiq Al-Nassar's son Khaled Al-Nassar said: "I would like to thank everyone who organized and participated in this event. As his family, it means so much to us that such an event takes place on such an important day for translators. My grandfather's friend, the owner of Kuwait Times Yousuf Al-Alyan, inquired about my father through my grandfather, and found his amazing grasp of the English language was enough to partake partly in running the newspaper." Many other people remembered the honorable life of the late Tawfiq Al-Nassar, who was without doubt a pivotal figure in Kuwait.

Fatimah Al-Mufarreh, former head of the translation department at the Amiri Diwan, spoke about Nassar's interesting life. "It is impossible to summarize what he meant to us in one sitting. He was an example of a helpful father figure who was always there to help us improve in our professions," she told Kuwait Times.

"We are celebrating today International Translation Day, which is also special for Kuwait for the founding and instituting of the Kuwait Translation Society. During this special occasion, we remember one of the most important figures of translation in Kuwait, Tawfiq Al-Nassar, who was a reflection of a cultured translator who never struggled with a word, and almost never used a dictionary because of his expansive cultural background," said Mufarreh, who worked under Nassar at the Amiri Diwan.



Fatimah Al-Mufarreh

"Al-Nassar never studied translation - he graduated with a bachelor's degree in geology, which influenced his knowledge, which is an important example of a translator's weapon and is vital to translate any word," she added.



KUWAIT: (From left to right): Sanaa Taqi, Fatimah Al-Mufarreh, Dr. Tareq Fakher Al-Deen and Khaled Al-Nassar at the event. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KFF carries out beach safety procedure check

KUWAIT: As per the instructions of acting Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Sabah, the head of KFF Khaled Al-Mikraad headed a meeting on Monday at the KFF headquarters to discuss the safety procedures to be carried out across all beaches in the country. The meeting which was also attended by

several undersecretaries aimed at keeping beaches safe and prevent any drowning incidents.

During the meeting, team members from KFF displayed statistics related to previous drowning incidents and other possible dangers that can take place at popular beaches. Solutions were also suggested to prevent the occurrence of such incidents.

Al-Mikraad highlighted the significance of working together as a team in order to respond effectively to crisis situations adding that citizens and residents also had a responsibility to observe the regulations put in place at the beaches.



Justice minister visits Saudi digital team

RIYADH: Jamal Al-Jalawi, Minister of Justice, Minister of State for Nazaha (Integrity) Enhancement and Minister of Awqaf (Endowment) and Islamic Affairs said that a delegation from Kuwait visited the Saudi Ministry of Justice to learn from the latter's experience in digitalizing documents.

Al-Jalawi said to KUNA on Wednesday that the Saudi Ministry of Justice has excellent experience in the electronic archiving process, the transition from print to digital system and the processing and preservation of documents. He also stressed that the pur-



pose of the visit was to gain more experience and knowledge in the digitalizing fields, stressing on Kuwait's keenness in strengthening cooperation between the two countries. Al-Jalawi

expressed his appreciation and gratitude to Saudi Arabia for their reception and hospitality as well as for providing Kuwait's delegation with all the necessary information. — KUNA



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Time Keeper Lounge launched in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Time Keeper launched its first lounge in Kuwait, dedicated for watches. The lounge offers a unique experience to Time Keeper customers, allowing them to reserve appointments to visit the lounge. Time Keeper was established in 2018 as an Arab platform dedicated to watches and a primary destination for watch enthusiasts.



Photo of the day



A night view of the Liberation Tower and Al-Sharhaan Mosque. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Are we being changed by what we watch?

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Watching movies and TV shows and following social media constantly could have an important role in reshaping people's mind or opinions over the years toward issues that weren't acceptable to them in the past. With the wide reach of social media, shows and movies, new issues have been discussed on media channels that are not suitable for certain cultures, directed to specific groups like women, children or men. Meanwhile, other issues have helped people adopt positive things in their lives, such as becoming more understanding to their children and more supportive of women's rights.

"Media channels have content that includes movies and shows, which have a great role in influencing people to change their minds and opinions about many issues that the writers deal with in their works. All of this often depends on the extent of the artists' ability in the series or the movie to influence viewers' thoughts. There are sensitive societal issues that lead to girls rebelling and living alone outside the family

framework, husbands or wives having relationships outside marriage, incest, violence against women, abuse and other images seen by the viewer away from the societal behavior which they are accustomed to. Therefore, the role of media mainly is not to show, entertain and drain society's time - what is required of them is instilling values and educating people," media analyst Bassam Al-Jazzaf told Kuwait Times.

"We are not saying that media cannot present all of the above topics. But it must explain what are the consequences of these decisions that the individual will take after watching the works. Foreign films and shows, including Arab works, sometimes raise issues, topics and ideas that are suitable only for their societies and not all societies, such as homosexuality, irresponsible and unconditional freedoms and extremism, which fuel stress, partisanship and non-acceptance of others' opinions," Jazzaf said. "We must be aware of the absence of laws that regulate the passage of media works to members of the society and families. Every foreign thought will one day escalate and become a belief, and it will be very difficult to drop these beliefs," he added.

Kuwait Times asked random people if they think the media has affected their behaviors in any way over the years and the things they have become more open or acceptable to, whether positive or negative. Maria Asaad said sometimes she watches scenes in movies or shows that can affect and benefit viewers. "We are nowadays more likely to be affected by social media than shows and movies due to the social experiences that could be more familiar to us done by people like us. So it's impossible to not take into account these experiences that will surely affect us," she explained.

"Recently, we noticed that movies have inappropriate issues that even does not suit us even as adults, not to mention children's movies and shows that touch sensitive and negative topics and would affect our children with the absence of family follow up," Asaad pointed out. "While the majority of the communities here in Kuwait reject those topics, it should be explained people are rejecting them not only as a matter of religion. I have noticed that the people who get affected by those topics are the ones who already accept them. On the other hand, those who reject negative content by the media are still the same and have not changed," Asaad said.

"Media channels helped us discover some mistakes in the way we are raising our children and the best methods to deal with them. In addition, they had a great role in improving ourselves in several aspects of life, whether by life coaches or understanding ourselves more on how to take

care of our mental health and giving us positive energy towards many things in life," said Dima Abdullah. "There are also negative things displayed through media channels that could affect the morals of the people, but we have to make efforts to correct these thoughts or negative topics in our community to make sure they won't become normal things that we will have to accept, especially with our children, due to them growing up at a time where the definition of freedom is wrongly defined," she said. "The effect of media in not exclusive to social aspects - it is also affecting our purchasing behaviors, which has turned to be for some people a kind of obsession," she added.

"The media in general and shows and movies have definitely affected people's mind over the years, and made some to adopt bad behaviors. In my personal experience, the media affected my point of view regarding women going out to work, and I become more acceptable to it, because media helped me to see the other side that was not clear to me," Abdullah Jamal told Kuwait Times. "The negative topics in the media only affect specific types of people who are ready to accept those thoughts. Movies and shows that have scenes of violence make people who are ready to be violent to implement violence," he stressed.

Abdulrahman Essa stressed he has never allowed the media to have an effect on him, adding he follows a religious lifestyle that drives his convictions. He pointed out the media is not the best source for information, adding people should get it from stories that are not highlighted. He said stories or social experiences portrayed through the media are not fully complete and do not show all viewpoints.

Amal Aboul Fotouh said people are accepting negative content shown in movies and shows more than positive contents. "Due to the huge flood of negative content, people have started to accept watching movies scenes that they never accepted before. "People have started to get used to things such as domestic violence and relationships outside marriage. Women feel they don't have to be married anymore, men accept the idea of cohabitation, or children think they have freedom to choose their sexual orientation or religion. All is due to the effect of media over the past years."



Bassam Al-Jazzaf

Kuwait, Years From Now Student Art Competition 2022

10 October - 13 November 2022

We are excited to welcome each and every youngster to our Student Art Competition 2022. We hope everyone is ready to showcase and create beautiful artworks of Kuwait in the future. We're searching for great art - so get your paintbrushes, color pencils and markers ready. Let your talent flow and start painting. Good luck to our young artists!

- The competition is open to students aged 6-18 years under the categories of 6-8 years, 9-11 years, 12-14 years, 15-18 years and special abilities students.
- The competition is open to all schools in Kuwait (government and private).
- 5 winners from each category will receive valuable prizes.
- All participants will receive a certificate of appreciation.
- All schools and individuals interested in participating in this competition are welcome.
- You can use any drawing sheet, but of A3 size.
- All artworks must be hand drawn and not computer generated.
- All paintings should be submitted by email at art@kuwaittimes.com in PDF format only.
- Kuwait Times reserves the right to retain the drawings for future use.
- Participants should include on the bottom of the artworks the following: Name, age, email address, phone number and school in legible font.



Strategic Partner

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Kuwait-funded schools perform well in tenth year in Lebanon

BEIRUT: Twelve charitable schools in Lebanon, established by Kuwait to educate Syrian refugee students in North Lebanon, started their tenth year, with students expressing deep gratitude for the Kuwaiti donations that enabled them to attend classes. A delegation from the International Islamic Charitable Organization, the Society for Humanitarian Excellence, the Islamic Development Bank and the Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development, toured the schools and reviewed their needs.

Receptions, organized by the pupils of these schools, were held to greet the delegation, in which various educational activities were showcased. Chairman of the Humanitarian Excellence Association Dr. Khaled Al-Subaihi said in remarks to KUNA that these schools that educate around 9,000 students in North Lebanon can be seen as model schools, noting that the students have attained much higher grades than those of their peers in other schools in northern Lebanon.

He also said that it requires great efforts to educate those students that require financial aid, such as refugee students than their counterparts who can afford to go to school.

In a similar statement, Board member of the Excellence Society, Hamid Al-Refai, said, "We realized the difficulties faced in teaching refugee students and in guiding the teachers 10 years ago when we started to build these schools with contributions from Kuwaiti philanthropists."



BEIRUT: Classes being carried out at the schools. —KUNA

"We acted to solve the problems facing the learning process and developed advanced teaching techniques for this purpose", he added. Director of the Educational Department at the UNICEF office in Lebanon, Atif Rafiq expressed thanks to Kuwait for supporting refugees especially in education. "I am happy to see that these children are receiving education and attending school," he said. The representative of the Islamic Solidarity Fund, Muhammad Al-Jawabra, said, "Our visit to the schools show the strategic work that affect the life and needs of these refugee students." He thanked the Kuwaiti Charitable associations and organizations saying that "we are proud of such a relation and their contributions towards the eradication of poverty and in building an educated community". The associations' delegation also took part in a meeting with technical coordinators and educational supervisors. —KUNA



Views on US bases shift in Japan's Okinawa

Lebanese lawmaker frees over \$8,500 in trapped bank deposits

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BARCELONA, Spain: Protesters take part in a demonstration in support of Iranian women in Barcelona following the death of Kurdish Iranian woman Mahsa Amini in Iran. —AFP

Iran schoolgirls take lead in protests

Iran summons British envoy to hear a protest over 'meddlesome statements'

PARIS: Iranian schoolgirls have come to the fore in protests over the death of Mahsa Amini, removing their hijabs and staging sporadic rallies in defiance of a lethal crackdown by the security forces. Amini, 22, was pronounced dead days after the notorious morality police detained the Iranian Kurd last month for allegedly breaching the Islamic republic's strict dress code for women.

Anger flared at her funeral and spread to become the biggest wave of protests to rock Iran in almost three years, despite the backlash by the security forces that has killed scores and seen hundreds arrested.

Students rallied at the weekend before being confronted by riot police who cornered them in an underground car park of Tehran's prestigious Sharif University of Technology before hauling them away.

Schoolgirls have since taken up the baton around the country, removing their hijabs, shouting anti-regime slogans and defacing images of the clerical state's leaders. "Death to the dictator," a group of bare-headed girls is heard chanting in reference to supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as they force a man, reportedly the principal, out of a school in Karaj, west of Tehran, on Monday in a video verified by AFP.

Another group of girls sings "Woman, life, freedom", as they march down a street of the Karaj neighbourhood of Gohardasht. "These are really extraordinary scenes. If these protests are going to achieve anything, it will be because of the schoolgirls," Esfandiyar Batmanghelidj of the Bourse & Bazaar news and analysis website tweeted in response.

Schoolgirls are also seen emptying classrooms and appearing at flash-mob protests to avoid detection, in other footage shared online. A boisterous group of girls are seen yelling "Get lost, Basiji", in reference to the paramilitary force, at a man standing at a podium in the southern city of Shiraz, in a video shared by the 1500tasvir social media channel. AFP has been unable to independently verify the footage.

Singer silenced

As the women-led protests stretch into a fourth week, Iran has widened its crackdown, rounding up

high profile supporters of the movement and imposing internet restrictions that limit access to social media.

On Tuesday night, Iranian pop singer Shervin Hajipour, who was arrested after his song in support of the protests went viral and became an anthem for the movement, was freed on bail. "I'm here to say I'm okay. But I am sorry that some particular movements based outside of Iran which I have had no relations with-made some improper political uses of this song," he told his 1.9 million Instagram followers shortly after his release.

Iran's judiciary meanwhile opened an investigation into the death of teenage girl Nika Shakrabi who was reportedly killed during the protests. BBC Persian and Iran Wire had reported that authorities had taken possession of her body and secretly buried her on Monday to avoid a funeral that could spark more protests.

At least 92 protesters have been killed in the

unrest, according to Oslo-based group Iran Human Rights (IHR). Amnesty International has confirmed 53 deaths, while Fars news agency put the death toll at "around 60" last week. At least 12 security personnel have been reported killed.

Another 63 people were killed last week when security forces "bloodily suppressed" a protest in Zahedan, near Iran's southeastern border with Pakistan, said IHR. The clashes erupted after Friday prayers during protests sparked by accusations a police chief in the region had raped a teenage girl of the Baluch Sunni minority, it said.

Sanctions loom

The crackdown has drawn global condemnation. On Tuesday the European Union joined the United States in warning that it was looking to impose tough new sanctions on Iran over the bloody crackdown. Proposed punitive measures targeting senior Iranian officials include "freezing their assets and their right to travel", French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna said. Iran has repeatedly accused outside forces of stoking the protests and last week said nine foreign nationals-including from France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Poland-had been arrested. — AFP



"These are really extraordinary scenes"

South Korea, US fire missiles in response to North Korea test

SEOUL: The South Korean and US militaries fired a volley of missiles into the sea in response to North Korea firing a ballistic missile over Japan, Seoul said Wednesday, as global condemnation mounted over Pyongyang's likely longest-ever test.

Nuclear-armed North Korea fired an Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM) over Japan for the first time in five years on Tuesday, prompting Tokyo to issue evacuation warnings for some residents. South Korea and the United States staged a drill of their own in response, firing ground-to-ground missiles into the East Sea, also known as the Sea of Japan, Seoul's military said.

Both militaries fired two ATACMS short-range ballistic missiles into the water "to precisely strike a virtual target," the Joint Chiefs of Staff said. The military also confirmed that a South Korean missile

failed soon after it was launched and crashed, without causing any casualties.

South Korean and US fighter jets had carried out a bombing drill at a virtual target in the Yellow Sea on Tuesday. The joint drills aim to "make sure that we have the military capabilities at the ready to respond to provocations by the North if it comes to that," US National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told CNN.

South Korea's military also announced Wednesday that the nuclear-powered USS Ronald Reagan aircraft carrier would return to the area, having already conducted joint drills with Seoul's navy last month. Pyongyang's Tuesday launch is part of a record year of sanctions-busting weapons tests by the isolated regime, which recently revised its nuclear laws, with leader Kim Jong Un declaring his country an "irreversible" nuclear power.

US President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida decried the launch "in the strongest terms" while South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol called it a "provocation". The United Nations Security Council was set to meet on Wednesday to discuss the matter.

The IRBM flew about 4,600 km (2,900 miles),

Seoul and Tokyo said, likely the longest-ever distance for a North Korean test, which are typically fired on a "lofted" trajectory to avoid flying over neighbouring countries.

Officials and experts said it was likely a Hwasong-12 IRBM, a nuclear-capable missile that North Korea likely first tested in 2017, which has a range that could put US bases on Guam within reach. North Korea has not commented on the launch in state media. "Regardless of today's missile launch by the US and South Korean military, North Korea's plan to carry out its next nuclear test will not change," Yang Moo-jin, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies, told AFP.

"It's likely that Pyongyang's going to ridicule today's missile launch-especially since one of the launches failed-and proceed with their next nuclear test, given the law changes they made on the nuclear use in September." The Tuesday test was Pyongyang's fifth missile launch in 10 days. The spate of launches comes as Seoul, Tokyo and Washington have been ramping up joint military drills to counter Pyongyang's growing threats, staging the first trilateral anti-submarine drills in five years on Friday. — AFP

Amid war, US set to fly Russian cosmonaut to ISS

WASHINGTON: The United States will on Wednesday carry a Russian to the International Space Station aboard a SpaceX ship, in a voyage that carries symbolic significance amid the Ukraine war. Anna Kikina, the only female cosmonaut in service, is part of the Crew-5 mission, which also includes one Japanese and two American astronauts.

Blast-off is set for noon from the Kennedy Space Center, with the weather forecast so far promising.

Two weeks ago, an American astronaut took off on a Russian Soyuz rocket for the orbital platform. The long-planned astronaut exchange program has been maintained despite soaring tensions between the two countries since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February.

Ensuring the operation of the ISS has become one of the few remaining areas of cooperation

between the United States and Russia. "When you each are flying other's crew members, you know that you have a huge responsibility that you're promising to the other country," NASA associate administrator Kathy Lueders told reporters in a recent press conference.

"At a working level, we really appreciated the constancy in the relationship, even during some really, really tough times geopolitically."

Fifth female cosmonaut

Kikina, 38 and an engineer by training, will become the fifth Russian female professional cosmonaut to go into space. "I hope in the near future we have more women in the cosmonaut corps," the Novosibirsk native told AFP in August.

The Soviet Union put the first woman in space, Valentina Tereshkova, in 1963, nearly 20 years before the first American woman Sally Ride. Since then, America has flown dozens more women.

It will also be the first spaceflight for American astronauts Nicole Mann and Josh Cassada, but the fifth for Japan's Koichi Wakata. After a journey of about 30 hours, their ship will dock with the station on Thursday, ready to begin a five-month science mission and relieve the four members of Crew-4,



CAPE CANAVERAL, United States: (L-R) Russian cosmonaut Anna Kikina, NASA astronaut Josh Cassada, NASA astronaut Nicole Mann, and Japanese astronaut Koichi Wakata arrive ahead of the launch of the SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket, carrying the Crew5 Dragon, at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida on October 5, 2022. — AFP

who will stay a few days for handover.

Crew-5's arrival will bring the total number of astronauts on the ISS to 11, including two other Russians and an American who arrived on the recent Soyuz. — AFP

Freed US citizen in Oman after detention in Iran

MUSCAT: Baquer Namazi, one of four US citizens whose freedom Washington had demanded in the context of any revived nuclear deal with Tehran, landed in neutral Oman Wednesday, his lawyer said. Namazi, a former UNICEF official, was detained in February 2016 when he travelled to Iran to press for the release of his son Siamak, who had been arrested in October of the previous year.

"Mohammad Baquer Namazi, who had been released from prison a few days ago, left Iran today (Wednesday)," the Iranian state broadcaster said, posting footage of Namazi boarding a plane. Human rights lawyer Jared Genser later confirmed via Namazi's cousin who travelled with the 85-year-old on the plane that he had arrived in Muscat, Oman's capital.

The United States has been pressing for the release of the Namazis and two other Americans amid efforts to revive the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and major powers. His son Siamak, "also wrongfully detained", has been given furlough from prison but remains in Iran, a State Department spokesperson told AFP.

"Baquer Namazi was unjustly detained in Iran and then not permitted to leave the county after serving his sentence, despite his repeated requirement for urgent medical attention," the spokesperson said. "We understand that the lifting of the travel ban and his son's furlough were related to his medical requirement."

The United Nations said last week that the pair had been allowed to leave Iran, after an appeal from Secretary General Antonio Guterres.

The Namazis were both were convicted of espionage in October 2016 and sentenced to 10 years in prison. Baquer Namazi was released on medical leave in 2018 and had been serving his sentence under house arrest. — AFP

International

Lebanese lawmaker frees over \$8,500 in trapped bank deposits

Several activists gather outside the bank to support Zarazir

BEIRUT: A Lebanese lawmaker entered a bank branch, accompanied by lawyers, and freed more than \$8,000 in trapped dollar deposits on Wednesday to pay for surgery, her lawyer said. Cynthia Zarazir, who was elected to parliament in May, is the latest in a growing number of angry depositors who have forced Lebanese lenders to unlock savings trapped under informal capital controls imposed in the face of an unprecedented financial crisis.

Zarazir, unarmed but with legal cover, entered her bank branch in a northern suburb of Beirut at around 9 am (0600 GMT) to demand \$8,500 to pay for surgery costs not covered by her health insurance, her lawyer Fouad Debs said. She exited hours later after the bank paid her the sum in cash, Debs and the official National News Agency said.

Several activists had gathered outside the bank to support Zarazir, whose plight echoes that of the many Lebanese who have been locked out of their savings by bank restrictions that have tightened since the start of the country's financial crash in 2019.

Commercial lenders have effectively banned most foreign currency transactions, forcing depositors to withdraw their savings in the plummeting Lebanese pound which has lost more than 95 percent of its value against the dollar.



"We are not beggars, we just want our money"

'Not beggars'

Also on Wednesday, a retired member of Lebanon's Internal Security Forces stormed a bank in Beirut's southern suburbs to demand access to

\$48,000 in dollar savings as well as 270 million Lebanese pounds from his pension. "I will not leave here, one day, two days, three days, a month if necessary ... It is my right," said Hussein Chokr, who was unarmed.

Meanwhile, dozens of protesters gathered outside central bank headquarters in Beirut to demand access to their money amid a heavy troop deployment. "We came to claim our rights," said protester Houssam Machmouchi, 42.

"We are not beggars, we just want our money." On Tuesday, a retired diplomat and honorary consul of Ireland, Georges Siam, carried out an all-day sit-in at a bank in the suburbs of Beirut to recover his savings before eventually reaching a compromise. Almost simultaneously, at least two other armed bank heists took place in separate branches.

They included one by a retired policeman who held up a bank in eastern Lebanon to demand a money transfer to his son in Ukraine to help pay for rent and university tuition. Lebanon's banks closed for a week after a series of heists on September 16. They have since reopened amid tight security. — AFP



ANTELIAS: Lebanese MP Cynthia Zarazir is pictured inside Byblos Bank Antelias branch north of Beirut demanding access to her savings and refusing to leave the bank without her money, on October 5, 2022. — AFP

UK PM seeks to soothe Tory faithful

BIRMINGHAM: Britain's embattled prime minister Liz Truss marched to the lectern for the most important speech of her political career on Wednesday accompanied by a song about a bitter break-up. After concluding her speech to the Conservatives' tempestuous annual conference, she at least found her way out of the 1,500-capacity Hall 1 of Birmingham's International Convention Centre.

The door's "Exit" sign was taped up, to prevent mischief-making by press photographers, one of whom was dragged away by security before the speech for unspecified reasons. When she launched her campaign in July to succeed Boris Johnson as Tory leader, Truss briefly got lost when she tried to leave the room.

This time in Birmingham, her arrival song was "Moving On Up" by M People, presumably to chime with the conference slogan of "Getting Britain Moving". But its lyrics—in fact a stinging goodbye to a cheating lover—could have rung true with those already calling for Truss to go.

"You've done me wrong, your time is up/You took a sip from the devil's cup. "You broke my heart, there's no way back/Move right out of here, baby, go on pack your bags." The 40-minute speech was briefly interrupted by Greenpeace protesters holding up a sign saying "Who voted for this?"

The sign was a clear reminder that Truss became prime minister with the votes of just 80,000 Tory activists, not the country at large. Opinion polls have increasingly signalled the country's deep unhappiness at her shock-and-awe economic policies.

For many of her Tory critics, Truss is already drinking in the last-chance saloon just a month into her premiership. Her policy package convulsed financial markets and forced an emergency inter-



BIRMINGHAM, United Kingdom: Britain's Prime Minister Liz Truss and her husband Hugh O'Leary wave to applauding delegates as they leave after delivering her keynote address on the final day of the annual Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham. — AFP

vention by the Bank of England.

One of the leaders of the awkward squad is former minister Grant Shapps, whom Truss unceremoniously sacked when she appointed her new cabinet. Shapps said the speech, and the next 10 days, were crucial if Truss wants to avoid a no-confidence vote by Tory MPs—mere months since they dumped Johnson.

'What a great week!'

As it was, the speech broke no new policy ground, but recapped Truss's life story and her low-tax, anti-European Union, patriotic mantra. It avoided the gaffes that made a 2014 conference speech by Truss go viral.

Then environment minister, she delivered a stilted and surreal turn in praise of British pork and cheese. But while no disgrace, her leader's speech did showcase some of the traits that make Truss such a wooden orator.

She smiled oddly at serious moments, then looked oddly determined in lighter sections. Eyes

staring, leaning forward, she declared her three priorities were "growth, growth, growth". Tentative applause built from the hall when she praised Kwasi Kwarteng as her "dynamic" chancellor of the exchequer.

And she continued to speak before finally realising that it was a moment to pause and let the party give its approval of the embattled minister after a disastrous few days. On Tuesday, Truss failed three times to declare she trusted Kwarteng—one of a series of car-crash moments that this week made the Tories look more like the perpetually faction-ridden Labour party than the Western world's most successful political force.

Many delegates admitted as much, and many left Birmingham on Tuesday to beat a national rail strike in Britain. A few empty seats dotted the back of the convention hall. Tory chairman Jake Berry was the first warm-up act for Truss, and gamely tried to inject confidence despite polls showing Labour in a commanding lead and Truss seen herself as "incompetent" and "useless". — AFP

Amir calls to adhere to law...

Continued from Page 1

He added that the new Cabinet does not have enough political experience.

The new Cabinet retained Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah and Finance Minister Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid. Rana Al-Fares kept her post as Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Communications, while Mohammed Al-Fares, the former oil minister, was kept as Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs.

Information Minister Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi also retained his post. New faces include Defense Minister Sheikh Abdullah Ali Al-Sabah and Oil Minister Hussein Ismail, a top oil executive. Mazen Al-Nahedh, a businessman, was appointed as Minister of Commerce and Industry, while Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi was named Health Minister. Khalifa Al-Humaidha was appointed Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs and Minister of State for Housing. Huda Al-Shayji, the second woman in the Cabinet along with Rana Al-Fares, was named Minister of Social Affairs and Development and Minister of State for Women and

Childhood Affairs, while Muthanna Al-Refai was appointed Minister of Education. Mohammad Buzabar was appointed Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs.

Earlier, Sheikh Ahmad's appointment was welcomed by opposition MPs, who have a clear majority in the house. MP Abdulwahab Al-Essa called on the premier to form a national salvation government to take Kuwait out of its troubles, insisting that ministers should be selected on the basis of competence and not due to political reasons.

MP Thamer Al-Suwait welcomed the premier's appointment and called on him to select a strong team for the Cabinet and submit a reform-oriented program of action for the new Cabinet. MP Saifi Al-Saifi called on the prime minister to submit a program of action that responds to the needs of the people. He added that not much time is left because the country has been exhausted by previous Cabinets.

Meanwhile, two former MPs who lost the elections on Sept 29 have challenged the results of the elections before the constitutional court, claiming there were calculation errors in the counting of votes. Candidate Ahmad Al-Otaibi from the fifth constituency also submitted a similar challenge. Several losing candidates have alleged there were major errors in counting the votes, which made them lose. They are demanding a recount of votes to rectify the alleged mistakes.

country's Jebel Ali port district, which is also home to churches and a Sikh temple.

Thousands of South Asian workers live in labor camps nearby and will be provided with special buses to allow them to visit the 2,300 sq m temple and its community center. Committee member Raju Shroff, who runs a textiles business, said it was the realization of his father's five-decade dream to open a dedicated temple in Dubai.

"It's an amazing feeling because it's a dream come true, at least for my father, who's been in this country since 1960," he told AFP. "I got involved in this project only five years ago, but he's been on it for five decades. So the journey has been quite (long)," added Shroff. — AFP

OPEC+ agrees major cut, Biden...

Continued from Page 1

energy-fueled inflation. Saudi Arabia's energy minister, Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, said the cartel's priority was "to maintain a sustainable oil market" following its first in-person meeting since March 2020.

But the move drew a swift rebuke from US President Joe Biden, who had made a controversial trip to Saudi Arabia in July in part to lobby for a boost in oil production as Americans faced rising prices at fuel stations. The timing is also bad for Biden's political agendas it comes ahead of US midterm elections next month.

"The president is disappointed by the short-sighted decision by OPEC+," National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and top economic advisor Brian Deese said in a statement. The supply cut will hit countries "already reeling" from high prices while "the global economy is dealing with the continued negative impact" of Russia's attack on Ukraine, the statement said.

OPEC+ decided to slash its output as oil prices fell below \$90 per barrel in recent months over concerns about the global economy, after soaring to \$140 in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine earlier this year. The international benchmark, Brent North Sea crude, was up almost two percent at \$93.41 following Wednesday's announcement.

The oil production cut could give sanctions-hit Russia a boost ahead of a European Union ban on most of its crude exports later this year and as the Group of Seven wealthy democracies mull a cap on the country's oil prices. Russian deputy prime minister Alexander Novak, who is under US sanctions and attended the OPEC+ meeting, said a price cap would have a "detrimental effect" on the global oil sector. He warned that Russian companies would "not supply oil to those countries" that introduce such a cap.

Collectively known as OPEC+, the alliance drastically slashed output by almost 10 million barrels



VIENNA: Representatives of OPEC member countries, including Kuwaiti Oil Minister Mohammed Al-Fares, attend a press conference on Oct 5, 2022. — AFP

per day (bpd) in April 2020 to reverse a massive drop in crude prices caused by COVID lockdowns. OPEC+ began to raise production last year after the market improved. Output returned to pre-pandemic levels this year, but only on paper as some members have struggled to meet their quotas. The group agreed last month on a small, symbolic cut of 100,000 bpd from October, the first in more than a year. Consumer countries had pushed for months for OPEC+ to open taps more widely to bring down prices, but the group ignored them again.

"Knowing that Russia is willing to cut output, the move could also be perceived as another escalation of the geopolitical tensions" between Moscow and the West, said Ipek Ozkardeska, a Swissquote bank analyst, ahead of the meeting. Biden travelled to Saudi Arabia in July in part to convince the kingdom to loosen the production taps. The trip saw Biden meet Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman despite his promise to make Riyadh a "pariah" following the 2018 killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

While the cut was not welcomed by the United States, several OPEC+ nations have struggled to meet their quotas in the first place. The next ministerial OPEC meeting will be on Dec 4. In recent months, the cartel and its partners met online each month. — AFP

Ornate Hindu temple opens doors in UAE

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates' first purpose-built Hindu temple opened in Dubai on Tuesday, providing a place of worship and support network for the large Indian community including migrant laborers. The large white marble building with Indian as well as Emirati architectural flourishes sits in the officially Islamic

International

Xi's 'Chinese Dream' flickers in one Beijing neighbourhood

Everyone has their own ideals, aspirations and dreams

BEIJING: Wu has staked out his patch of the Chinese Dream. Married with a second child on the way, he has a Beijing apartment and a car paid for by a tech job with a comfortable salary. He has even jumped the fence of China's restrictive residency rules to move from eastern Shandong province to the capital, near the middle-class neighbourhood of Shangdi.

"Things are going pretty well," the fresh-faced thirty-something says with a smile. His ascent through the hurly-burly of China's competitive capital has broadly tracked the leadership of President Xi Jinping.

It is 10 years since Xi unveiled the "Chinese Dream", a grand vision to restore the country's global influence through a collective struggle for prosperity, power and glory — steered by the Communist Party.

Its achievements include pulling tens of millions from poverty into an economy fizzing on tech, manufacturing supply chains and the breathless energy of 1.4 billion people. That has brought new freedoms and opportunities, alongside unexpected challenges for a party primed for control and self-preservation. "Everyone has their own ideals, aspirations and dreams," Xi said in a speech on November 29, 2012 shortly after he was made party general secretary.



'Things are going pretty well'

"In my opinion, realising the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is the greatest Chinese Dream." But as Xi prepares for the party to anoint him for an unprecedented third term in office, some say that dream is losing definition. Even in Shangdi, anxiety lurks behind the baubles of affluence. Workers struggle with burnout and the soaring costs of housing and childcare, as well as the social pressures of marriage — all in an economy weighed down by the COVID-19 pandemic. Expectations for the future are changing, with potentially profound implications for China's direction. "People are chasing different things from what they used to," says 29-year-old Anna Chen, who works for another tech firm in Shangdi.

Tech tales

Over the last decade, hulking office blocks have transformed Shangdi from an unremarkable suburb to a landmark on China's tech map. The area is near the ruins of the Old Summer Palace — destroyed by British soldiers in 1860 — a reminder of China's "cen-

tury of humiliation" at the hands of Western nations that still rankles in Beijing. Many of Shangdi's new residents work for tech giants such as Baidu, Kuaishou and Didi Chuxing — companies that dominate daily life in the world's most populous nation and now outsize many of their Western rivals.

With his wire-framed glasses, dark T-shirt and sweatpants, 31-year-old Sheldon Zhang wears the uniform of a generation of young tech professionals who have emerged as some of the best-educated and most cosmopolitan in China's history. A fast-talking college dropout who co-founded a startup in his early 20s, Zhang is now a user experience architect at a major firm, tinkering with robotics and artificial intelligence in a mission he says is for the "future benefit of humanity".

Hubs such as Shangdi are drivers of AI, quantum computing, sensors and chips earmarked in the party's last five-year plan as essential for the next phase of China's development. But industry insiders warn a "winter" has settled across the tech sector. In a widespread crackdown, Beijing has been bringing to heel major firms over fears they have too great a hold over Chinese consumers. Revenue growth is in decline at big-hitters such as Alibaba and Tencent, and job layoffs in the sector are rising. China's economy grew just 0.4 percent in the second quarter of this year — its worst performance since the start of the pandemic. "Without an explosion of new technologies, we may start to slow down or regress," Zhang says.

Reality bites

Others are already feeling the squeeze. Li Mengzhen, a 27-year-old strategy specialist at a short-video platform, says the tech scene's rank and file now self-effacingly label themselves "digital blue-collar". "Our situation is quite similar to migrant workers in the 1990s," she says.

She has a decent salary but fears property ownership in Shangdi, where apartments easily sell for 100,000 yuan (\$13,900) per square metre, will forever be beyond her. "We left our hometowns to work in Beijing... but can't say that we're Beijingers," says Li. "Our coders are like the people who worked on sewing machines or putting in screws... their jobs are easily replaceable." It is an ennui spreading across much of her generation, with many seeking solace in a counterculture of "lying flat" — abandoning the endless work cycle to meet the impossible goals of urban living.

China's zero-COVID strategy has chopped back at growth, making it even harder to get a job and then keep it. Youth unemployment in urban areas has repeatedly hit record highs this year, peaking in July when nearly 20 percent of people aged 16-24 were jobless, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. But new city cultures also provide ladders out.



BEIJING, China: File photo shows a child driving a go-kart in a mall in Beijing's middle-class neighbourhood of Shangdi. It is 10 years since China's President Xi Jinping unveiled the "Chinese Dream", a grand vision to restore the country's global influence through a collective struggle for prosperity, power and glory. — AFP

At a cafe in southern Shangdi, a beaming Feng Jing says she has just quit her job at a video platform to become a yoga teacher. "I'm someone who chases freedom," the 29-year-old says. "I don't feel tied down by money or other preconceived ideas."

Family values

At the district's Love Park, giggling children chase each other while being watched over by stone statues inscribed with Communist shibboleths of China's past.

"Stabilise low birth levels, raise the quality of the newborn population," reads one monument to a family planning policy imposed in the late 1970s to slow population growth, which restricted many families to having one child. The government is now encouraging couples to have up to three children to head off a demographic crisis poised to burden a declining, weary young workforce with the costs of paying for hundreds of millions of retirees.

It is perhaps the biggest challenge of all to the Chinese Dream, threatening to warp state spending to provide healthcare and pensions for about 400 million people over 60 years old by 2040.

If current trends continue, the population will likely peak by the end of the decade before entering a "sustained" decline, according to the state-linked Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Such a decline would inflict "extremely unfavourable social and economic consequences" on the country, the academy adds.

Moves to stir a baby boom, with tax breaks and childcare rebates, have so far fallen flat. "One kid is expensive enough," said one father, declining to be

identified. Others question the need to marry or have children at all — a radical position in a patriarchal society where the pressure to start a family is high.

Tech worker Anna Chen said she aims to earn just enough to travel the world and support her parents through their dotage. "There are quite enough people in the world already," she told AFP, using a pseudonym to avoid blowback from her employer. "And the way society is developing, you can live well without marriage or kids."

Rejuvenated nation?

In the shadow of a block of luxury apartments in Beijing, 70-year-old Wang Yufu dozes through the midday heat. Wang moved to the city from eastern Jiangsu province around the same time Xi unfurled his Chinese Dream. Spry and unassuming, he leads a team of migrant workers beautifying Shangdi's green spaces, earning around 6,500 yuan (\$917) per month — several times his wages when he first arrived.

China's rapid urbanisation in the last four decades has depended on migrant labour. According to official data, there are currently 290 million people from the countryside working in urban areas, many staffing low-paid jobs. But strict residency requirements and ballooning living costs prevent most from settling in the cities they have helped to construct. The lunch break over, Wang cajoled his team back to work in a nearby park. Things are better than they were a decade ago, he said, but big dreams are still for other people. "People like us could never afford houses here." — AFP

Ten dead after Himalayas avalanche hits climbers

NEW DELHI: Ten people are confirmed dead after an avalanche struck climbers in the Indian Himalayas, police said Wednesday, with 18 other members of the expedition still missing. Several dozen climbing trainees were caught in Tuesday morning's snowslide near the summit of Mount Draupadi ka Danda-II in the northern state of Uttarakhand.

The Indian air force and local disaster agency were assisting with rescue efforts before heavy snow and rainfall forced them to abandon the search overnight. "Rescue teams have recovered 10 bodies," the Uttarakhand state police force said on Twitter after operations resumed in the morning. Fourteen people have so far been rescued from the site of the avalanche, around 4,900 metres (16,000 feet) above sea level, and police said five were being treated at a district hospital in Uttarkashi. Police footage showed several rescued climbers arriving in the town and walking unassisted while escorted by officers.

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama confirmed on Twitter that accomplished climber Savita Kanswal, who had summited Everest earlier this year, was among the dead. Kanswal was an instructor with the expedition and had been feted by the climbing community for summiting the world's highest peak and nearby Makalu in just 16 days—a women's record.

Dhama said the government would provide immediate financial assistance to those injured in the avalanche along with the families of victims. State disaster agency spokesperson Rishim Aggarwal told AFP that the climbers had been stuck in a crevasse after the avalanche hit. The Nehru Institute of Mountaineering said the expedition included 34 of its trainees, seven instructors and a nursing assistant. Two air force helicopters had been sent to the region to assist with the search, senior disaster management official Devendra Singh Patwal told AFP.—AFP



UTTARAKHAND: Evacuees (L) rest after receiving first aid at the ITBP Matli helipad station on October 5, 2022, after being airlifted during a rescue operation for 26 missing climbers struck by an avalanche in the northern state of Uttarakhand. — AFP



NAGO, Japan: Anti-base activist Suzuyo Takazato (front L) walking in front of a protest outside Henoko US base in Nago, Okinawa Prefecture. For decades, residents of Japan's Okinawa have strongly opposed the US military bases that dot the region. — AFP

Views on US bases shift in Japan's Okinawa

GINOWAN, Japan: For decades, residents of Japan's Okinawa have strongly opposed the US military bases that dot the region but a subtle shift is under way, driven by Chinese sabre-rattling and economic challenges. The bases are often seen as a disproportionate burden for Japan's sub-tropical southernmost region. Okinawa comprises 0.6 percent of the Japanese archipelago's territory but contains 70 percent of the land used for US bases, and over half the 50,000-strong troop presence. Base-related crime, accidents and pollution are potent irritants for Okinawa's 1.5 million residents.

But with Okinawa now a front line in the burgeoning confrontation between China and regional US allies, the bases are increasingly important for American and Japanese defence strategies. "Okinawa has been given an excessive burden," said 39-year-old Ryo Matayoshi, a municipal councillor in the Okinawan city of Ginowan. But "if we think about the security of Japan and of east Asia, the presence of bases on Okinawa is inevitable in a way," he told AFP. "A lot of people of our generation recognise that reality." Japan has long been wary of China's growing military, but the stakes have risen as Beijing hardens its rhetoric on Taiwan and riles Tokyo with incursions around disputed islands.

In August, Chinese drills in response to US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's trip to Taiwan spotlighted the issue, with several missiles landing in waters near Okinawa. "China's reaction to the Pelosi visit and the

Russian invasion of Ukraine... have elevated the threat perception," said Yoichiro Sato, a professor and foreign affairs expert at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University.

Crime, noise, pollution

Anti-base opposition is deeply rooted in Okinawa, which was an independent kingdom before Japanese annexation in the 19th century. Tokyo used it as a buffer to slow US forces during World War II and over a quarter of the population died in the 1945 Battle of Okinawa. US occupation only ended in 1972, under a mutual treaty that left American bases in place. And persistent flight noise, pollution and crime have kept anti-base sentiment strong, according to 82-year-old politician and peace activist Suzuyo Takazato.

Between 1972 and 2020, Okinawa's government recorded 582 violent crimes involving base residents, and the kidnap and rape of a 12-year-old girl by three US soldiers in 1995 drew more than 80,000 protesters. The treaty governing US forces limits Japanese legal oversight—a persistent sore point, said Takazato. "When a helicopter crashed in the Okinawa International University, US soldiers surrounded it and wouldn't allow any inspection," she said.

In recent years, opposition has crystallised around the planned relocation of Futenma air base in Ginowan, sometimes called the world's most dangerous base because of its proximity to homes. The government wants it shifted north to the less-populated Henoko, but base opponents want it removed altogether. That is the position of governor Denny Tamaki, a prominent anti-base politician who was recently re-elected. But at the local level, candidates backed by the pro-base Liberal Democratic Party, Japan's ruling party, are gaining ground, including in the areas where Futenma and Henoko are located.—AFP

News in brief

Cholera outbreak in Syria

DAMASCUS, Syria: Syria's health ministry has recorded 39 deaths from cholera and nearly 600 cases in an outbreak spreading in the war-ravaged country that the United Nations warned is "evolving alarmingly". A total of 594 cases have been recorded across 11 of its 14 provinces since late last month, the health ministry said late Tuesday. "The situation is evolving alarmingly in affected governorates and expanding to new areas," the World Health Organization warned Tuesday. Most of those who have died are in the northern province of Aleppo, and it was not immediately clear if the dead were included in the overall case tally. It is the first major outbreak of cholera in Syria in over a decade. The extremely virulent disease is generally contracted from contaminated food or water, and causes diarrhoea and vomiting. It can spread in residential areas that lack proper sewerage networks or mains drinking water.

Torture rampant in DR Congo

KINSHASA: Torture and degrading treatment is widespread and practiced with impunity in DR Congo's conflict zones, the United Nations said Wednesday, with over 3,000 cases recorded in the past two years. A report published by the UN Joint Human Rights Office and the UN peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo found that 93 percent of the recorded 3,618 cases occurred in areas of armed conflict in the central African nation. Much of eastern DRC is prey to armed groups, many of which are a legacy of regional wars that flared during the late 1990s and early 2000s. Militia attacks against civilians are routine in the volatile region. On Tuesday alone, rebels from the Allied Democratic Forces—which the Islamic State group claims as its affiliate—killed 10 people in North Kivu province.

Danish PM calls general election

COPENHAGEN: Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen on Wednesday called an early general election for November 1, with her left-wing block neck and neck in the polls against the right and far-right. "I have today informed the queen that elections to the Folketing (parliament) will be held," the Social Democratic leader told a press conference. In office since June 2019, Frederiksen had to call elections by June 2023, under the Danish system. But she had faced an ultimatum from a small party propping up her minority government demanding that she call elections before parliament's first debate on October 6. — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2022

Boursa Kuwait rings bell for financial literacy during 'World Investor Week'

Campaign in cooperation with INJAZ Kuwait and CFA Society Kuwait

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait rang the bell for the second consecutive year for financial literacy during "World Investor Week", in an effort to raise awareness of the importance and necessity of financial literacy and its impact on life, in collaboration with INJAZ Kuwait and the CFA Society Kuwait.

World Investor Week is a global campaign promoted by the International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO), in collaboration with the World Federation of Exchanges (WFE), to raise awareness about the importance of investor education and protection, and to highlight the various initiatives taken on by securities regulators, in relation to these two key pillars. The 2022 edition will mark the sixth year for this campaign, which saw the participation of over 100 exchanges and eleven international institutions. This year, "World Investor Week" will run from Monday, 3 October to Sunday 9 October 2022, with its themes centered on investor resilience and sustainable finance.

In commemoration of this week, Boursa Kuwait, in collaboration with the CFA Society Kuwait, recorded a podcast talking about financial literacy and organized a seminar about the future of risk and the challenges this sector might face in the coming years.

Commenting on this initiative, Mohammad Saud Al-Osaimi, Boursa Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer, said, "Today, Boursa Kuwait joins more than 100 stock exchanges from around the world to ring the bell in commemoration of World Investor Week and bring attention to the importance of financial literacy. We continue to partner with internationally renowned organizations and institutions to raise the level and awareness of this important initiative, especially in the Kuwait capital market".

Ashley Alder, Chairman of IOSCO board and the Chief Executive Officer of the Hong Kong Securities and Futures Commission, also spoke on this occasion, saying, "I welcome this sixth edition of "World Investor Week", organized by IOSCO in collaboration with the WFE. During the last two years, we have seen a growing number of retail investors participating in securities markets. Those investors are facing new challenges, such as inflationary pressures and the uncertainties deriving from geopolitical tensions. Financial education and investor protection play a critical role in enhancing investor resilience and investor confidence to participate in financial markets on a properly informed basis."

Partnership with INJAZ Kuwait

In addition to this week's events, Boursa Kuwait announced a partnership with INJAZ Kuwait, a nonprofit organization that aims to empower and equip the youth with the necessary skills and knowledge, including the necessary financial literacy skills, that allow to become influential and productive participants in the Kuwait economy. INJAZ Kuwait also offers vocational volunteer programs in schools and universities. As part of this partner-

ship, Boursa Kuwait will be sponsoring the initiatives of Financial Literacy and Future Leaders offered by the organization.

Al-Osaimi spoke about the partnership with INJAZ, saying, "We continue to sponsor, develop and support a range of high-impact, education focused initiatives as well as enhance our collaborations with strategic partners like the CFA Society, local universities and our partners across the investment community. To that end, we are pleased to announce a new strategic partnership with INJAZ Kuwait, through which we seek to educate a new generation of market participants and stakeholders."

INJAZ Kuwait Chief Executive Officer, Laila Al-Mutairi, commended Boursa Kuwait's efforts to support initiatives that aim at spreading financial literacy among youth, claiming that "Boursa Kuwait's commitment to equip the youth with key financial skills from a young age and enable them to face future challenges addresses one of INJAZ Kuwait's main objectives. Investing in the youth is an absolute necessity, and it reinforces our organization's role in empowering this segment of society through specialized training programs."

"INJAZ Kuwait's financial literacy programs are internationally accredited programs that are presented in both public and private schools and across different educational levels, contributing to the creation of an ambitious generation with a bright outlook towards the future," Al-Mutairi added.

Continued collaboration with CFA Society

Boursa Kuwait also announced its continued partnership with the CFA Society Kuwait, whereby the Society will contribute to enriching the Boursa Kuwait Academy platform with valuable content. It will also organize specialized training programs and seminars to various stakeholders and to those interested in capital markets. The CFA Society Kuwait is an association of local investment professionals, consisting of portfolio managers, security analysts, investment advisors and other financial practitioners, that has served CFA charter holders and CFA Program candidates locally since 2008. Boursa Kuwait entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with CFA Society in October 2018, aiming to educate the public on the fundamentals of investing through the Boursa Kuwait Online platform, the digital education portal designed and developed by Boursa Kuwait, which aims to promote investing and financial literacy among new and professional retail investors. The Society will also collaborate in the organization of training programs and seminars.

Commenting on the prolific partnership between the two institutions, Aminah Abotalaf, President of the CFA Society Kuwait, said: "We take pride in our partnership with Boursa Kuwait, and we strongly believe that taking on initiatives related to financial literacy directly contributes to the improvement of the investment environment and the education of its participants. Since incep-



KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait on Wednesday joined more than 100 stock exchanges from around the world to ring the bell in commemoration of World Investor Week. Mohammad Saud Al-Osaimi (right) during the ceremony.

tion of the CFA Society Kuwait in 2008, we have worked towards elevating both the standards of ethics and professional conduct in the financial sector as well as educating and protecting investors by promoting market integrity and transparency among policymakers and regional regulators."

During 2022, Boursa Kuwait organized a series of training programs in collaboration with the International Capital Market Association (ICMA), targeting financial brokerage companies as well as investment companies and asset managers. The company also partnered with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to organize a workshop around the standards, practices and tools for ensuring the impactful implementation and reporting of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles as well as the importance of integrating them with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and into business operations.

These initiatives form part of Boursa Kuwait's efforts to develop and educate market participants as well as create a lasting meaningful impact on the communities where it operates. Part of the company's Corporate Sustainability (CS) strategy, they are in line with Goal 4 - Quality Education - and Goal 17 - Partnership for the Goals - of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Boursa Kuwait's Corporate Sustainability strategy stipulates ensuring initiatives apply and fall in line with the company's corporate social responsibility (CSR), industry best practice standards and investor expectations, creating strong and sustainable partnerships that ultimately achieve success and allow Boursa Kuwait to leverage the capabilities and strengths of other companies or organizations that have experience in different fields, and integrating sustainability efforts with the company culture, in order to achieve longevity and an ongoing impact that is carried on and instilled in the day-to-day operations of the stock exchange.

Under-fire Truss vows to get UK 'through tempest'

BIRMINGHAM: Prime Minister Liz Truss vowed to steer the UK "through the tempest" as she closed her party's tumultuous annual conference on Wednesday, making an unapologetic pitch for economic "growth, growth, growth." Just a month since she succeeded Boris Johnson, Truss has alienated voters, financial markets and many in the ruling Conservative party with a crash program of debt-fueled tax cuts to boost Britain's stagnant economy.

But Truss argued in her speech that the status quo was not an option, despite the botched rollout of her fiscal plan leading to a humiliating U-turn on a pledge to cut income tax for the highest earners.

"In these tough times, we need to step up," she told delegates, taking aim at what she said was an "anti-growth coalition" holding back attempts to revive the economy. "I'm determined to get Britain moving, to get us through the tempest and put us on a stronger footing as a nation," she added, mentioning the word "growth" 27 times during the speech.

Despite only being leader for exactly a month, Truss's calamitous start, with a 10-day hiatus because of the death of Queen Elizabeth II, has already seen her fighting to keep her job.

Former minister Grant Shapps, who supported Truss's leadership rival Rishi Sunak, said she could face a no-confidence vote by MPs if the keynote speech fails to start reviving the party's dismal standing in opinion polls.



BIRMINGHAM: Britain's Health Secretary and Deputy Prime Minister Theresa Coffey (left) and Britain's Prime Minister Liz Truss applaud after Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Kwasi Kwarteng delivered his keynote address on the second day of the annual Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham, central England, on October 3, 2022. —AFP

"In the end, I don't think members of parliament, Conservatives, if they see the polls continue as they are, are going to sit on their hands," he told Times Radio. "A way would be found to make that change." The speech wasn't without its hiccups, with protesters holding a Greenpeace banner saying "who voted for this?" disrupting the prime minister around 15 minutes into her message.

Truss's critics, including allies of Johnson, have accused her of lacking a national mandate for her unpopular reforms after she won the Tory leadership. But she insisted Britain needed to "do things differently", with no time for "more drift and delay".

"Whenever there is change, there is disruption. Not everyone will be in favour. "But

everyone will benefit from the result—a growing economy and a better future," she said.

It remains to be seen whether the speech has the effect 10 Downing Street wants.

Truss's media interviews in the build-up to Wednesday focussed unrelentingly on the U-turn she and Chancellor of the Exchequer Kwasi Kwarteng were forced to stage on the signature element of their reform overhaul.

Cabinet splits emerged in Birmingham on indications that despite the impact of the crisis on the poor, the pair will next cut welfare benefits. Truss denied she had lost control of her cabinet after putting on a show of unity with the beleaguered Kwarteng on a visit to a construction site in Birmingham on Tuesday. —AFP

WTO slashes 2023 global trade forecast as recession looms

GENEVA: The World Trade Organization on Wednesday dramatically lowered its global trade forecast for 2023, as Russia's war in Ukraine and other shocks take their toll on the world economy. Presenting a revision of their annual trade forecast, WTO economists said they expected the volume of global merchandise trade to grow 3.5 percent this year, which is slightly higher than their expectations in April.

But they forecast it would grow by only one percent in 2023 — dramatically down from their expectations of 3.4-percent growth six months ago. "The picture for 2023 has darkened considerably," WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala told reporters in Geneva.

"Today the global economy faces multi-pronged crises. Monetary tightening is weighing on growth across much of the world." As for the global economy as a whole, WTO economists stuck with their April forecast of 2.8-percent GDP growth this year, but said growth in 2023 was now expected to be just 2.3 percent—down a full percentage point from the previous forecast.

By way of comparison, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has maintained its 2022 forecast at three percent, and expects 2.2 percent growth next year. The International Monetary Fund meanwhile forecasts growth at 3.2 percent this year and 2.9 percent in 2023.

The WTO pointed out that its April forecasts were presented only weeks into the start of Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine, making them very uncertain. The estimates for 2023 "now appear overly optimistic, as energy prices have skyrocketed, inflation has become more broad-based, and the war shows no sign of letting up," it said. The WTO said surging energy prices in Europe, stemming from the war in Ukraine, were expected to squeeze household spending and raise manufacturing costs on the continent. —AFP

Business

Europe fears an energy crisis, but power crisis a long reality in Iraq

Despite oil wealth, endemic corruption and wars have wrecked Iraq's infrastructure

SADR CITY: Europe may fear an energy crisis over the coming winter, but for Iraqis an unstable power supply and frequent blackouts have been a reality during decades of war and turmoil. The Middle Eastern country is rich in oil, but endemic corruption and devastating conflict have taken a heavy toll on its infrastructure and forced most of its 42 million people to adapt. The noise of privately owned generators can be heard all over the country as households and businesses try to make up for supply shortfalls from the national electricity company.

"Without generators, Iraq would go completely dark," Mohammed Jabr, a retired public servant, told AFP in his yard in Sadr City, a working-class district of the capital Baghdad. Ensuring a stable power supply, he said, requires resourcefulness and money when the national grid can go down for four to 10 hours a day in peak summer consumption, according to electricity ministry data.

Generators "provide the electricity we need for the television, fridge, air cooler", said the 62-year-old former accountant. He pays \$50 a month in generator subscription fees-but even that isn't always enough to keep a whole house running. "A client may have to turn the fridge off to keep the air conditioner on," explained Khaled Al-Shablawi, who has worked for a generator service for 13 years.

'Plunged into darkness'

Soaring energy prices fuelled by Russia's war in Ukraine have forced a new reality upon European nations, where people are asked to limit the electricity they use for heating, lighting and cooking. Some cities keep street lights on for shorter lengths of time, and in Paris, the lights illuminating the Eiffel Tower are switched off an hour earlier now to save energy.

But to Jabr, such a step "is normal". "When there's a technical problem, the whole area could be left without power for a day or two before they fix it," he said. Jabr recalled how immediately after the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled longtime dictator Saddam Hussein, "houses were plunged into darkness" after fighting destroyed infrastructure.

"There was very little electricity, only two or three hours" a day, he said. "People had their own generators. They would buy fuel and it would last a day or



SADR CITY, Iraq: A technician checks the oil on the dipstick of one of the fuel-based electricity generators in the eastern Sadr City suburb of Iraq's capital Baghdad. — AFP

two." In Iraq's long summer months, when temperatures can peak around 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit) and air-conditioner use surges, overloaded generator providers hike up prices.

Some regions were deprived of power altogether in the summer of 2021, triggering sporadic street protests by frustrated residents.

Europe 'destabilized'

Despite its oil wealth, the country relies heavily on energy supply from neighbouring Iran.

With its mighty Tigris and Euphrates rivers, Iraq has some hydro-electric power but no nuclear plants, and is just beginning to explore renewable energy options such as solar panels. In a bid to overcome the common blackouts, Baghdad has nonetheless moved to increase domestic power production.

It now generates more than 24,000 megawatts per day, said electricity ministry spokesman Ahmed

acutely in Comoros, an island chain of almost 900,000 people located between Madagascar and Mozambique, which was left virtually without its staple food. The country imports most of its food, and Onicor has blamed the lack of rice on suppliers, saying they did not deliver what they promised.

Rations and tear gas

When the supply crunch started to bite, rations were put in place, with a 25-kilogram (55-pound) bag earmarked to feed up to six families until the next shipment arrived. When a freighter carrying about 800 tons of rice arrived early last month, most families had already run out of stock. Long queues had already formed outside distribution points.

Some people placed bricks on the ground to hold their place in the line while they ran other errands. The precious cargo was unloaded under the watchful eye of heavily armed security forces but in any case, could only cover a fraction of the country's needs. Up to 7,000 tonnes of rice are consumed every month, according to the government. As government promises to deliver emergency assistance failed to materialize, tensions rose. Police arrested nine people after a truck convoy carrying rice bags was attacked. Some distribution points were moved to police stations.

In the town of Ouani, authorities fired tear gas to disperse an angry crowd.—AFP

Rice shipment brings relief to hungry, shortage-hit Comoros

MORONI, Comoros: It's late in the evening in the Comorian capital of Moroni but the city's port is filled with eager faces. An 800-tonne rice shipment has docked in the Indian Ocean archipelago after three months of shortages that have sharpened hunger and stoked unrest. "We can officially declare the end to the rice shortage," declared Ben Abdallah Youssouf of Onicor, a state entity that holds a monopoly on imports and trade in "ordinary" rice, the cheapest and most consumed variety.

But many locals who have struggled to put food on the table in recent weeks said they were far from convinced. "They say there's enough rice for everyone, but I don't believe it anymore," said Ben Laden, who like many others had joined the crowd at the dock in the hope of getting his hands on a sack.

Supply-chain snags and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have caused food shortages and high prices across much of the world. But the crisis has been felt



MORONI, Comoros: Rice bags are offloaded in Moroni on October 3, 2022 from a cargo vessel. — AFP

German exports rebound despite recession fears

FRANKFURT: German exports rebounded in August thanks to strong demand from the United States, official data showed Wednesday, but analysts warned that the outlook for Europe's top economy remained gloomy. Germany exported 133.1 billion euros' (\$132 billion) worth of goods in August, up 1.6 percent month-on-month, according to seasonally-adjusted figures from federal statistics agency Destatis. In July, exports had plunged by 2.1 percent.

The increase beat analyst expectations and was mainly driven by a 12-percent jump in US demand for

"made in Germany" goods. But shipments to fellow European Union countries fell, as the continent grapples with soaring inflation and skyrocketing energy prices in the wake of Russia's war in Ukraine.

Higher global prices and a weaker euro pushed up the cost of German imports in August, which rose by 3.4 percent to 131.9 billion euros, narrowing the country's trade surplus to 1.2 billion euros.

"The war in Ukraine has succeeded in delivering what nothing else had managed before: letting the notorious German trade surplus disappear," said ING bank economist Carsten Brzeski. "Unfortunately, it is not a 'good' disappearing of the trade surplus, driven by stronger domestic demand but rather a 'bad' disappearing, driven by high energy prices and structurally weaker exports."

Germany's economy, traditionally a driver of European growth, is expected to fall into recession and shrink by 0.4 percent in 2023, according to the country's leading economic institutes.—AFP

Moussa. To secure stable nationwide power supply, however, 32,000 megawatts would be needed daily, he said. For now, the national grid provides most regions with 14-20 hours of electricity a day in summer. Moussa added. In one Sadr City avenue, private generators line the street, each feeding electricity to some 300 homes and a similar number of shops. Ali Al-Aaraji, who owns a private college for around 300 students, decried "astronomical" generator costs, which he estimated at \$600 a month.

"Electricity is a constant problem for Iraqis," said Aaraji, 58, pinning the blame on "the American occupation" of years past. "Iraqis have managed to put up with the situation for three decades," he added, questioning how Europe would cope with its looming power problem. "Energy is the source of economic prosperity," Aaraji said. "Europe is now destabilized. It's going to impact their economy, industry and commerce. They'll go backwards." — AFP

Ukraine economy to contract 35% this year: World Bank

WASHINGTON: The economy of war-torn Ukraine is expected to shrink 35 percent this year, the World Bank said Tuesday, with Russia's invasion of the country displacing millions. Following Moscow's invasion, Ukraine's economy has been "scarred by the destruction of productive capacity, damage to agricultural land, and reduced labor supply," the World Bank said in an economic update for Europe and Central Asia.

The global development lender estimates more than 14 million people have been displaced by the war.

Recovery and reconstruction will require at least \$349 billion, or more than 1.5 times the size of Ukraine's pre-war economy, the report said. The US Congress last week approved another \$12.3 billion in aid to help Ukraine battle the invasion as fighting raged on.

Global food and energy prices have surged amid large reductions in Russian supply, and the World Bank said the ongoing war dampens prospects of a post-pandemic recovery for emerging and developing economies in region as well. "The overlapping crises of the war in Ukraine, the ongoing pandemic and the surge in food and fuel prices are painful reminders that governments need to be prepared to manage massive, unexpected shocks that unravel very quickly," Anna Bjerde, the World Bank's vice president for Europe and Central Asia, said in a statement.

The report notes that global prices for oil, gas and coal had been picking up since early 2021, but they "skyrocketed" after Russia's invasion and sent inflation "to levels not seen for decades in the region."

That is especially painful for countries that rely on imported energy and "countries closely connected with EU energy markets," and the bank said countries should prepare for shortages. Regional output is expected to contract by 0.2 percent this year, while growth for 2023 is pegged at 0.3 percent, and economic activity "will remain deeply depressed through next year."

CB chief quits

Ukraine's central bank chief announced Tuesday he was stepping down for health reasons, more than seven months after the Russian invasion of the country. "I have submitted my resignation letter and asked the President of Ukraine to accept it," Ukraine National Bank governor Kyrylo Shevchenko said in a statement on his Facebook page.

Shevchenko, 49, said the difficult decision to step down was due to health-related issues that could no longer be ignored. Any changes at the head of the central bank are closely followed by Ukraine's western allies, whose financial support has been key to propelling up the country's economy even before the war. Appointed in 2020 after his predecessor resigned citing political pressure, Shevchenko and the central bank have been key players in efforts to ensure the country's financial and economic stability after the Russian invasion in February. The central bank imposed controls to avoid an outflow of capital, prop up the local currency, and helped keep a lid on inflation. Nevertheless, the country's economic output is expected to contract by 35 percent this year due to the war, according to the latest World Bank forecast published on Tuesday.—AFP

EU signals shift toward gas price cap

BRUSSELS: The EU is "ready to discuss" a price cap on gas within the bloc to bring down soaring energy costs, European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said Wednesday.

Her comment, to the European Parliament, signalled a shift in tone after powerhouse EU country Germany had expressed worries that a broad price cap might divert supplies for Europe.

It comes after 15 EU countries—more than half the bloc—made a joint call for the EU to impose a price ceiling on how much it would pay for gas piped or shipped in, as the northern hemisphere winter sets in. Europe is facing an energy crunch as the price of electricity generation skyrockets because of a massive surge in the price of gas.

Russia, which used to be Europe's main gas supplier, has turned off the taps after being hit by EU sanctions over the war in Ukraine that, while not touching gas, cramped sales of its more lucrative oil exports. "We are ready to discuss a cap on the price of gas that is used to generate electricity," Von der Leyen told MEPs sitting in Strasbourg, France. "This cap would also be a first step on the way to a structural reform and overall reform of our electricity market." She added that "we also have to look at gas prices beyond the electricity market".

Still being 'fleshed out'

Her spokesman, Eric Mamer, later explained that the proposal was still being "fleshed out" and would be detailed in a letter to EU leaders ahead of a Friday summit in Prague. But he did say that the idea was "related to the wholesale market of gas trading in Europe" and not directly on the price paid for imported gas. He acknowledged however that "there are links between the price of gas traded within Europe and the price of the gas that we buy from outside". Brussels has been amenable to a cap on pipeline gas to hurt Russia and deprive it of cash for its Ukraine invasion.

But it has resisted a cap on liquefied natural gas (LNG), fearing that sellers might simply divert to higher-paying markets, further starving Europe of gas. Germany, traditionally the biggest beneficiary of Russian gas, had also rebuffed the idea. But it has come under pressure from other EU countries after it announced a 200-billion-euro (\$199-billion) fund to shield its own consumers from soaring prices.

Von der Leyen admitted a price cap "entails drawbacks in terms of security of supply of gas". But she argued that "the situation has critically evolved" and now, "more member states are open for it and we are better prepared". She noted that Europe's stockpile of gas for winter had reached 90 percent of capacity, exceeding a target set. She also said any price cap would be "a temporary solution" and that "exceptional times require exceptional emergency measures". — AFP



US private hiring picks up in Sept

WASHINGTON: Hiring by US firms accelerated slightly in September, but remained below the three-month average, according to data Wednesday from payroll firm ADP. Private employment increased by 208,000 last month as schools reopened and pandemic concerns receded, up compared to August, when job gains were revised up to 185,000, the ADP survey showed.

"We are continuing to see steady job gains," ADP chief economist Nela Richardson said in a statement.

"There are signs that people are returning to the labor market," she said, adding that "Employer demand remains robust and the supply of workers is improving—for now." The data, coming before Friday's all-important government employment report, could be good news for the Federal Reserve, which has been aggressively pushing up interest rates to tamp down red-hot inflation, amid fears the strong labor market will cause a wage spiral.

The US central bank has been particularly concerned about the short supply of workers and have been watching to see if more people come off the sidelines to rejoin the labor force. The ADP's newly revamped report, which include data on pay, confirmed the trend of rising wages, especially for those who left their jobs to find a new position—although the pace has slowed.—AFP

Business

Musk offers to 'close Twitter buyout deal' at original price

Trial over Musk's efforts to withdraw from the deal loomed

SAN FRANCISCO: Elon Musk on Tuesday offered to push through with his buyout of Twitter at the original agreed price, as a trial over his efforts to withdraw from the deal loomed. The world's richest man said in a filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission that he sent Twitter a letter vowing to honor the contract. The latest twist in the long-running saga came ahead of the high-stakes court battle launched by Twitter in an attempt to hold the Tesla chief to the deal he signed in April.

Musk's potential stewardship of the influential social media site has sparked worry from activists who fear he could open the gates to more abusive and misinformative posts.

"We write to notify you that the Musk Parties intend to proceed to closing of the transaction," read a copy of the letter to Twitter filed with the SEC. Twitter confirmed to AFP that it received the letter from Musk, and said it intends to close the buyout deal at the agreed-on price of \$54.20 per share.

Conditions noted in Musk's letter included that the court halt action in the lawsuit against him. He had been slated to be questioned under oath by Twitter attorneys later this week.

The 51-year-old tweeted that buying Twitter "is an accelerator to creating X, the everything app," offering no details. During an annual shareholders meeting in August, Musk said Twitter

could add momentum to a vision he had for the X.com company he founded in 1999.

X.com merged with Confinity, whose co-founders include Peter Thiel, and the entity went on to become PayPal. "I do sort of have a grander vision for what I thought X.com, or X corporation, could have been back in the day," Musk said at the shareholder meeting.

"I think Twitter would help accelerate that by three to five years."

Buyer's remorse?

A serial entrepreneur made rich through his success with Tesla electric cars, Musk began to step back from the Twitter deal soon after it was agreed. But "I think that Musk realized he was not going to win that trial" next week, University of Richmond law professor Carl Tobias told AFP.

"Ever since he had buyer's remorse, the problem has been why, and why had he not done due diligence up front," Musk said in July he was canceling the purchase because he was misled by Twitter concerning the number of fake "bot" accounts, allegations rejected by the company.

Twitter meanwhile has sought to prove Musk was contriving excuses to walk away because he changed his mind. In July, a Delaware judge agreed to fast-track a trial on Twitter's allegations.

Webbush analyst Dan Ives said in an email

that Musk's pivot showed he recognized "this \$44 billion deal was going to be completed one way or another." Musk made his unsolicited bid to buy Twitter without asking for estimates regarding spam or fake accounts, and even sweetened his offer to the board by withdrawing a diligence condition, the lawsuit said.

"Ultimately, we will not know why Elon elected to change course ahead of trial, though we speculate that there are details of the negotiation or legal process that he preferred remain private-including deposition," Baird Equity Research analysts said in a note to investors.

Free speech

Seen by his champions as an iconoclastic genius and by his critics as an erratic megalomaniac, Musk surprised many investors with his pursuit of Twitter. Claiming to be a free speech advocate, he has said he favored lifting the site's ban on Donald Trump, who was kicked off shortly after the former president's efforts to overturn his election defeat led to the January 6, 2021 assault on the US Capitol by his supporters. "Musk made it clear that he would roll back Twitter's community standards and safety guidelines, reinstate Donald Trump along with scores of other accounts suspended for violence and abuse, and open the floodgates of disinformation," said Angelo Carusone, president of watch-

two years, as supply challenges begin to resolve and demand cools.

And new data from the Labor Department on Tuesday showed the number of job openings fell sharply in August, to 10.1 million, the lowest level since June 2021. That in turn lowered the ratio of openings to unemployed workers—a key indicator of strains in the labor market—to 1.7, from 2.0 in the prior month. Jefferson pointed to signs "supply bottlenecks have, at long last, begun to resolve," as growth has slowed this year, but noted that upward pressure on wages remains an issue.

"I want to assure you that my colleagues and I are resolute that we will bring inflation back down to two percent," he said in a speech in Atlanta to a conference on the impact of technology on the economy. "The full effects of monetary policy take time, but ... we have acted boldly to address rising inflation, and we are committed to taking the further steps necessary."

Meanwhile, European Central Bank president Christine Lagarde said Tuesday it was difficult to predict whether inflation had peaked, after eurozone consumer prices hit a record due to rising energy costs.

Inflation in the 19-country single currency area accelerated to 10 percent in September, following Russia's shutdown of crucial gas supplies as tensions soar over the Ukraine war. Speaking at an event in Cyprus, Lagarde said that inflation was "undesirably high". "Is it at its peak? Difficult to say,

ect also expects to utilize tax credits under the Chips Act signed into law by President Biden in August, said a Micron news release. At an event in Syracuse to announce the investment, New York Governor Kathy Hochul likened the drive to a "fourth industrial revolution" and alluded to an improvement in fortunes for an upstate New York region that had lost thousands of manufacturing jobs in earlier decades.

There is "hope of a better tomorrow," Hochul said. Micron, describing the plant as the "largest semiconductor fabrication facility in the history of the United States," said the venture would create 50,000 jobs in the state, including 9,000 at Micron. Biden touted the investment as reflecting the importance of the Chips and Science Act, which included around \$52 billion to promote production of

reliable energy available to everyone by 2063, she argued. Funding for Africa's green transition is likely to be a flashpoint at the COP27 climate summit, running in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh from November 6-18.

Under the 2015 Paris Agreement, rich nations pledged \$100 billion a year to help developing countries limit climate change. But they have so far failed to meet the promise—and prospects have been further clouded this year by the resounding economic impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine.

'Not in our interest'

Ghana's deputy energy minister Mohammed Amin Adam said international green energy investment in Africa was "still appalling", accounting only for about two percent of the global total. At the same time, African countries also need to secure financing for oil and gas projects, as fossil fuel revenue is needed to finance climate adaptation measures, he told AFP.

Adam pointed to data showing that most of Africa's oil and gas producers depended greatly on export revenue derived by these fuels. "If we give up this, how do we even finance our ability to adapt to the climate effects? We cannot. Unless we have a

£253 million (\$290 million) in the six months to late August from £781 million a year earlier, the supermarket giant said in a statement.

The group noted "cost inflation is significant" and said full-year profits would be towards the lower end of its previous expectation.

"We know our customers are facing a tough time and watching every penny to make ends meet", Tesco chief executive Ken Murphy said in the statement, adding that UK staff would be getting a second pay rise this year. "Customers are seeking out the quality and value of our own brand ranges as



SAN FRANCISCO: In this file photo taken on April 26, 2022, the Twitter logo is seen at their headquarters in downtown San Francisco, California. —AFP

dog group Media Matters for America.

"In effect, Musk will turn Twitter into a fever swamp of dangerous conspiracy theories, partisan chicanery, and operationalized harassment." Musk's norm-defying conduct over Twitter came after the Tesla and SpaceX chief's past record of statements that flout or test convention and sometimes provoke a crackdown from regulators.

On Monday he was embroiled in a Twitter spat with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky over his ideas on ending Russia's invasion. —AFP



BRUSSELS: French President of European Central Bank (ECB) Christine Lagarde (left) arrives at the Hearing of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs of the European Parliament in Brussels. —AFP

and I'm not going to venture there," she said. But she signaled her determination to pull prices back down to the ECB's two-percent target: "We want to bring it back from where it is now."

"If you let inflation run loose, to bring it back you have to fight really hard. And it hurts."

She also added that "we should certainly not stimulate demand even more". The central bank increased interest rates by a record 75 basis points at its last meeting in September, and has indicated it will implement further hikes to cool prices. But fears are growing that the aggressive rate hiking cycle could help push the eurozone into a recession. —AFP

microchips, the tiny but powerful and relatively hard-to-make components at the heart of almost every modern piece of machinery.

"To those who doubted that America could dominate the industries of the future, I say this—you should never bet against the American people," Biden said in a news release. "Today is another win for America." Shortages of semiconductors have been a drag on the global economy during the pandemic, crippling production of automobiles, personal electronics and other goods.

Micron Chief Executive Sanya Mehrota said the investment "will deliver benefits beyond the semiconductor industry by strengthening US technology leadership as well as economic and national security, driving American innovation and competitiveness for decades to come." —AFP



ADDIS ABABA: African Union (AU) Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy Amani Abou-Zeid speaks during a press conference on the sidelines of the 39th Ordinary Session of the AU Executive Council in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on Oct. 14, 2021. —AFP

substitute for our revenue," he said.

African countries are among the most exposed to the impacts of climate change, especially worsening droughts and floods, but responsible for only around three percent of global CO2 emissions, former UN chief Ban Ki-moon said last month. —AFP

they work to make their money go further, whether they are switching from branded products, between categories or cutting back on eating out."

Tesco added that total sales grew 6.7 percent to £32.5 billion in its first half.

Revenue from sales of fuel soared 39 percent to almost £4.3 billion. At the same time, "the wider economic backdrop is leaving its mark and Tesco recognizes the uncertainty of the remainder of the year in a cautious outlook statement", noted Richard Hunter, head of markets at Interactive Investor. —AFP

Musk-Twitter deal: A roller-coaster saga

SAN FRANCISCO: Elon Musk's pursuit of Twitter was a melodrama from the beginning—a mercurial billionaire locked in a bitter fight with his favorite social media platform. After months of recriminations and attempts to cancel his attempt to buy, Musk on Tuesday called a truce and agreed to honor his initial offer. Here are the main ups and downs of the saga:

'Passionate believer'

Musk is a long-time Twitter user with more than 100 million followers, using the platform as a megaphone for his corporate and personal ambitions. In an April 4 regulatory filing, he revealed he had splashed out nearly \$2.9 billion on a 9.2 percent stake in the company.

Twitter shares soared, Musk got a seat on the board, and CEO Parag Agrawal called him "a passionate believer and intense critic of the service", saying it was "exactly what we need". Both sides appeared to be getting along famously.

'Poison pill'

But it took less than a week for things to fall apart. Musk decided against joining the board, and Agrawal said it was "for the best". Musk then launched a hostile takeover bid, an April 13 filing showed, and Twitter adopted a "poison pill" defense that would allow shareholders to buy additional stock.

Deal back on

Then Twitter reversed course and on April 25 revealed that it would sell after all in a deal that valued the firm at \$44 billion. Musk parted with \$8.4 billion in shares in Tesla, pledged up to \$21 billion from his personal fortune and got some friends to stake him a few billion.

The billionaire mogul, known for his provocative messages, set out plans to allow former US president Donald Trump back on to the platform.

See you in court

Then it was Musk's turn to get cold feet. He said on May 13 the deal was "temporarily on hold" while he sought details of spam and fake accounts on the platform. After two months of very public fighting over the issue, he called off the deal and accused Twitter of making "misleading" statements. The company quickly launched legal action to enforce the deal.

Rapprochement

Both sides had been gearing up for a lengthy and hugely expensive showdown at the Delaware Chancery Court. Musk had been buoyed by whistleblower revelations that portrayed the company as cavalier with its bot counting and lax on security. Twitter, however, believed the agreement it had with Musk was watertight.

Then, on Tuesday, Musk revealed on Twitter, of course—that he had agreed to close the deal at the price he had initially offered. "I think that Musk realized he was not going to win that trial," said law professor Carl Tobias.

The future is 'X'

In his tweet on Tuesday, Musk said the acquisition would be an "accelerant" towards creating "X", which he said would be "the everything app". He offered no further detail.

He had previously told Twitter staff that he envisaged a platform with one billion users, but he was hazy on issues like potential staff layoffs and free-speech limits. Text messages revealed during the legal process showed how he briefly considered making a blockchain-based social media app.

But before the future of Twitter can even be discussed, either side could still quibble over the details of the sale. The potential of a courtroom showdown has receded but remains a possibility. —AFP

ECB, Fed official warn of growth crisis over inflation

WASHINGTON: The US economy is likely to slow as the central bank continues its battle against high inflation, newly-installed Federal Reserve Governor Philip Jefferson cautioned. Inflation—which has soared to its fastest in 40 years—"remains elevated, and this is the problem that concerns me most," Jefferson said in his first speech as a member of the Fed's board.

Echoing comments from other central bankers, he said the Fed is "resolute" in its commitment to bringing prices down but warned that "restoring price stability may take some time and will likely entail a period of below-trend growth."

The Fed has moved aggressively this year to tamp down demand to help drive prices lower, hiking the benchmark lending rate five times, for a total of three percentage points. And the central bank has said more increases are coming this year. However, stock markets have recovered in recent days amid rising hopes the Fed might pull back amid signs the pressures might be easing.

A key manufacturing survey released Monday showed the price measure at its lowest in more than

Micron unveils new \$100bn New York semiconductor plant

NEW YORK: Micron announced Tuesday it will invest up to \$100 billion to build semiconductors in New York state, capitalizing on US policies to boost domestic manufacturing of key goods. The chip giant, which is based in the western state of Idaho, said it plans to begin construction in 2024 on a project expected to be executed over two decades.

New York state is providing \$5.5 billion in state incentives over the life of the build-out and the proj-

Africa sounds caution on net zero goal ahead of COP27

CAPE TOWN: Africa needs time and money to wean itself off fossil fuels in order to achieve net zero without jeopardizing its future, its representatives are warning ahead of next month's climate talks.

At energy conferences this week, Ghana, South Africa and the African Union have insisted the continent stands by net zero—the goal of an overall balance in heat-stoking greenhouse gases.

But they warned that the continent was still heavily dependent on coal, oil and gas to power its development. "Africa is fully convinced and committed to a net zero and supportive of the climate agenda. However, where we may differ is on the timeframe," African Union (AU) energy commissioner Amani Abou-Zeid told AFP on the sidelines of the Green Energy Africa Summit in Cape Town.

Africa's population of 1.3 billion is set to double by 2050, and AU nations aim to make affordable and

Supermarket Tesco says profits tumble as inflation bites

LONDON: Britain's largest retailer Tesco on Wednesday announced tumbling profits in its first half as higher costs fuelled by rocketing inflation offset a jump in revenue. Profit after tax slumped to

Lifestyle | Features



Thailand's Piyarat Kaljareuk (right) walks on the red carpet during the opening ceremony of the 27th Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) at the Busan Cinema Center in Busan on October 5, 2022. — AFP photos



South Korean actress Kim Gyu-ri walks on the red carpet during the opening ceremony of the 27th Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) on October 5, 2022.



People attend the opening ceremony of the 27th Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) at the Busan Cinema Center.

ASIA'S BIGGEST FILM FESTIVAL BACK IN TOP FORM IN 2022

Movie stars, directors and fans descended on South Korea's port town of Busan Wednesday as Asia's largest film festival returned at full power post-pandemic, with an Iranian film opening the event. Top Korean actors and Asian stars including Hong Kong's legendary Tony Leung are set to attend the Busan International Film Festival, which opened with a red carpet event and will run until October 14. South Korea has cemented its status as a global cultural powerhouse in recent years, thanks in part to the explosive success of the Oscar-winning film "Parasite" and the Netflix series "Squid Game".

But due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Busan festival was reduced to a fraction of its usual scale in 2020, while last year's edition took place with a number of social distancing measures. But the festival is back with no restrictions for 2022, with high-profile guests such as Japan's famed filmmaker Hirokazu Kore-eda flying in to discuss their latest projects. "We feel fortunate to be able to play the role of Asia's best film festival again," festival director Huh Moon-young told reporters last month.

The festival will feature 243 movies from 71 countries, including 89 that will have their world premiere. Hosts South Korea are well-represented, with K-pop



People walk past an installation for the 27th Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) at the Busan Cinema Center.

megastar and actress IU joining Korea to discuss their film "Broker" - which was featured at the Cannes film festival earlier this year. The festival opened with Iranian filmmaker Hadi Mohaghegh's "Scent of Wind", which tells the story of a father and a son - both of whom have disabilities - living in a remote village.

Celebrating Tony Leung
Hong Kong's acclaimed actor Tony

Leung has been selected as the recipient of Busan's "Asian Cineaste of the Year" prize. The festival will screen six films featuring Leung, who will be in Busan to receive the award and meet with festival goers. Leung, 60, is best known for his collaborations with famed director Wong Kar-wai, and picked the six films himself - which include Wong's "In the Mood for Love" (2000) and "Happy Together" (1997). Other anticipated screenings



People walk past cinema posters for the 27th Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) at the Busan Cinema Center.

include Korean-Canadian director Anthony Shim's "Riceboy Sleeps," which tells the story of a Korean immigrant single mother, said the festival's programmer Nam Dong-chul.

"The movie is expected to become the next 'Minari'," Nam said, referring to a 2020 drama about South Korean immigrants in the United States, which received rave reviews and a slew of awards, including the best supporting

actress Oscar. Four South Korean top stars - Kang Dong-won, Han Ji-min, Lee Young-ae and Ha Jung-woo - will meet with fans in Busan to talk about their life and work. Japanese director Kei Ishikawa's drama "A Man" - about a widow who discovers unexpected truths about her late husband - will close the edition. — AFP

Iran pop singer silenced, but his song remains a protest anthem

Even though he has been silenced, Iranian pop singer Shirvin Hajipour's impassioned song in support of protests over Mahsa Amini's death in custody remains an unofficial anthem of the movement. The song "Baraye" notched up 40 million views on Instagram before it was deleted when Hajipour was arrested, but he has since been freed on bail and has distanced himself from politics, likely as a condition for his release.



A man watches a video of Iranian singer Shirvin Hajipour, who was released in Tehran today after being arrested for his song in support of protests over the death of Mahsa Amini, in the Cypriot capital Nicosia. — AFP

Baraye, the Persian word "For" or "Because", is composed of tweets about the protests and highlights longings people have for things lacking in sanctions-hit Iran, where many complain of hardship caused by economic mismanagement. It also draws on everyday activities that

have landed people in trouble with the authorities in the Islamic republic.

"For the sake of dancing in the streets; Because of the fear felt while kissing; For my sister, your sister, your sisters," the song's lyrics say. "Because of the embarrassment of an empty pocket; Because we are longing for a normal life... Because of this polluted air." Baraye has been heard played loudly at night from apartment blocks in Iran to show support for protests sparked by Amini's death on September 16, after the notorious morality police arrested her for allegedly breaching rules requiring women to wear hijab headscarves and modest clothes.

It was also sung with gusto by the Iranian diaspora at rallies in more than 150 cities around the world at the weekend. In one clip shared by the New York-based Center for Human Rights in Iran, a group of schoolgirls without headscarves is seen singing Baraye in class with their backs to the camera. The tune was removed from Hajipour's Instagram account shortly after his arrest but is still widely available on other social media platforms, including Twitter and YouTube.

"Because of forced Instagram stories" - Hajipour's lawyer Majid Kaveh said he was released on bail at noon on Tuesday. The reformist Shargh newspaper said his family had been informed of his arrest in the northern city of Sari on Saturday, in a report that cited his sister Kamand Hajipour. She had said in an Instagram post that her parents had been informed of his arrest in a call from the city's intelligence ministry offices. Shortly after his release, Hajipour was back on Instagram, but this time to apologize and distance himself from politics. "I'm here to say I'm okay," he told his 1.9 million followers on the platform. "But I'm sorry that some particular movements based outside of Iran - which I have had no relations with - made some improper political uses of this song. — AFP

Pitt 'choked' one child, hit another in Jolie plane fight

Brad Pitt allegedly hit one of his children in the face and choked another during a fight with Angelina Jolie on a private plane, according to court papers filed Tuesday in the United States by his ex-wife. The former couple, once one of Hollywood's highest profile pairings, have been embroiled in a lengthy dispute over their marriage, custody of their six children and shared assets, including a French winery. In papers lodged in a Los Angeles court and widely quoted in US media, Jolie describes a lengthy eruption by Pitt as the couple flew with the children from California to France in September 2016. "Pitt choked one of the children and struck another in the face," the papers say, according to Variety. "When one of the children verbally defended Jolie, Pitt lunged at his own child and Jolie grabbed him from behind to stop him," it adds. "The children rushed in and all bravely tried to protect each other. Before it was over, Pitt choked one of the children and struck another in the face. Some of the children pleaded with Pitt to stop. They were all frightened. Many were crying."

The "Fight Club" actor, who has for decades been one of cinema's most bankable stars, was investigated over the

claims by federal authorities, who have jurisdiction over US-origin air travel. No charges were ever brought. Jolie filed for divorce a few days after the flight. In the ensuing years, the A-listers have clashed over custody of the children - three biological and three adopted - and more recently over the ownership of a luxury French property they bought together. AFP has reached out to Pitt's representatives for comment on the latest claims.

French winery
Tuesday's filing by Jolie says negotiations over the sale to Pitt of her stake in

President Vladimir Putin.

Yuri Shefler has long been an outspoken critic of Putin, and his Stoli Group drinks conglomerate is based in Latvia. But Jolie's lawyers said in Tuesday's filing the sale had only been pursued after talks to sell to Pitt broke down over the non-disclosure clause he was demanding. A source close to the situation told AFP earlier this year that Jolie decided to sell as she and her children "have not been able to return" to Chateau Miraval, and she had made multiple offers to her ex-husband before signing the deal with Shefler.



In this file photo, actors Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt arrive at the 69th Annual Golden Globe Awards held at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP

Chateau Miraval broke down over his demand she sign "a nondisclosure agreement that would have contractually prohibited her from speaking... about Pitt's physical and emotional abuse of her and their children." It comes after Pitt accused his one-time co-star of breaching his rights when she offloaded her share in the winery to a subsidiary of Stoli Group, which is owned by a Russian-born billionaire. In papers he filed earlier this year, Pitt said "Jolie sought to inflict harm" on him with the sale, invoking alleged connections between the firm's owner and Russian

Once Tinseltown's highest-profile couple, Pitt and Jolie first got together after co-starring as married assassins in the 2005 film "Mr. and Mrs. Smith." Pitt was married to Jennifer Aniston at the time. The A-listers announced in 2018 they had reached an amicable settlement over their children, but any deal appeared to fall apart quickly. Last July, Jolie scored a win in their custody battle as the private judge overseeing their divorce and custody matters was disqualified from the case. — AFP

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Visitors drink traditional 'gahwa' at Embrace Doha cultural house in souq Al-Wakrah, south of the capital Doha. — AFP photos



A man serves traditional 'gahwa', prepared by roasting coffee beans then boiling them with cardamom and saffron, at Embrace Doha cultural house in souq Al-Wakrah, south of the capital Doha. With its strong aroma of cardamom and its yellowy, tea-like consistency, Arabic coffee is a ubiquitous symbol of hospitality across Gulf countries, not least in World Cup host Qatar.

Taste of Qatari hospitality: Traditional Arabic coffee

With its strong aroma of cardamom and its yellowy, tea-like consistency, Arabic coffee is a ubiquitous symbol of hospitality across Gulf countries, not least in World Cup host Qatar. Prepared by roasting coffee beans then boiling them with cardamom and saffron, the traditional "gahwa" is usually enjoyed in the Qatari majlis—the all-male gathering that forms the centrepiece of social life in the country.



"I didn't know it has coffee in it," said Lanka Perera, 29, a Sri Lankan expatriate who has lived in the tiny, gas-rich Gulf emirate for three years, adding that it doesn't taste like "the coffee that we know". As custom dictates, the hot drink

is prepared in front of guests by the head of the household and served by his eldest son.

But in more recent years, the beverage has spilled beyond its traditional confines, making its way into commercial establishments and cultural houses, offering a taste of Qatari culture to residents and visitors alike. One such independent cultural centre is Embrace Doha, where Perera attended a session on the coffee and its origins. "Gahwa is something that we drink almost every day... we see it in our office because there are lots of Qataris, so they bring it and then we taste it," she told AFP after the session. "But... I didn't know what's in it and the story behind it, the origin behind it," she confessed.

Ritual and ceremony

Since the introduction of coffee to the region around 600 years ago, it has acquired its own ritual and ceremony, now integral to the culture of the country and region. Poured out of golden or silver "dallah" pots, it is consumed out of little cups that are only ever partially filled to avoid burning drinkers' fingers. The coffee keeps coming until the drinker makes a certain waving gesture to indicate that he has had enough—a vestige of an era when it was often poured by deaf



Visitors are served traditional 'gahwa'.

servers to prevent sensitive information from leaking out of the majlis.

"For hundreds of years, the whole country has changed, but coffee hasn't," said Shaima Sherif, the director of Embrace Doha, located in the heart of the old market known as Souq Al Wakrah, south of the capital. In 2015, an initiative by Saudi Arabia, the United

Arab Emirates, Oman and Qatar saw Arabic coffee enter the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

According to UNESCO, "serving Arabic coffee is an important aspect of hospitality in Arab societies and considered a ceremonial act of generosity". Ahead of the tournament's November 20 start, Qatar is facing increased interna-

tional scrutiny for its record for its treatment of women and foreign workers. But organizers of the first World Cup to be held in an Arab country have said fans were more concerned about COVID-era logistics and have emphasized the country's "warm hospitality" culture. — AFP

Qatar reopens
Museum of Islamic
Art ahead of WCup

Qatar unveiled Tuesday its landmark Museum of Islamic Art after an 18-month renovation ahead of the World Cup in a bid to be a "showcase" for the Arab world. "We are the biggest Museum of Islamic Art in this region... and we are in the middle of the Arab world," said museum director Julia Gonnella. "Where better can you learn about Islamic culture and art and history than here?"

The museum showcases 14 centuries of Islamic art and artefacts from around the world. Constructed on a purpose-built island on Doha's waterfront promenade, the building is the work of the late US architect I.M. Pei, one of the best-known architects of the 20th century. The

five-storey building has redesigned its collections, with some two-thirds of the thousand exhibits new to the museum. "Before it was only about the art, now it's about culture," Gonnella said.

"We really want to tell the stories behind the masterpieces." Qatar has spent billions of dollars on new stadiums for the first football World Cup in an Arab country, which kicks off on November 20. As the sporting festival approaches, Doha is leading a cultural push, including erecting dozens of works of public art, and opened the Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum earlier this year. — AFP



People visit the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha during its reopening.

Last stop: Paris
waves goodbye to
cardboard Metro
tickets

The Paris Metro is phasing out cardboard tickets after 120 years, taking the capital's urban transit into a contactless future but leaving behind nostalgic fans who will miss the humble rectangular cards. Beyond their intended use as a transport token, the tickets with their trademark magnetic strip have inspired artists, filmmakers and singers, served as emergency notepads and, most of all, bookmarks.

"As the metro ticket disappears, so does a part of our lives," said Gregoire Thonnat, a collector and author of a book on the history of the metro ticket. "The metro ticket is part of how we picture Paris." Ile-de-France Mobilites, which operates the metro's ticketing system, had wanted the pack of 10 tickets known as "carnets" to be gone by the first quarter of this year.

But then the Covid-19 pandemic erupted, and Russia's war in Ukraine, and with it a global shortage of microchips needed to make the smartcards to replace the tickets - whose sales still total 550 million per year, more than 50 tons of paper. "We were in a hurry, but the chip crisis slowed us down," Laurent Probst, director-general at Ile-de-France Mobilites told AFP. The operator has started cutting the number of metro stations that still sell carnets to nudge clients towards plastic cards, and many turnstiles can no longer read cardboard tickets.

Change their habits

As a result, the share of card tickets used on urban trips has dropped from more than two-thirds a year ago to well under half now. "Our customers are beginning to change their habits," Probst said. He said carnets would be gone completely sometime next year. But, probably until 2024, travelers will still be able to buy single tickets at 1.90 euros (\$1.82), a markup from the 1.49 euros a single journey costs when using a smartcard.

Ile-de-France Mobilites is pushing ahead with more modernization, including the use of smartphones at turnstiles, with Android phones to be enabled within weeks and Apple phones in 2023. "I'm enthusiastic about this development," Probst said. "This is a sea change in the quality of our customer service."

Paris's leap into the future comes 20 years after the New York subway abolished metal tokens, and more than a decade after London's Underground went mostly paperless, but some are pleased that Paris has taken things slowly. "I enjoy the texture of it, I enjoy the cleanliness of the ticket itself when it's new, and how much you can destroy it and still have it," said Sarah Sturman, an Italian-American artist in Paris who uses metro tickets in her collage work.



"I'm going to keep collecting metro tickets until they're gone, and when they're gone they'll be even more precious," she told AFP. "If I see a metro ticket in a scrapbook 10 years from now, it will all come rushing back: Memories of being on the metro late at night, or in the rush hour, my favourite metro line, or why I hate another one, losing the tickets, trying to sort through my bag at the turnstile, doing laundry and finding your crumpled metro ticket in a pocket afterwards," she said.

Ideal thickness

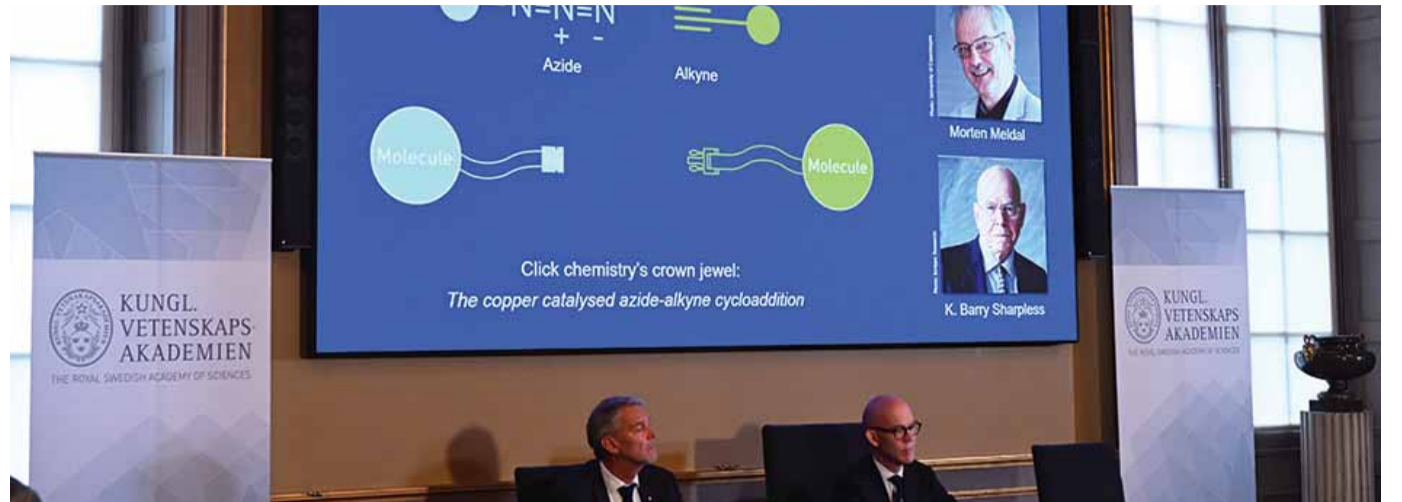
Cannabis smokers will also miss the 30-by-66-millimetre ticket, which can be used to make filter tips, or "crutches", for joints. "Ideal thickness, perfect width, readily available - the three gold standards of a good crutch," said Jake, a Japanese-American student in Paris. The metro ticket also has its place in popular culture, famously in singer-songwriter Serge Gainsbourg's 1959 hit "Le Poinconneur des Lilas" (The ticket puncher at the Lilas station); as a keepsake for Yves Montand in the 1953 film "Wages of Fear"; and on the cover of Raymond Queneau's novel "Zazie in the Metro" that director Louis Malle made into a film in 1960.

"The useful life of a metro ticket is one hour, or one and a half hours, and yet we get attached to it," Thonnat said. "It's quite irrational." "Metro ticket" is also the name of a public hair trimming style that leaves just a ticket-size strip after waxing. The cut, known in the United States as a "landing strip," is the most popular among Parisian women, according to a 2020 study published by the Version Femina magazine.

Lifestyle | Features



A display shows the winners of the 2022 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, US's Carolyn Bertozzi (left) and Barry Sharpless (right), together with Denmark's Morten Meldal during a press conference at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm, on October 5, 2022.



Members of the Nobel Committee for Chemistry (Center left to right) Chair Professor of Theoretical Chemistry Johan Aqvist and Secretary General of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences Hans Ellegren listen to Professor in Chemistry Olof Ramstrom (unseen) during a press conference to announce the winners of the 2022 Nobel Prize in Chemistry at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm, on October 5, 2022. — AFP photos

Five scientists who won 2 Nobel prizes

American Barry Sharpless on Wednesday became only the fifth person ever to win a second Nobel Prize, two decades after being awarded his first. AFP looks at the four other people who received the illustrious award twice for their services to mankind:

Marie Curie (1903, 1911)

The mother of modern physics was the first woman ever to win not one, but two, Nobel prizes for her seminal discoveries in physics and chemistry. Born Maria Sklodowska in Poland, Curie moved to Paris as a student and is famed for having isolated the elements

of polonium and radium as well as for promoting radium to alleviate suffering. In 1903, she was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics, along with her husband Pierre Curie and French physicist Antoine Henri Becquerel for their research into spontaneous radiation. A second Nobel followed in 1911, this time for chemistry, when Curie was honoured alone for her work on radioactivity.

Linus Pauling (1954, 1962)

Linus Pauling, the US chemist who posited that huge doses of vitamin C can ward off the common cold, is the only person to have been awarded two unshared Nobel Prizes - the 1954 Nobel

Prize in Chemistry and the 1962 Nobel Peace Prize. Pauling won his first Nobel in 1954 for his work in molecular chemistry, particularly in the field of proteins and anti-bodies. His second award came eight years later in 1962 was in recognition for his campaigning against nuclear testing.

John Bardeen (1956, 1972)

US engineer John Bardeen shared the Nobel Prize in Physics twice. In 1956, he and two colleagues at Bell Labs, William Shockley and Walter Brattain, won for inventing the transistor, which revolutionized the field of electronics by leading to smaller and cheaper

radios, calculators and computers, amongst other objects. In 1972, he picked up his second Nobel for developing the BSC-theory of superconductivity, with fellow American physicists Leon Cooper and John Robert Schrieffer.

Frederick Sanger (1958, 1980)

British biochemist Frederick Sanger, dubbed the father of genomics, was the only person to win the chemistry Nobel twice. Sanger was the sole winner of the prize in 1958 for his work on the structure of proteins, notably insulin, and then shared it with two others, Paul Berg and Walter Gilbert of the United States, in 1980 for pioneering developments in

DNA sequencing that are still being used today. His work allowed long stretches of DNA to be rapidly and accurately sequenced and was central to the Human Genome Project's mammoth achievement in mapping more than three billion units of human DNA.

ICRC and UNHCR

Two organizations have won multiple Nobel Peace Prizes. The International Committee of the Red Cross won in 1917, 1944 and 1963 and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees won in 1954 and 1981. — AFP



In this file photo, Loretta Lynn performs during the 16th Annual Americana Music Festival & Conference at Ascend Amphitheater in Nashville, Tennessee. — AFP

Loretta Lynn, country music luminary dies

Loretta Lynn, America's groundbreaking country titan whose frank lyricism delving into women's experiences with sex, infidelity and pregnancy touched the nerve of a nation, has died. She was 90 years old. She "passed peacefully in her sleep" at her ranch in Tennessee Tuesday morning, her family said in a statement sent to AFP.

Lynn saw a number of her edgy tracks banned by country music stations, but over the course of more than six decades in the business, she became a standard-bearer of the genre and its most decorated female artist ever. Born Loretta Webb on April 14, 1932 in small-town Kentucky, Lynn was the eldest daughter in an impoverished family of eight kids, a childhood she immortalized in her iconic track "Coal Miner's Daughter"—a staple on lists of all-time best songs.

"We were poor but we had love / That's the one thing that daddy made sure of," Lynn sang in the hit recorded in 1970 — later the theme song for a 1980 movie about her life starring Sissy Spacek, who won an Oscar for the role. At just 15 the artist married Oliver Vanetta Lynn, who she remained married to for nearly 50 years until his death in 1996. They moved to a logging community in Washington state, and Lynn gave birth to four children before the age of 20, adding twins to the family not long after.

An admirer of his wife's voice, her husband bought Lynn a guitar in the early 1950s. The self-taught musician went on to pen lyrics inspired by her own early experiences as a married woman and her oft-tumultuous relationship, the nascent days of a prolific career that would see the artist release dozens of albums. She started her own band, Loretta and the Trailblazers, and began playing bar sets before cutting her first record—"I'm a Honky Tonk Girl" in 1960.

Her twang was warm and languid but Lynn's lyrics were anything but: she sang with searing precision of marriage's growing pains and gave voice to issues facing women that had long been kept quiet. "Most songwriters tended to write about falling in love, breaking up and being alone, things like that," Lynn told The Wall Street Journal in 2016. "The female view I wrote about was new." "I just wrote

about what I knew, and what I knew usually involved something that somebody did to me."

'The Pill'

The Lynns began touring nationwide to promote the singer's work to radio stations, and she made her debut at the storied Grand Ole Opry in 1960, going on to become one of the Nashville institution's most acclaimed acts.

"Our Opry family turns to music when words fail. Thank you for all you've given to the Opry, @LorettaLynn," the show tweeted. During her early years in the industry, she found a friend and mentor in Patsy Cline, one of the 20th century's most influential singers who died in a plane crash in 1963 at age 30. She also forged a longstanding creative partnership with Conway Twitty, with whom she formed one of country's classic duet acts.

Lynn released a steady stream of hit singles, including 1966's "Dear Uncle Sam"—one of the era's first tracks to document the tragedy of the Vietnam War. That same year she put out "You Ain't Woman Enough (To Take My Man)," which made her the first woman in country to pen a number one hit. In 1969, she released one of her most controversial songs, "Wings Upon Your Horns," which describes through religious metaphor a teenager losing her virginity.

But her runaway success continued and she dominated the 1970s with hits such as "Fist City"—a stern warning to her cheating husband's lover—and 1972's "Rated X," which triggered an outcry in discussing the stigmas faced by divorced women. In 1975, she released "The Pill," which praised the freedoms of birth control. "When I'd put out a record, they'd say, 'Uh oh, another dirty song.' 'Rated X'? They thought that was going to be bad. But hey, it sold. 'One's on the Way'? They thought that song would really be dirty," she told Billboard in 2015. "But everything I sang about was everyday living."

In 1988, Lynn was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame as one of its most storied legends. She won virtually every arts honor available, including the prestigious Presidential Medal of Freedom. Despite the progressive airs of her music, Lynn would insist her clearly political art had "no politics." She leaned Republican most of her life, frequently performing for and supporting right-wing candidates—including Donald Trump in 2016 — even as she also voiced support for Democrats like Jimmy Carter. —AFP

Snooker star sees silver lining to HK COVID rules

Hong Kong's stringent coronavirus rules found an unlikely fan in visiting snooker legend Ronnie O'Sullivan, though he and other top players still needed help navigating the city's contact tracing mobile app. "For me sometimes, I like the restrictions... you don't have to hobnob with people, with crowds. It's just a quiet life," O'Sullivan told AFP at a Wednesday press conference. The seven-time world champion, along with five top international players, landed in the Chinese finance hub for the four-day Hong Kong Masters, which begins Thursday.



World No1 and seven-time world champion Ronnie O'Sullivan demonstrates during a snooker lesson at the newly opened Ronnie O'Sullivan academy in Singapore. — AFP

Hong Kong has begun relaxing some of its pandemic restrictions, which followed a looser version of China's zero-COVID strategy but were still among the strictest in the world. The city scrapped its unpopular mandatory hotel quarantine last month but visitors are barred from restaurants and bars for the first three days after arrival. Departing from his usual irreverent tone, O'Sullivan said he "respected" the rules and even managed to find a silver lining, saying they eliminated distractions. "When you play sport, you just want to be left alone in the quiet and allowed to play your game."

But local snooker star Marco Fu posted on Facebook that he spent the better part of an hour teaching the world's top players how to use Hong Kong's contact tracing app, which is mandatory for entering restaurants and bars and many public venues. Four-time world champion John Higgins said the need to wear face masks in Hong Kong brought back bad memories of pandemic-era life in Britain.

"It's just something you have to put up with," Higgins said. "Hopefully life (in Hong Kong) can become a little bit less stressful." The tournament is marking its return after a five-year absence, and organizers are eager to bill it as Hong Kong's first major international sports event since the pandemic began. Vincent Law, who chairs the Hong Kong Billiard Sports Control Council, said the event benefited from the scrapping of hotel quarantine even though the policy U-turn left organizers scrambling. —AFP



A staff member holds a wallaby at the Eden Meerkat Friends animal cafe in Seoul.



A one-month-old wallaby peeks out of its mother's pouch at the Amneville zoo.

Australia lists small wallaby among new endangered species

Australia listed a small wallaby and the grey snake among 15 new threatened species on Tuesday as it launched a zero-extinction plan for its unique wildlife. Many of Australia's species are clinging to existence, their habitats shrinking from human activity and extreme events such as the 2019-2020 Black Summer bushfires, wildlife groups say.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's government announced a new 10-year scheme to try and halt the slide into extinction of 110 "priority species" and shield 20 "priority places" from further degradation. It aims to prevent any new extinctions of plants and animals while conserving at least 30 percent of Australia's land mass. Wildlife groups blame Australia's poor record in protecting its unique species largely on habitat destruction, accelerated by global warming and resulting extreme weather.

The Black Summer fires burned through 5.8 million hectares in eastern Australia and killed or displaced an estimated 1-3 billion animals. "The Black Summer bushfires in particular have seen devastating results for many species. We are determined to give wildlife a better chance," said Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek. "Listing species as threatened under national environment law is a critical step in protecting the species and habitats in need of urgent help."

'Extinction capital'

Australia's attempts to protect its wildlife had not worked so far, the minister added. "Australia is the mammal extinction capital of the world," she said. Among the 15 plants and animals listed as threat-

ened are the vulnerable small parma wallaby, which faces danger from bushfires and predators, the endangered mildly venomous grey snake of Queensland, and the endangered small wingless matchstick grasshopper, which is sensitive to drought and frequent bushfires. Wildlife groups welcomed the government's goal of preventing any new plant or animal extinctions.

The objective "is ambitious but essential if future generations of Australians are to see animals like koalas, mountain pygmy possums, greater gliders and gang gang cockatoos," said the Australian Conservation Foundation's nature program manager Basha Stasak. "Stopping the destruction of wildlife habitat is the key to achieving this objective." Stasak called on the government to strengthen national environment law, saying it had failed to protect animals, plants and ecosystems. Scientists had estimated the cost of tackling Australia's "extinction crisis" at 1.69 billion Australian dollars (\$1 billion) a year, Stasak said.

'Downward spiral'

A five-yearly State of the Environment report released in July painted a picture of wildlife devastation on land and sea. It cited the clearing of millions of hectares of primary forest and mass coral bleaching on the Great Barrier Reef caused by marine heatwaves. WWF-Australia called for investment in recovery plans for all threatened species.

"Australia's wildlife and wild places have been on a dangerous downward spiral," said WWF-Australia chief conservation officer Rachel Lowry. She welcomed Australia's target of zero new extinctions, saying it matched the goals of New Zealand and European Union member countries. Lowry pressed the government to set out and fund a recovery plan for the more than 1,900 threatened species in Australia. "This plan picks 110 winners," she said. —AFP



Chris Coupland, a senior keeper at 'Devils @ Cradle', feeds a wallaby leg to a Tasmanian devil at the refuge that maintains a disease-free insurance population of devils while allowing tourists to see the elusive marsupial up close, in Cradle Mountain in Australia's island state of Tasmania. — AFP photos

Sports

Verstappen gets second crack at clinching F1 world title in Japan

Leclerc finishes lower than second

SUZUKA: Red Bull's flying Dutchman Max Verstappen has another chance to clinch his second consecutive world championship when the Japanese Grand Prix returns at Suzuka this weekend after a three-year absence because of COVID. The runaway leader failed to secure the title at last weekend's rain-affected Singapore Grand Prix, but he will do it in Japan if he wins and nearest rival Charles Leclerc finishes lower than second.

Verstappen is 104 points ahead and he needs to extend that to 112 points over the field to claim the championship after Sunday's race. Simply put, if Verstappen gains eight points on Leclerc and six on teammate Sergio Perez, who won in Singapore, he will be only the third driver after Michael Schumacher and Sebastian Vettel to clinch the title with four races to spare. History appears to be on the 25-year-old's side, with 12 Formula One world champions having been

crowned at the Japanese Grand Prix.

"This is not where we want to be but we move on to Japan," Verstappen said after a rollercoaster wet-dry race in Singapore where he finished seventh to end his five-race winning streak. Verstappen has never won in Japan and will aim to bounce back from a frustrating race under the lights of Singapore, where he finished seventh after starting eighth on the grid. A fuelling blunder in qualifying left him seething and gave him too much work to do on the tight Marina Bay street circuit, where overtaking was extremely difficult.

That will be less of a problem at Suzuka, on a circuit characterized by sweeping bends and dramatic elevation changes. Weather forecasts suggest the race could be another wet one, after a heavy rain storm delayed the start of the Singapore Grand Prix for more than an hour. The Japanese Grand Prix has not been held since 2019 because of the

pandemic, when it was won by Valtteri Bottas in a Mercedes, and it will likely take more than rain to dampen the enthusiasm of fans and drivers.

Budget brouhaha

Casting a shadow over the race in Japan will be the investigation from the governing body FIA into 2021 team spending. Rival teams claimed at the Singapore Grand Prix that Red Bull and Aston Martin had spent more than the \$145 million cost cap that was introduced last season to make racing more competitive. A furious Red Bull chief Christian Horner blasted the claims as "fictitious" and threatened legal action, while the FIA said they were "unsubstantiated" as they still had to conclude their investigation.

The FIA are due to release their findings in a report later Wednesday. Should any team exceed the cost cap then there are a range of penalties

available, from fines for "minor" breaches of the cap all the way up to points deductions and disqualification from the championship for a serious "material" breach. If Red Bull are found to have broken the rules, it would cast a further shadow over Verstappen's first world title, won in controversial circumstances in the final race of 2021 in Abu Dhabi.

By contrast, this year's fight is all but over, and it is a question of when, not if, the dominant Dutchman, who has won 11 of 17 races, will be declared champion again. Verstappen will clinch the championship if he wins in Japan and takes the bonus point for the fastest lap, regardless of where Leclerc finishes. He can wrap it up even if he does not win Sunday's race, although another finish outside the top six would see the fight continue to the United States Grand Prix in Austin in a fortnight's time. — AFP

Rugby players face increased MND risk

LONDON: Rugby chiefs must take urgent action to reduce head injuries after a study indicated that former international players are 15 times more likely to develop motor neurone disease, researchers said Tuesday. Academics, who studied a cohort of former Scottish internationals, found that, overall, the ex-players were about 2.5 times more likely to develop neurodegenerative disease than expected, compared to members of the general population. Multiple studies have shown a link between brain injuries and an increased risk of developing neurodegenerative disease, and that ex-professional athletes are at an increased risk of developing such conditions.

As concerns grow, a group of former players has decided to sue various governing bodies for allegedly failing to protect them from permanent injury. In the latest research, a team led by the University of Glasgow compared health outcomes among 412 male, Scottish, former international rugby players with over 1,200 matched individuals from the general population.

The results, published in the *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry*, showed that while age at death was slightly higher among former players, they were also at higher risk of a neurodegenerative disease diagnosis compared to their matched controls. The risk varies by sub-type, but not by player position. As well as the higher risk of developing motor neurone disease, the risk of Parkinson's disease is three times greater.

"This study provides further insight into the association between contact sports and neurodegenerative disease risk," said Glasgow consultant neuropathologist Willie Stewart, who led the research team. "Of particular concern are the data on motor neurone disease risk among our rugby players, which is even higher than that for former professional footballers. This finding requires immediate research attention."

The Motor Neurone Disease Association says the disease affects up to 5,000 adults in the UK at any one time, with a 1 in 300 risk of getting MND across a lifetime. The researchers said the paper's findings echo those of previous studies of former professional football players and American football players but point out most of the rugby players studied were amateurs, playing before the sport turned professional in 1995. They said this showed the risks were not confined to professional athletes.

Professional risks

Stewart, whose previous research showed ex-professional footballers had a significantly higher risk of dying from neurodegenerative disease than the general population, said he was concerned that rugby players faced even more risks in the professional era with an increasing number of matches being played.

"Rugby has talked a lot and is doing a lot about head injury management and talking about whether it can reduce impact exposure during the week," he said. "I think those conversations have gone on a while and the pace of progress is pretty slow." He added: "Instead of talking about extending seasons and introducing new competitions and global seasons they should be talking about restricting it as much as possible, cutting back on the amount of rugby we're seeing and getting rid of as much training as possible."

Stewart said rapid strides had been made in American football, highlighting the reduction in contact training. "I think rugby could be speeding up this pace of change," he said. "I know it's tough to think of about there being less rugby rather than more but maybe less is more. "Maybe you get a better-quality product if the players are less damaged and fitter rather than depending purely on quantity. "So I think rugby has to think about it. You can't continue to put young men and women through what they've been through now we know from the amateur era there's this risk of brain disease." — AFP

Kuwait Girls Gymnastics team win second place

KUWAIT: Kuwait Girls Gymnastics team won second place and the silver medal in the Arab Juniors Gymnastics Championship being held in Wahran, Algeria. The hosts Algeria won first place while Jordan took third. Kuwait's Gymnast Fatima Al-Nama won 5 silver medals in the floor exercise, balance beam, parallel bars, pommel horse and individual general gymnastics - raising the team's medals to six. President of Arab and Kuwait Gymnastics Associations Fahad Al-Soula commended Kuwait's achievement and congratulated Fatima Al-Nama on her performance. He thanked the organizing committee and the Algerian Association for their efforts.

Arab basketball clubs' championship begins

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The second round of the Arab men basketball clubs' championship will kick off on Thursday with six matches. Sixteen clubs from 11 countries are participating in the tournament that continues until Oct 15. Al-Riyadhi (Lebanon) meets Al-Gharrafa (Qatar) at 3:00 pm. At 5:00 pm, Ahli Benghazi (Libya) play Ittihad Alexandria (Egypt). The third match will be between Ahli Aleppo (Syria) and the hosts Kuwait Club at 7:00 pm.

Meanwhile, Beirut (Lebanon) will meet Widad Boufarik (Algeria) at 3:00 pm, followed by Kazma with Ahli (Bahrain) at 5:00 pm, then at 7:00 pm Sadd (Qatar) will play Bashaer (Oman). Kuwait Club is expected to have an easy match against Aleppo, as players are ready, in addition to having signed excellent professional players, but they should be wary of surprises. Al-Ahli is more prepared and at same level of Kazma, although Kazma have the advantage of playing at home and have a good fan backing.

In a rare move, Al-Gharrafa signed a contract

South Africa shine in third T20; India win series

INDORE: South Africa's Rilee Rossouw on Tuesday called his maiden Twenty20 international century coming against a "world class" India "special" after he helped the tourists to a consolation 49-run win in the third match. The left-handed Rossouw, who came into his 21st T20 for South Africa on the back of two ducks, made an unbeaten 100 in 48 balls to steer the team to 227-3 after being invited to bat first in Indore. South African bowlers then combined to bowl out India for 178 in 18.3 overs, but the hosts took the three-match series 2-1 - their first ever against the Proteas at home after winning the first two matches.

It was the last match for both the teams ahead of the T20 World Cup in Australia starting later this month and the 32-year-old Rossouw made it count for the tourists. "(India are) a world class side, I would say, it (the knock) was special," man of the match Rossouw said of his ton against the top-ranked T20 team in the world. "It is something that you dream of as a cricketer, to score a hundred in front of a packed crowd and I am glad I could contribute for the winning side tonight."

Quinton de Kock, who hit 68 off 43 balls, and Rossouw put on 89 for the second wicket after skipper Temba Bavuma, who got ducks in the two losses, fell for three. Rossouw survived a dropped catch on 24 by Mohammed Siraj in the deep as the ball popped out of his hands for a six. De Kock made his second successive fifty with a hit over the fence off Umesh Yadav. The pair hit eight sixes between them before the partnership ended with De Kock's run out in his attempt to steal a second run.

India's bowling woes

Rossouw, who hit eight sixes, then got going with



with Kuwait basketball coach Talal Al-Qallaf to lead the team during the championship, because their coach Qusai Hatim of Iraq was not able to travel to Kuwait. Meanwhile, the technical committee of the Arab Basketball Association held its meeting with all participating clubs in the presence of Secretary General Abdullah Shalabi and head of the Higher Organizing Committee Bader Al-Osaimi. Shalabi lauded the good organization and professionalism of the organizing committee, adding all procedures are going smoothly, and expected this championship to be the best at both the technical and organizational levels.



INDORE: India's cricketers celebrate with the trophy after winning the series at the end of the third and final Twenty20 international cricket match between India and South Africa on October 4, 2022. — AFP

Tristan Stubbs in another big partnership of 87 and surpassed his previous best of 96 not out to reach his hundred in 48 balls. Stubbs, who was warned by pace bowler Deepak Chahar for backing up too far at the non-striker's end when on 13, made 23.

Rossouw finished unbeaten and David Miller, who hit a 100 in the second T20, smacked three straight sixes in the final over from Chahar to score an unbeaten 19 off five balls. India captain Rohit Sharma said bowling remains one of the things to be worked upon before heading into the World Cup Down under. "Areas of concerns, we have to look at our bowling, what more options we can find in the powerplay, middle and death," said Rohit whose side also beat Australia 2-1 in a three-match T20 series last month.

"We were playing two quality sides, (we) have to go back and see what we can do better. It will be challenging and we need to find answers, still work-

ing towards that." India's chase started badly as they lost two early wickets including Rohit for a duck after the opener got an inside edge on to his stumps from pace bowler Kagiso Rabada. Wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant (27) and Dinesh Karthik (46) attempted to revive the chase in an attacking partnership of 41 off 20 balls.

Pant got out after hitting three fours and two sixes in his 14-ball knock, but Karthik kept up the charge. Left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj denied Karthik his fifty after the batsman attempted a reverse scoop only to be bowled. The rest of the batting, which missed Virat Kohli and KL Rahul who were rested, failed to challenge the bowlers apart from Chahar who made a valiant 31 of 17 balls. Fast bowler Dwaine Pretorius, who came in for the rested Anrich Nortje, stood out with figures of 3-26 in his 3.3 overs. — AFP

Sports

Oust team owners and officials named in soccer abuse report

Bombshell report details systemic sexual abuse in US women's soccer

LOS ANGELES: United States international captain Becky Sauerbrunn said Tuesday that team owners and officials implicated in a bombshell report detailing systemic sexual abuse and misconduct in US women's soccer should be barred from the sport. The 37-year-old two-time World Cup winner said players were "horrified and heartbroken" by the findings of a report published on Monday following a year-long investigation by former US attorney general Sally Yates.

Yates's report included interviews with more than 200 National Women's Soccer League players—many of them members of US national teams—and detailed patterns of abuse from team coaches, including manipulation and tirades. "Every owner and executive and US soccer official who has repeatedly failed the players and failed to protect the players who have hidden behind legalities and have not participated fully in these investigations should be gone," Sauerbrunn said in a video-conference call from London, where the US women's team is preparing for a friendly with England on Friday.

Merritt Paulson, the owner of Sauerbrunn's club, the Portland Thorns, was accused in the Yates report along with other club officials of enabling misconduct by former Thorns manager Paul Riley. Pressed on whether Paulson was included in the team owners she believes should be forced out of the NWSL, Sauerbrunn replied: "It includes everyone that has continued to fail the players time and time again, who didn't take players concerns seriously, who didn't pass on information correctly, who have not participated in investigations. All of them."

In a separate development on Tuesday, Paulson, who is also the owner of the Portland Timbers

Major League Soccer franchise, said he was removing himself from all Thorns-related decision-making until the conclusion of a separate NWSL/NWSL Players Association investigation. "I cannot apologize enough for our role in a gross systemic failure to protect player safety and the missteps we made in 2015," Paulson said in a statement.

Later Tuesday, Arnim Whisler, owner of the Chicago Red Stars and a NWSL board member, confirmed he was also stepping away from his roles. "I am so deeply sorry for what our players experienced during their time spent in Chicago," Whisler said. "Our organization is committed to rebuilding trust and respect among players and staff towards our league and club, and I recognize that my current presence is a distraction."

'Horrified and heartbroken'

Sauerbrunn, meanwhile, said players were "not doing well" following publication of the findings of the investigation, which was launched last year after reports in *The Athletic* and *The Washington Post* lifted the lid on abuse in the NWSL. "We are horrified and heartbroken and frustrated and exhausted and really, really angry," said Sauerbrunn, a veteran of 208 internationals stretching back to 2008.

"We are angry that it took a third-party investigation. We're angry that it took an article in *The Athletic* and *The Washington Post*. We're angry that it took over 200 people sharing their trauma to get to this point right now," she said. "For so long, this has always fallen on the players to demand change. And that is because the people in authority and decision-making positions have repeatedly failed to protect us. And they have failed to hold themselves and each other accountable."



LOUISVILLE: In this file photo, Becky Sauerbrunn #4 of the Portland Thorns FC and Nadia Nadim #10 of the Racing Louisville FC battle for the ball during the game at Lynn Family Stadium in Louisville, Kentucky. — AFP

US head coach Vlatko Andonovski, meanwhile, said members of his squad would be given the option of sitting out this week's game against England if they decided they were not in the right frame of mind for the game. "Some players and staff members need time, need space, need to process all of it," Andonovski said. "If that means they don't want to participate in a team meeting, or in a team training, or even if they don't want to play the game, then it's up to them," he said, noting that he was "sickened and disgusted" by details of the report.

"Now this report is out, it's our job to do our part to make sure that no one has to deal with this ever again in our sport at any level," he added. Sauerbrunn also said she has not contemplated the possibility of going on strike to force change in the NWSL. "I haven't thought about not playing," she said. "I hope it won't get to that point. A lot of us have been navigating these things for a very long time and you find a way to deal with it. We, as women, as players have faced a lot for a very long time. Unfortunately, I'd say you get used to it." —AFP



Uzbekistan, Japan face off in the AFC Futsal Asian Cup

KUWAIT: The finalists in the AFC Futsal Asian Cup Kuwait 2022 Championship will be decided on Thursday as Uzbekistan face Japan (by 5:00 pm) while current champions will face Thailand (8:00 pm). Uzbekistan qualified after defeating Kuwait 3-0 and grabbed 12 points. Meanwhile Japan reached the semi-finals with difficulty, starting with their loss to Saudi Arabia 1-2. They had two consecutive wins against South Korea 6-0 and Vietnam 2-0. The Iranians, meanwhile, enter their match with Thailand as favorites to reach the final. They had the easiest path to the semifinals after crushing Vietnam 8-1, Indonesia 5-0, Chinese Taipei 10-1 and Lebanon 9-0.

Chairman of the Board of Kuwait Football Association Abdullah Al-Shaheen is satisfied with Kuwait team's performance despite their exit. "We are proud of what the Kuwait Futsal team did during the tournament. The players and coaches did all they have to do to please their fans and hoist



Kuwait flag high," he said.

Kuwait team coach apologized to the fans, adding that he took the responsibility for the loss to Uzbekistan in the quarter-finals. He said the

team suffered from exhaustion after playing 3 strong matches in the group stage followed by Uzbekistan in the quarter-final. He said that Kuwait have a good team.

How Indonesian stadium disaster unfolded

MALANG: Indonesian investigators are still assessing events that culminated in one of the deadliest disasters in the history of football. A pitch invasion and a stampede prompted by police firing tear gas in a packed Indonesian stadium on Saturday left at least 131 people dead, including 32 children. Using interviews with officials, witness accounts and verified images and footage from the night, AFP pieces together how the tragedy unfolded in just 10 minutes of chaos after the game finished at the Kanjuruhan stadium in the city of Malang.

9:47 pm: Gates closed

After the game kicked off at 8:00 pm local time, the match ran peacefully through the first and second halves with the stadium packed to capacity with about 42,000 home Arema FC fans. The game ended at 9:57 pm, according to image metadata. But 10 minutes before it finished, some exit gates remained closed contrary to established practice. This was due to "late commands" and because officers "had not arrived" yet, according to Indonesian football association spokesperson Ahmad Riyadh. Several witness accounts and images support this version of events. But police dispute this and say the exits were all open. After the final whistle, the situation began to unravel.

10:17 pm: Pitch invasion

Players were resting on the pitch after the defeat while the result sank in, according to video metadata. They then walked across the field from the west stand to greet waiting fans in the east stand at 10:17 pm, pictures and video metadata showed. Two supporters entered the field to meet the players. One appeared to confront them but was then seen hugging a member of the team, according to photos. Several fans can be seen in video footage raising their middle fingers to players from the terraces.

A third fan then ran onto the field, attracting the attention of stewards who tried to stop that person, videos and photos showed. A fourth spectator also came onto the pitch, according to footage, where security officers can be seen pointing to him but were late to catch him. Tens of other fans entered the field, pictures and video showed. More stewards tried to stop them, asking them to return to the stands.

10:19 pm: Riot police move in

At 10:18 pm, stewards began to move players back to the changing rooms as fans continued to enter the field, according to footage. At 10:19 pm, footage showed the first flare was thrown from the west stand, landing near where the players were escorted out. Dozens of fans had by now invaded the pitch. Another flare was then thrown from the same stand, according to the same footage. The first riot police—armed with shields and batons—were then deployed from the north side of the stadium, videos showed.

At 10:20 pm, fans backed themselves up to the east stand as officers ran at them, some hitting supporters with sticks, according to photographs and video footage. Items were thrown at officers from

the crowd. At 10:22 pm, clashes started between police and fans on the pitch, footage showed. Some fans can be heard asking their friends to return to the stands. Footage showed officers move towards the north stand to beat back supporters as the situation spiraled out of control.

10:25 pm: Tear gas fired, crush begins

According to footage, at about 10:25 pm, police fired tear gas for the first time into the east and west stands. Supporters responded by throwing items at officers and some entered the pitch to do so. At 10:26 pm, more tear gas was fired by officers, video footage showed. Many supporters rushed to nearby locked gates, according to images, in an attempt to save themselves from the smoke, which witnesses say left people choking and struggling to breathe.

As they fled, many became trampled or choked to death as a crush developed at several gates that were closed and some that were open but too small for so many people to pass through, according to survivors. Survivors said dozens died at Gate 13, where the west and south stands meet, in a crush. Authorities have not confirmed how many were killed there.

After this, photographers and video journalists stopped shooting to help victims as police stood by, according to several witnesses who spoke to AFP. Images captured a few minutes later showed many of the officers had disappeared from the pitch as supporters tried to run from the tear gas. Police have claimed around 3,000 spectators eventually invaded the pitch. Photographs showed fans carrying victims to an ambulance on the field or outside the stadium. Within minutes dozens had died, with many more later sent to hospital, as Indonesia faced a moment of reckoning on crowd safety at sports events. — AFP

Indonesia stampede puts focus on police

JAKARTA: The Indonesian stadium stampede that left 131 people dead has sparked anger against the nation's police, whom critics have long accused of using excessive violence. Police, who described the unrest on Saturday night as "riots", said they tried to force supporters to return to the stands and fired tear gas after they invaded the pitch.

But survivors—who had described the police as wielding batons and firing tear gas at helpless spectators—accuse them of overreacting, which led to a crush that became one of the deadliest disasters in football history. Indonesia's police has, along with the military, been involved for decades in suppressing dissent, quelling riots, crushing radical Islamist groups and anchoring the government's bloody fight against separatists in Papua, Aceh and East Timor.

The police force has grown in power as an institution used for the security of the state since the fall of Indonesia's military dictatorship under Suharto in the late 1990s. Data reviewed by AFP shows a force heavily armed and funded to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars for tactical riot equipment since Joko Widodo rose to the presidency in 2014. Spending on crowd control tactical gear—batons, tear gas, gas masks, shields and vehicles—has jumped in recent years, according to figures collected by Andri Prasetyo, a researcher at NGO Trend Asia who analyses government purchases. They have spent close to a quarter of a billion dollars in less than a decade, he said, to kit out officers who use what experts say is often excessive force that almost always goes unpunished. In 2014, the national police spent \$6 million on tear gas. In 2022, that figure rose to \$10 million. In the period between, it spent more than \$68 million to procure tear gas.

In East Java, where the site of tragedy in the city of Malang is located, police spent \$3.2 million on batons in January 2022 alone. "They use our tax money to kill us," said Prasetyo. The nine elite officers suspended after the incident remain under investigation and come from a unit notorious for its aggressive crowd control tactics. All are commanders in the Mobile Brigade Corps, or Brimob, a unit that acts as the special operations paramilitary unit for the Indonesian police force.

Since the election of Widodo, they have been used to crush government opponents, activists say. Their coffers have since been heavily buffeted to militarize the force. "In the past the most brutal force in the military were the special forces. I think they (Brimob) are now getting more notoriously known as a special force of the military," said Usman Hamid, director of Amnesty International Indonesia. "They are being used as a stick." A national police force spokesman was not immediately available for comment.

While Saturday's stampede appeared to have little to do with politics, the displeasure of a society with its leaders can often be heard on the football terraces and some Arema FC fans were yelling obscenities at police as the chaos began. Indonesia's Commission for Disappeared and Victims of Violence, or Kontras, recorded 677 incidents of violence by police between July 2021 and June this year that left 59 people dead and 928 injured. In the years before the COVID-19 pandemic, such incidents spiked. In 2018 to 2019, Kontras recorded 643 cases of violence. In the following year, it recorded 921 cases. — AFP



LIVERPOOL: Rangers' Scottish goalkeeper Allan McGregor (left) dives as Liverpool's Egyptian striker Mohamed Salah (center) shoots to score from the penalty spot during the UEFA Champions League group A football match on October 4, 2022. Liverpool won the game 2-0. —AFP

Liverpool edge Rangers as Bayern, and Napoli underline credentials

Liverpool outclass Rangers to quell early season crisis

PARIS: Liverpool eased to a comfortable 2-0 win in the 'Battle of Britain' against Rangers in the Champions League group games on Tuesday while Napoli underlined their credentials with an impressive 6-1 thrashing of Ajax in Amsterdam. On a night when a minute's silence was held before every match in tribute to the 131 victims of the Indonesia stadium tragedy, Bayern Munich and Club Brugge also made it three wins from three while Inter edged Barcelona in a tight contest in Milan.

Jürgen Klopp's Liverpool went into their Group A game against the Scottish champions on the back of just three wins in their first nine Premier League and Champions League games of the season. But they settled quickly when Trent Alexander-Arnold produced a sublime free-kick to put the home side ahead after just seven minutes. Rangers' 40-year-old goalkeeper Allan McGregor produced some fine saves, including four to deny Darwin Núñez his first goal for Liverpool, to keep his side in the hunt at half-time.

Seven minutes into the second half, however, Leon King's challenge caught the legs of Luis Díaz to give away a penalty. Mohamed Salah stepped up and struck the ball down the middle as McGregor was unable to repeat the penalty-sav-

ing heroics he produced against Napoli. "It was exactly what we needed. It was a super, solid performance," said Klopp, who switched from his usual 4-3-3 formation to a 4-2-3-1. "Sometimes you have to change things." Napoli stay top of Group A after another impressive victory, coming from behind to hammer Ajax 6-1 to take their tally of goals to 13 from three matches.

Mohammed Kudus put the home side ahead in the ninth minute but Luciano Spalletti's side bounced back with first-half goals from Giacomo Raspadori, Giovanni Di Lorenzo and Piotr Zielinski. Raspadori added his second two minutes after the restart and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia added the fifth just after the hour. Ajax's night was made worse when captain Dusan Tadic was sent off after collecting a second yellow card and Giovanni Simeone closed out the win.

'Unstoppable' Bayern

Bayern moved to the edge of qualification with a third successive win, thrashing Viktoria Plzen 5-0 in Group C. "We were calm, we dominated and we were in total control," said Bayern captain and Manuel Neuer. "When everything is going well, we're almost unstoppable." German international Leroy Sané

struck twice, opening the scoring from distance after seven minutes and adding a second five minutes after the break.

Between Sané's two goals, Serge Gnabry added a second on 13 minutes before Sadio Mané posted his first Champions League goal for Bayern with number three after 21 minutes. Substitute Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting came off the bench at half time and added the fifth just before the hour mark. Hakan Calhanoglu fired Inter Milan to a 1-0 win over Barcelona at the San Siro which took the Italians into second spot in Group C, three points behind Bayern.

Inter had lost five of the previous 10 matches in all competitions but Turkey midfielder Calhanoglu ended the crisis talk when he lashed in the only goal of the game on the stroke of half-time. "It was very important today for us, to show something to our fans who are always with us. We showed that we deserved it," said Calhanoglu. Barcelona boss Xavi Hernandez, however, was left fuming after two key handball decisions went against his team.

The first saw an equaliser ruled out following a pitch review by referee Slavko Vincic for Ansu Fati's handball just before the ball dropped to Pedri to tuck home. Barca were then denied a stoppage time penalty after VAR officials ruled

that Denzel Dumfries did not commit a handball offence despite touching the ball in a very similar way to Fati. "If you ask me I'm outraged... the word is outrage because it makes no sense, it's an injustice," Xavi told reporters. "I think it's an injustice, I just can't hide it." Club Brugge also claimed a third successive win to continue their surprise charge towards the next round. Kamal Sowah and Ferran Jugla were on target as the Belgian side made short work of Atletico Madrid in Group B. Atletico had their chances with Antoine Griezmann crashing a penalty off the crossbar. They also had a goal ruled out for offside which added to their frustration. "It's a very tight group and we will have to fight because we won't get anything for free," said Atletico captain Koke.

Club Brugge top Group B, three points ahead of the other three teams after Porto beat Bayern Leverkusen 2-0 with second half goals from Zaidu and Galeno. Sporting Lisbon's march in Group D came to a shuddering halt in Marseille where the home side came from a goal down to win 4-1 and get their first win under their belt. Lisbon still top the group with six points, two ahead of Eintracht Frankfurt and Tottenham Hotspur who played out a goalless draw in Germany. —AFP



KUWAIT: Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Sport (PAS) Mahmoud Abul and other top officials are pictured during the press conference yesterday. —KUNA

PAS issues new guidelines for professionals

KUWAIT: Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Sport (PAS) Mahmoud Abul announced the new regulations and guidelines for Kuwait professional athletes. In the press conference on Wednesday, Abul set forth PAS's strategy for the years 2022-2028 that was announced earlier this year and aiming to provide all the necessary means to enhance and sponsor sports, enable youth capabilities and ensure an

appropriate environment for sports.

He noted that the new strategy seeks to link financial support with athletes' performances depending on their achievements in the prior season to motivate Olympic teams and players which would reflect positively on local and international competitions. He said that the 'comprehensive professional system' for football has been created with the amount of KD 800 per player each month, in addition to permitting footballers with a season-long sabbatical. Abul illustrated that the Kuwaiti Olympic and Paralympic Committees were involved in the strategy to include deserving players to receive their rewards and financial support. He also said that this new list of guidelines would reinforce women's sports through providing them a share from the budget to support women athletes. —KUNA

Judge blasts 62nd homer to beat Maris record

LOS ANGELES: New York Yankees slugger Aaron Judge smashed his 62nd home run of the season on Tuesday to finally surpass the legendary Roger Maris's long-standing American League record. Judge, who equaled Maris's record in Toronto last week, blasted a 391-foot bomb into the stands at the Texas Rangers' Choctaw Stadium in the top of the first inning in Arlington.

The 30-year-old slugger had been stuck on 61 homers since pulling level with Maris, failing to better the record during a weekend homestand at Yankee Stadium. Two more fruitless appearances followed during Monday's road opener against the Rangers, as well as the opening game of Tuesday's double-header. But Judge made no mistake as he led off the hitting in Tuesday's evening game, crushing the third pitch faced from Rangers pitcher Jesus Tinoco.

A packed house rose to give Judge a standing ovation as he rounded the bases to be greeted by delighted teammates at home plate. "It's a big relief," Judge said after setting the record with just one more regular season game remaining on Wednesday. "Everybody can finally sit down in their seats now and watch the ball game. It's been a fun ride so far." And getting the chance to do this with my teammates, the constant support from my family. It's been a great honor."

Meanwhile, Judge's 62nd home run ball was scooped up by a fan in the stands who now stands to earn a multi-million-dollar payday. The ball has been conservative-



ARLINGTON: Aaron Judge #99 of the New York Yankees hits his 62nd home run of the season against the Texas Rangers during the first inning in game two of a double header on October 4, 2022. —AFP

ly valued at around \$2 million. Judge said he would like to eventually receive the ball, but did not begrudge the spectator who grabbed the instantly valuable piece of memorabilia. "I don't know where the ball's at, so we'll see what happens with that," Judge said. "It would have been great to get it back but that's a souvenir for a fan. They made a great catch out there and they've got every right to it."

'Clean Home Run King'

The American League record set by Maris in the 1961 season stood as the outright Major League Baseball single season home run record until it fell during the sport's steroid era of the late 1990s. Only three men - Barry Bonds, Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa - have ever hit more home runs in a season, and all three have been tainted by allegations of steroid use. San Francisco Giants legend Bonds holds the official Major League Baseball home run record of 73 set in the 2001 season. —AFP