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New beginning and development

Deputy Amir urges cooperation • PM pledges reforms • Saadoun elected Speaker



KUWAIT: HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah poses for a group photo with National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah and members of the Cabinet and parliament during the opening session of the National Assembly on Oct 18, 2022. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and Amiri Diwan



HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah gestures as he delivers a speech.



Newly-elected National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun chairs the Assembly session.



HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah addresses the National Assembly.

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: It was an inauguration like no other. HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah gave yet another historic address at the opening session of the National Assembly, as he passionately called for cooperation, end to disputes and development, to thunderous applause from the jam-packed chamber and gallery.

Later, HH Sheikh Mishal turned the official ceremony into an almost informal event as he shook hands with lawmakers, exchanged traditional greetings and chatted with all MPs, sometimes at length. He appeared very relaxed, perhaps reflecting an atmosphere of optimism that the election was

smooth and the outcome was as expected.

But that followed a hard-hitting address by HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince, reading it on behalf of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. "If the (Amiri) address on June 22 was the speech of the new era, today's speech is the address for the covenant of the new era," he said, in reference to Kuwait's national covenant issued 60 years ago that put the country on the democratic path.

HH Sheikh Mishal described the day as a "remarkable and glorious day", and called on both the government and MPs to cooperate and focus on achievement rather than engaging in disputes. He urged MPs to practice clean democracy, end rows

and focus on the supervision and legislative role of the Assembly to enact laws that strengthen national unity and achieve the ambitions of the people.

HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince issued a firm warning to legislators by asking them to rearrange their priorities, which should not start with the files of those who broke the law. MPs have said they are planning to start the functions of the new Assembly by submitting a general law to pardon all political prisoners.

HH Sheikh Mishal also reminded the lawmakers that they should respect the authorities of HH the Amir and not to cast any doubt towards them, as "we will not allow this to happen".

He urged the government to work out a strategic

plan and improve work at ministries.

In an unprecedented move, Cabinet members walked out of the chamber as MPs began procedures to elect the speaker, his deputy and other posts, in fulfillment of a pledge by HH the Amir that the government will not interfere in the internal elections of the Assembly. MP Ahmad Al-Saadoun was elected as a speaker of the National Assembly, and warmly congratulated by HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah, his deputy, Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, and other lawmakers. MP Mohammad Al-Mutair was elected deputy speaker. MPs Osama Al-Shaheen and Abdulkarim Al-Kandari were elected secretary and observer of the Assembly respectively.

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See Pages 2 & 3

Australia reverses recognition of 'capital' Jerusalem

SYDNEY: Australia said it would no longer recognize west Jerusalem as the Zionist entity's capital Tuesday, a policy reversal that prompted a curt rebuke from the Zionist entity but was cheered by Palestinians. Foreign Minister Penny Wong said the city's status should be decided by Zionist-Palestinian peace talks, unwinding a contentious decision by the previous conservative government.

In 2018, Australia's then-prime minister Scott Morrison followed US president Donald Trump's lead in unilaterally recognizing west Jerusalem as the Zionist capital. The move caused a domestic backlash in Australia and friction with neighboring Indonesia -

the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation - temporarily derailing a bilateral free trade deal. "I know this has caused conflict and distress in part of the Australian community, and today the government seeks to resolve that," Wong said.

Jerusalem is claimed by both Zionists and Palestinians, but most governments avoid putting embassies there to avoid prejudging the outcome of negotiations for a lasting peace. "We will not support an approach that undermines" a two-state solution, Wong said, adding: "Australia's embassy has always been, and remains, in Tel Aviv".

Zionist Prime Minister Yair Lapid criticized Tuesday's move - which comes as he prepares to face a Nov 1 general election. "We can only hope that the Australian government manages other matters more seriously and professionally," he said. Political director of the Zionist foreign ministry Aliza Bin Noun summoned Australia's ambassador Paul Griffiths on Tuesday to express her country's "deep disappointment" and to protest Canberra's "surprising decision".

Continued on Page 6

Kuwait reiterates staunch support for Palestinians

NEW YORK: Kuwait will spare no effort to throw weight behind the Palestinian people and their legitimate rights at all international events, a Kuwaiti diplomat said late Monday. Kuwait's support for the Palestinian people is based on its unwavering and unyielding principles for helping them restore their rights, Kuwaiti Diplomatic Attaché Suleiman Hamada said during a UN panel meeting, calling on the international community to put an end to the Palestinian people's long-lasting anguish.

Kuwait will keep standing side by side with the Palestinian and Syrian people until their legitimate rights enshrined in relevant international resolutions are restored, he said, decrying provocative Zionist



NEW YORK: Kuwaiti Diplomatic Attaché Suleiman Hamada speaks during a UN panel meeting. — KUNA

practices against them. In this regard, he cited the UN Secretary-General's report on the violations by the Zionist occupation authority against Palestinian and Syrian rights. The Kuwaiti diplomat condemned the Zionist entity's insistence on imposing arbitrary

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Local

Prime Minister: New era needs a new vision of national work

Sheikh Ahmad delivers speech to Assembly on behalf of Amir

KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said in a speech, delivered during the opening session of parliament on Tuesday, that "we are living in a new era that needs a new vision of national work based on the foundations of reform, commitment to wisdom and the effective participation and joint work to achieve the aspirations of the people." Addressing the first session of the 17th legislative term of the National Assembly, the premier added that he hopes clashes and personal interests disappear in favor of the nation's stability, progress and prosperity.

The session was inaugurated by HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Sheikh Ahmad continued addressing MPs by saying he was honored to deliver a speech on behalf of HH the Amir on the occasion of the opening of first ordinary session of the 17th legislative term. "It gives me great pleasure to congratulate you for gaining the trust of the Kuwaiti people, who chose their representatives in parliament to respond to their wishes," the premier said, adding, "and I wish you success in serving the people and what they aspire to."

HH the Prime Minister said that he extended his sincerest appreciation and pride to the Kuwaiti people, who responded to the messages and directives of HH the Amir and HH the Crown Prince, in their speech addressed on June 22 to re-correct the course of the political scene and to wisely choose who represents them, which reflected on the real



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah addresses the inaugural National Assembly session. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and KUNA

and transparent competition among candidates during the last election. The premier added that such an atmosphere came after the two decrees of law issued urgently in implementation of the provision of

article 71 of the constitution to amend and add a number of articles regarding elections for members of the National Assembly, so that voters vote with their civil IDs.

'New era'

"We meet today to open the first session of your esteemed council. We welcome the new era with an atmosphere of optimism, hope and determination to work hard on our national priorities, responsible performance and move towards a new stage of desired cooperation," Sheikh Ahmad said. The premier added as we are in a new era, we must preserve national unity because of "we are responsible for the trust given to us by the people, and we are all partners in carrying on the duties and to be vigilant to take all the necessary procedures based on what the constitution and laws permit us to do, in compliance with the provisions of article 50 of the constitution".

Sheikh Ahmad said that positive cooperation based on the principle of open and democratic dialogue in accordance with the provisions of the constitution together constitute the supporting basis for putting the relationship between the two authorities on the right track in a manner that ensures the stability of the state, achieves its higher interests, and advances the fundamentals of its renaissance. Commitment to the principle of cooperation does not strip any authority of its competencies or confiscate the rights of its members, the premier noted. Rather, it is a constitutional pillar to promote joint

action and establish democratic dialogue and constructive criticism.

Fruitful relationship

The premier noted that the government looks forward to a fruitful relationship with the esteemed council, and will present its program of work in implementation of the provisions of article 98 of the constitution, accommodating all the priorities of the next period, which are realistic and feasible for implementation according to a specific timetable in order to ensure meeting the aspirations of citizens.

Sheikh Ahmad went on to highlight the government program, which he said also deals with initiatives related to the sustainability of the state's public finances, diversifying non-oil revenue sources, restructuring the public sector, combating corruption, enhancing integrity, drying up money laundering sources, combating drugs, implementing development projects and renewable energy projects that contribute to advancing development in the country, achieving Kuwait's vision 2035 and the transformation towards a sustainable economy.

The government has begun to take serious steps towards embodying the effectiveness of government work and strengthening the foundations of trust between citizens and government agencies, the premier said. Later, the premier went over current development on the regional and international levels, and alerted all to the importance of unity and cooperation. — KUNA

MP: Deputy Amir's address inspires Kuwaiti people

KUWAIT: Chosen as temporary parliament speaker as he is the oldest MP, Marzouq Al-Hubaini said Tuesday HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's speech while opening the first session of the new National Assembly has raised the Kuwaiti people's hopes. "The speech was very exceptional and all-out that diagnosed Kuwait's actual reality," Hubaini told the newly-elected Assembly's maiden session.

Hubaini added the country now is in dire need of political stability that could only be ensured by taking precautions and learning lessons amid the



Temporary parliament speaker Marzouq Al-Hubaini addresses the Assembly session.

surrounding crises, challenges and risks. He hoped that the new Assembly will be up to the expectations of the Kuwaiti people under the wise direction of HH the Deputy Amir and with the sincere help of the government. "This is the only way and safe track for fulfilling the Kuwaiti people's expectations, including structural reforms and future accomplishments," he stressed.

Hubaini noted that continued political stability should be based on an independent and balanced foreign policy that puts Kuwaiti interests into account and safeguards Kuwait's independence and sovereignty amid the current regional and world challenges, changes and chaos. He added that HH the Deputy Amir's speech reflected his keenness on closely monitoring the political scene in the country, which has been marred by differences at the expense of national stability, development and public welfare.

Hubaini added national stability should be based

on independent decision-making and complete and close cooperation with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, together with development of foreign relations with other countries on the basis of mutual respect. The Kuwaiti people pin much hope on this new Assembly whose members have been elected in a completely fair and transparent manner, he said, urging them to work in tandem with the government in order to ensure national interests and goals and provide a decent life to people.

Furthermore, the Assembly's oldest MP emphasized that it is necessary to fight corruption amid the country's current financial and economic circumstances. Economically, Hubaini pointed out that with the new parliament, the country is hoped to usher in a fresh economic development stage based on the reactivation of the national economy and diversification of sources of the national income as well as resolution of economic problems, mainly unemployment and housing. — KUNA

In my view

A nation's true Assembly



By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

khaled@kuwaittimes.com

Away from ideologies, factions or divisions of any kind, the National Assembly's first session had an emotionally engaging start. HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah launched the start of the next four years of the parliament with a heartwarming speech that ensured what was declared to the public on August 2, when he, on behalf of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, dissolved the parliament with a clear and direct message that encouraged moving away from years of political stagnation.

HH the Deputy Amir reassured in the message to the people that the path must be corrected, and indeed, during the Assembly's opening session, everyone in the room with no exception felt the honest truth in His Highness' heartfelt words, which was met with a standing ovation. This is a milestone, which the new parliament must not take lightly, as the people and the authority have never been as collaborative in decades.

There was a sense of belonging, which we have not seen in a long time in the Assembly, evident by the unwavering collaboration of the Cabinet, headed by HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah, when it formally stepped aside to let the people themselves finally vote for a speaker of the parliament, without any intrusion as promised and guided by HH the Deputy Amir. When the time for voting for the speaker came, everyone agreed to let Ahmad Al-Saadoun assume the post, and the Cabinet returned briefly to congratulate him.

This makes one only hopeful of a new and bright future. The recent urgent decisions by the acting Cabinet and it officially resuming its role as the new Cabinet along with the collaboration and teamwork expressed by members of the Assembly can only predict a positive future. We are still, as directed by HH the Deputy Amir, required to follow up MPs' performance to ensure the National Assembly belongs to the nation and for the nation, so that this legislative and executive combination remains in harmony to be a nation's true Assembly.



An official in the viewing gallery reads a copy of Kuwait Times. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Local

Kuwait Deputy Amir: Today's speech is covenant of new era

Sheikh Mishal opens first session of National Assembly's 17th legislative term



KUWAIT: HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah gestures as he delivers a speech during the opening ceremony of the 17th parliamentary term at the National Assembly on Oct 18, 2022. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and KUNA



HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah and temporary speaker Marzouq Al-Hubaini arrive at the National Assembly.

KUWAIT: HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, addressing the first session of the 17th legislative term of the National Assembly on Tuesday, said his speech today is covenant of a new era and constitutes guidelines for performing state tasks. "His Highness the Amir's speech on June 22, 2022 was the new era's speech, and today's address is the new era's covenant; it sets the guidelines from the political leadership to nationals regarding the fashion of work in the coming stage," HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince said in his address at Abdullah Al-Salem Hall of the National Assembly.

HH Sheikh Mishal affirmed that all citizens are partners in shouldering the responsibilities and moving forward with the process of construction and reforms. He expressed gratitude for the efforts that had been exerted to hold the recent parliamentary elections without any flaws, lauding the citizens for "their sound selection of their representatives in the National Assembly". However, HH the Deputy Amir and the Crown Prince cautioned that following the elections, there must be follow-up and accountability, urging citizens to judge MPs "in case they deviate in words and action from the sound democratic path."

He also praised efforts of the civil, military personnel and volunteers who cooperated for ensuring the success of the parliamentary elections. Touching on the recent parliament polls, HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince stated: "We had cleansed the electoral process, before it was held, of flaws, offenses, deviations, votes' transfers... thus it was concluded with a new manifestation. In follow-up to the pledge we have made, the government will play an unprecedented historic role in your respectable Assembly during the selection of the speaker and members of various committees, where the government will not side with one's interest at the expense of another and the Assembly will be the master of its decisions."

National duties

Voicing satisfaction with results of the parliamentary polling, HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince said members of the legislative authority should perform their national duties and honor

their pledges they had made as nominees for the sake of the homeland and citizens during their electoral campaigns. "And we hope... that members of the legislative authority be aloft in democracy practices, abstain from wasting Assembly sessions with bickering and quarrels, take the sessions ahead of schedules, not raise their voices in breach of norms of dialogue, and refrain from intentional absence from meetings of various committees' sessions," he said.

"Such actions foil efforts to attain the aspired objectives, thus we hope that the members of the legislative authority focus instead on bolstering the supervisory role of the Assembly, activating its legislative role by issuing laws that depict national unity and attain citizens' aspirations," Sheikh Mishal said. HH the Deputy Amir and the Crown Prince earnestly urged MPs to refrain from non-constructive rhetoric toward laws that concern interests of the homeland, citizens and the country's

security, warning that such bids to serve personal interests will undermine the parliament's aspired role.

Moreover, he urged the legislators to set their priorities for the near future, where "files of the offenders and lawbreakers must not be on top of your priorities at the expense of the state's full-scale development plans." HH Sheikh Mishal further cautioned against dedicating attention to issues that serve tribal and factional interests "rather than the citizens' aspirations". "We hope that the (MPs) democracy practice will be white (flawless) and free of any blemish so that they will not risk losing confidence of the people and ours."

'Rational governing'

As to ministers, HH Sheikh Mishal urged the members of the executive authority to sense citizens' needs and seek to attain their demands by serious action. He urged the new government to

work out a strategy to reach "rational governing", warning that the Cabinet and the ministers would be queried for any irregular acts and complacency. "I will personally follow up on the government's performance and bring it to account with respect of the execution of its manifesto," he warned.

In his robust address, HH Sheikh Mishal indicated to the desire to oversee public personnel work and how they deal with citizens. "And we stress on the necessity of applying the law decisively against offenders and persons who have proven to be slack in performing their national duties," he said. He hoped that "the time of tension and rifts in the relations among you will be over, so that the constitution may be respected with no infringement of any authority in the jurisdictions of another," he added.

HH the Deputy Amir and the Crown Prince further hoped that harmony, good intentions and devotion to the higher interests might prevail, regretting that much time and money had been wasted. He urged both MPs and ministers to stimulate the youth so that they may partake in building Kuwait. Sheikh Mishal urged the state media to hold seminars to inform the public about execution of the projects, and called on the people of Kuwait, namely the decision makers, to ignore bids intended to sow seeds of sedition. HH the Deputy Amir and the Crown Prince emphasized the necessity to respect HH the Amir's jurisdictions, abstain from objections or suspicion because they constitute the core of sovereign acts.

The parliament session kicked off early Tuesday. An Amiri decree was published on Oct 9 calling on the parliament to convene in the wake of the Sept 29 legislative elections. Article 104 of the constitution states that the Amir shall open the annual session of the parliament and he shall deliver an Amiri speech reviewing the situation of the nation and the important public matters, which happened during the preceding year, and outlining the projects and reforms the government plans to undertake during the coming year. The Amir, according to the article, could deputize the Prime Minister to open the Assembly or deliver the Amiri speech. Article 83 of the constitution states that the term of the National Assembly shall be four calendar years commencing from the day of its first sitting. — KUNA



MPs attend the opening ceremony of the National Assembly.

Members of committees

<p>Public Funds Protection Committee Khaled Al-Otaibi Thamer Al-Suwait Jenan Bushehri Muhahal Al-Mudhaf Shuaib Al-Muwaizri</p>	<p>Yousef Al-Bathali Abdulaziz Al-Saqaabi</p>	<p>Financial and Economic Affairs Committee Saleh Ashour Abdullah Al-Anbaei Abdulwahab Al-Essa Shuaib Al-Muwaizri Abdullah Fahhad Majed Al-Mutairi Hamed Al-Bathali</p>	<p>Fares Al-Otaibi Thamer Al-Suwait Mubarak Al-Hajraf Hamad Al-Obaid</p>	<p>Muhannad Al-Sayer Jenan Bushehri Khaled Al-Oteibi</p>	<p>Osama Al-Shaheen</p>
<p>Budgets Committee Osama Al-Zaid Hamdan Al-Azmi Hamad Al-Obaid Fares Al-Otaibi Hamad Al-Matar Saud Al-Asfour Adel Al-Damkhi</p>	<p>Health, Social Affairs and Labor Committee Fares Al-Otaibi Hani Shams Saifi Al-Saifi Osama Al-Shaheen Khalil Al-Saleh</p>	<p>Interior and Defense Committee Khaled Al-Amairah Khaled Al-Otaibi Shuaib Shaaban Mohammad Al-Ajmi Hamed Al-Bathali</p>	<p>Priorities Committee Abdullah Fahhad Hamad Al-Mudlej Ahmad Lari They will be joined by heads of the financial and legal committees.</p>	<p>Committee for Values Hamdan Al-Azmi Mohammad Hayef Falah Al-Hajeri Mubarak Al-Tasha Hamad Al-Obaid</p>	<p>Environment, Food and Water Security Committee Hamad Al-Matar Hamdan Al-Azmi Abdullah Fahhad</p>
<p>Public Utilities Committee Majed Al-Mutairi Mohammad Al-Ajmi Faisal Al-Kandari Mubarak Al-Hajraf Essa Al-Kandari Mohammad Al-Huwailah Khaled Al-Amairah</p>	<p>Educational Committee Hamad Al-Matar Mohammad Al-Huwailah Falah Al-Hajeri Khalil Abul Alia Al-Khaled</p>	<p>Petitions and Complaints Committee Hamdan Al-Azmi Falah Al-Hajeri Yousef Al-Bathali Hani Shams Mubarak Al-Tasha</p>	<p>Human Rights Committee Mohammad Hayef Khalil Abul Adel Al-Damkhi Shuaib Al-Muwaizri Thamer Al-Suwait</p>	<p>Committee for Sports Affairs Muhannad Al-Sayer Abdullah Al-Mudhaf Khaled Al-Otaibi Hani Shams Thamer Al-Suwait</p>	<p>Human Resources Committee Fares Al-Otaibi Saifi Al-Saifi Khaled Al-Omaira</p>
<p>Foreign Relations Committee Marzouq Al-Hubaini Abdulkarim Al-Kandari Abdullah Al-Mudhaf</p>	<p>Legal and Legislative Committee Saud Al-Asfour Abdullah Al-Anbaei Abdulkarim Al-Kandari Osama Al-Shaheen Muhannad Al-Sayer Mubarak Al-Tasha Osama Al-Zaid</p>	<p>Committee to prepare reply to Amiri Address Osama Al-Shaheen</p>	<p>Committee for the Handicapped Saleh Ashour Hamed Al-Bathali Falah Al-Hajeri Alia Al-Khaled Saud Al-Asfour</p>	<p>Housing and Real Estate Committee Abdulaziz Al-Saqaabi Hasan Jowhar Hamad Al-Mudlej Hamad Al-Obaid Abdullah Al-Anbaei</p>	<p>Oil Affairs Committee Hasan Jowhar Abdullah Al-Mudhaf Osama Al-Zaid Hamdan Al-Azmi Faisal Al-Kandari</p>
			<p>Committee for Mega Projects Marzouq Al-Hubaini Saleh Ashour</p>	<p>Women, Family and Child Committee Jenan Bushehri Khalil Al-Saleh</p>	<p>Stateless residents (bedoons) Committee Hasan Jowhar Saifi Al-Saifi Hani Shams Abdullah Al-Enezi Osama Al-Zaid</p>

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Kuwait ready to improve lives in nations in South

NEW YORK: Kuwait affirmed its permanent readiness and cooperation to support the initiatives taken by the authorities to improve the lives of the peoples of the South by exploring innovative approaches and strategies. This came in Kuwait's speech delivered by Anaes Hamed Al-Ostad, Kuwait's diplomatic attache, during a session of the Second Committee of the United Nations General Assembly in the discussion of the item on South-South Cooperation for Development, held late Monday.



KUWAIT
Anaes Hamed Al-Ostad

She indicated that in light of the decline in North-South cooperation, South-South cooperation has positively contributed to the development of international cooperation for implementing the goals of sustainable development in an effective manner. She expressed her wishes in this regard to see more cooperation

within the framework of development among the countries of the South. She added that this plan was based on the Kuwait Declaration of 1977 on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries.

Ostad said the cooperation added many innovations to overcome development challenges and the gaps they face, which undermine their local capacities to achieve the sustainable development goals by 2030. She reviewed development-related operational activities undertaken by Kuwait, as it contributed in financing many projects in many countries in various sectors such as energy, transportation, communications, water, sanitation and agriculture, in addition to health and education sectors. Ostad noted the development projects financed by the Kuwait Fund cover the goals of sustainable development, most notably the eradication of poverty, the provision of quality healthcare, welfare, education and gender equality. — KUNA

Construction, food sectors suffer shortage of workers

Companies facing difficulties in recruiting laborers from abroad

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: After the pandemic, the Kuwait market has suffered from a great shortage in the number of support workers. The construction and food sectors are the most affected by this shortage. There has been some recovery in the local market, but this only includes workers who have official work permits. Meanwhile, the market still suffers from a shortage of marginal workers that most companies depend on, such as in the construction sector, which led to a rise in wages, so costs incurred by contractors and owners of properties is high.

Managers of construction companies told Kuwait Times they are facing big difficulties in recruiting laborers from abroad due to the conditions imposed by official authorities over the number of workers allowed to each company. They pointed out that due to the rising demand for building houses, especially with the end of the summer vacation, the number of company workers aren't enough. This has forced construction companies to deploy untrained marginal laborers available on the market and pay them higher wages too due to the shortage that is occurring among them as well.

The construction managers said the construction sector is witnessing chaos due to an absence of supervision, calling on the government to intervene and control "street contractors" who work individually without the presence of any oversight by a legal entity, municipal classification or commercial headquarters. This has been accompanied by a tightening

by official authorities with regards to requests by contracting companies to increase the number of workers they have.

A construction company manager said average wages have increased by 100 percent, while that of technical workers have increased by 200 percent, indicating this has caused suspension of work at a large number of plots and failure to complete construction due to some workers' exploitation of the situation and lack of sufficient oversight by relevant state institutions.

Regarding the reasons that have affected the construction sector and caused a shortage of labor, a construction company owner noted the absence of projects by the government during the pandemic caused construction companies to lose hundreds of experienced and efficient workers, as they were unable to bear their costs. He pointed out that most of these expert technical workers moved to neighboring states. The lack of government projects also prompted many Kuwaiti companies to flee to more active and vibrant neighboring markets, which will have a negative impact on Kuwait.

A restaurant owner told Kuwait Times that the local market suffers from a shortage of trained and qualified workers in the food sector, stressing the limited numbers of workers allowed to them from the official authority is preventing them to cover the great demand after recovering from the pandemic, pointing out the restaurant sector is one of the first and largest sectors that was affected by the pandemic.



KUWAIT: A construction worker is seen at a site in this illustrative file photo.

The Economist Intelligence Unit stated in its report that expatriate workers dominate the private sector in Kuwait, which employs about 1.6 million expatriates and only around 73,000 citizens. Around 205,000 expatriates working in the private sector left Kuwait in 2021, which has hurt local businesses, especially in the hospitality and retail sectors. The report pointed that in 2021, about 41,200 domestic workers left Kuwait permanently. Domestic workers currently constitute around 22.8 percent of the workforce in Kuwait of 2.7 million.

German legislator praises Kuwait's role for peace

BERLIN: Chairperson of the German-Arab Friendship Association Christoph Bloss has lauded Kuwait's role in maintaining global peace. The Kuwaiti Embassy in Germany said in a statement that Bloss lauded Kuwait's positive role on the international stage during a meeting on Monday, between him and German MPs with Kuwaiti Ambassador in Berlin Najib Al-Badr. The Kuwaiti ambassador told KUNA that the meeting was fruitful and constructive and came in line with the distinctive relations between Kuwait and Germany, noting keenness on further beefing up these ties. — KUNA



BERLIN: Kuwaiti Ambassador in Berlin Najib Al-Badr meets members of the German-Arab Friendship Association. — KUNA

CONDOLENCES

Kuwait Times

management and staff

convey our deepest condolences to our colleague

Faten Omar

on the sad demise of her

Cousin

May Allah Almighty bestow His mercy on him



Afghan students expelled from university dorms

Woman charged in Paris over 12-year-old's brutal murder

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LONDON: Sky News presenter Kay Burley (R) holds the day's newspapers as she reports from outside 10 Downing Street in London on October 18, 2022. Embattled UK Prime Minister Liz Truss apologised for going "too far too fast" with reforms that triggered economic turmoil, but vowed to remain leader despite a series of humiliating climbdowns. —AFP

UK PM battles to stay in power

Truss apologises for going 'too far and too fast' with reforms

LONDON: British Prime Minister Liz Truss on Tuesday battled to stabilise her position after an economic crash forced her into humiliating U-turns on tax reforms, putting her future as leader in doubt. "It's hard to conceive of a more serious political and economic crisis in recent times than that which Britain now faces," right-wing broadsheet The Daily Telegraph wrote in an editorial.

The paper, which previously supported Truss, wrote that she faced "the ignominy" of becoming the country's second shortest-serving prime minister in history, unless her own MPs gave her "breathing space".

Truss on Tuesday was to meet her cabinet and attempt to rally support among Conservative MPs, some of whom have publicly said she has no future as prime minister. She was set to face parliament on Wednesday for a session of Prime Minister's Questions.

The right-wing Sun tabloid on Tuesday called Truss "The Ghost PM", while left-wing tabloid The Mirror called the situation a "catastrophic humiliation".

The embattled prime minister on Monday apologised in a BBC interview for going "too far and too fast" with reforms, a month after taking office.

This came after her new finance minister Jeremy Hunt in a brief televised statement on Monday axed almost all the debt-fuelled tax cuts announced last month in a budget by his sacked predecessor,

Kwasi Kwarteng. Hunt told parliament that he and Truss "agreed yesterday to reverse almost all the tax measures announced in the growth plan three weeks ago", flanked by a grim-faced Truss.

The announcement came as Truss's governing Conservative party tanked in the opinion polls amid the reversals and Britain's worsening cost-of-living crisis.

'Very British coup'

British media likened Hunt's dramatic intervention to a coup, with The Telegraph depicting him in cartoon form as a bemedaled Generalissimo "taking temporary control to stabilise the situation".

"It was a very British coup. So polite you could almost have missed it," wrote left-wing broadsheet The Guardian.

Conservative MP Roger Gale said that Hunt had become "de facto prime minister" as several MPs publicly urged her to go and others reportedly plotted to unseat her. "I think her position is untenable," Conservative MP Charles Walker told Sky News.

"If she doesn't go right now, it will not be her decision," he warned.

Armed forces minister James Heappey assured British media on Tuesday morning that Truss had

"owned" her mistake, while admitting she could not repeat such errors.

Asked by Sky News whether Truss was "prime minister in name only", Heappey insisted: "She's been very candid about the mistake that was made and she has apologised for that... There's leadership in doing that".

But he conceded that "given how skittish our politics are... I don't think that there's the opportunity to make any more mistakes."

Truss fired her close friend Kwarteng on Friday after their tax-slashing budget sent bond yields spiking and the pound collapsing to a record dollar-low on fears of rocketing UK debt-fuelling intense speculation over her political future one month after taking office.

Truss had already staged two embarrassing budget U-turns, scrapping tax cuts for the richest earners and on company profits.

Hunt's strategy reversals included reducing Truss's announced £2,500 cap on energy bills for all British people from two years to six months, after which he promised a new approach.

Hunt estimated the tax changes would raise about £32 billion (\$36 billion) per year, after economists estimated the government faced a £60-billion black hole. He also warned of tough spending cuts.

Hunt's actions on Monday sent the British pound soaring against the dollar and euro, while bond yields dipped. —AFP

Russian strikes pound Ukraine power sites

KYIV: President Volodymyr Zelensky said Tuesday that Russian strikes had destroyed about 30 percent of his country's power stations in one week, speaking hours after a fresh barrage cut electricity to cities across Ukraine. Russian attacks rocked energy facilities in Kyiv and urban centres across the country, causing blackouts and disrupting water supplies, just one day after the capital was bombarded with a swarm of suicide drones.

The strikes in the early hours of Tuesday hit Kyiv, Kharkiv in the east, Mykolaiv in the south and central regions of Dnipro and Zhytomyr, where officials said hospitals were running on backup generators. Drones bombarded Kyiv on Monday, destroying a residential building in the centre and killing five people in what the presidency described as an attack of desperation.

It was the second Monday in a row that Russia launched punitive strikes which military observers have said appear to be Moscow's response to battlefield losses. Zelensky described the repeated targeted of energy infrastructure as "another kind of Russian terrorist attacks".

"Since October 10, 30 percent of Ukraine's power stations have been destroyed, causing massive blackouts across the country," the Ukrainian leader said on Twitter. Hospitals on back-up power -

He said the attack meant that there was "no



KYIV, Ukraine: Ukrainian firefighters work on a destroyed building after a drone attack in Kyiv, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Ukraine officials said that the capital Kyiv had been struck four times in an early morning Russian attack. —AFP

space left for negotiations with (President Vladimir Putin's regime". Many settlements in the Zhytomyr region west of Kyiv and parts of the city of Dnipro in central Ukraine were without electricity, while power was restored to the southern city of Mykolaiv after strikes overnight.

"Now the city is cut off from electricity and water supplies. Hospitals are working on backup power," the mayor of Zhytomyr Sergiy Sukhomlyn said in a statement on line. In the northeast meanwhile, Ukraine's second-largest city of Kharkiv some 40 kilometres (25 miles) from the border with Russia was hit with eight missiles, the regional governor said.

Kharkiv's mayor Igor Terekhov said an "industrial enterprise" had been hit. In Kyiv, meanwhile, the DETK energy provider said its staff were "doing their best to restore electricity supply after the destruction of a critical infrastructure facility in Kyiv city." —AFP

inside the grounds and assaulting him. "The Foreign Secretary has issued a summons to the Chinese charge d'affaires at the Chinese Embassy in London to express... deep concern" over the incident "and to demand an explanation for the actions of the consulate staff", a foreign office minister, Jesse Norman, told parliament.

But Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said the protesters were to blame and that "violation of the peace and dignity of China's overseas embassies and consulates will not be tolerated".

"The troublemakers illegally entered the Chinese Consulate-General in Manchester, endangering the security of the premises," Wang said at a daily press briefing. He urged the UK to "earnestly fulfil its duties and take effective measures to step up protection of the premises and personnel of the Chinese embassy and consulates". —AFP

UK summons China diplomat over protest assault

LONDON: The UK's foreign office on Tuesday summoned a top Chinese diplomat in London over footage of a Hong Kong pro-democracy protester being assaulted in the grounds of a Chinese consulate in Britain.

The summons came after Beijing earlier Tuesday accused demonstrators of "illegally entering" the consulate in the northern British city of Manchester. British police have said a group of men came out of the consulate during a peaceful demonstration on Sunday afternoon, dragging one of the protesters

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£6.050 £5.290	£1.785 £1.180	£3.490 £2.890
		
£3.500 £2.950	£1.195	£4.750 £3.990
		
£1.195 £0.995	£0.795 £0.645	£0.595 £0.395
		
£1.895	£2.590	£3.590 £2.690
		
329.9 279.9	£9.715 £169.900 £139.900	£13.900 £5.900
		
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International

Woman charged in Paris over 12-year-old's brutal murder

PARIS: Paris investigators on Monday charged a woman suspected of raping and murdering a 12-year-old girl whose body was found in a trunk on Friday, a source close to the case told AFP.

The main suspect, identified as a 24-year-old woman suffering from psychiatric disorders, was questioned earlier Monday alongside an older man suspected of sheltering her.

The 24-year-old has been charged with the rape and murder of a minor aged under 15 along with torture and abuse, the source said.

A judge ordered that she be held in provisional custody.

Prosecutors said in a press release Monday that under questioning, the woman made "varying statements, switching between admitting and denying the facts of the case."

But she eventually said she had brought the girl — identified only by her first name, Lola — to her sister's apartment in the same building, where she forced her to take a shower.

The woman said she had then "committed harm of a sexual nature and other violent acts against (Lola) that caused her death, and hid her body in the trunk," prosecutors said.

According to the autopsy, the young girl died due to "cardio-respiratory failure with signs of asphyxia and cervical compression".

Other non-fatal wounds were found on her face and back as well as large gashes on her neck, and the numbers 0 and 1 were written in red on the soles of each of her feet.

"Investigations are continuing to determine exactly what happened (and) to establish the criminal responsibility of the people involved," prosecutors added.

The suspect's lawyer Alexandre Silva expressed sympathy for Lola's family, before calling on the press not to report "rumours" and

insisting on the presumption of innocence for his client.

The 43-year-old man also questioned in custody on Monday admitted that he brought the 24-year-old woman to his home with the trunk and two suitcases, where he said she stayed for two hours before leaving again in a chauffeur-driven car he had called for her.

Spotted on CCTV

The main suspect was arrested on Saturday in Bois-Colombes in Paris' northwestern suburbs, after investigators tracked her movements on CCTV cameras from the building and the surrounding area as well as using phone records and physical searches.

Lola's parents had called police after their daughter did not return from middle school on Friday afternoon.

Her father, the custodian in the building, was unsettled by seeing the unknown woman enter the building in Paris' 19th district alongside his daughter when he checked the CCTV recordings.

An eyewitness who also saw the suspect at the scene said that she had offered him money to help her move a large trunk, several media outlets reported.

But a homeless man was the first to discover the body, which sources familiar with the investigation said was hidden under cloths in a plastic box in the building's courtyard.

Six people, including the suspect's sister and others who had contact with her in the time immediately following the killing, have so far been placed in custody in relation to the case, with four since released.

'Time for mourning'

Local residents placed flowers at the gate of



PARIS: French lawyer Alexandre Silva addresses the press on October 17, 2022 at the Paris courthouse, as he leaves a hearing with a judge after his client has been charged with the rape and murder of 12-year-old girl Lola, whose body was found in a trunk on October 14, 2022. —AFP

the family's building over the weekend.

Meanwhile, school authorities have announced they will set up psychological aid for staff and pupils at Lola's school and others in the area.

One mother told AFP that her daughter, another pupil who knew Lola by sight, was "not doing well today, she doesn't want to go to school."

"Today it's time for mourning and for the investigation, which seems to be progressing quickly," 19th district mayor Francois Dagnaud

said during a visit to the Georges-Brassens school.

"What's important is that the main suspect for now has been arrested, there's no psychopath roaming the streets of this neighbourhood," he added after local parents reported fears for their children's safety.

"Of course, the fact that a 12-year-old child can die in such circumstances is overwhelming for everybody," he added, saying that counselling would also be offered to local residents. —AFP



ZARZIS, Tunisia: Locals of this coastal city in southeastern Tunisia gather in the city center on Oct 18, 2022 for a demonstration. — AFP

Tunisians strike over missing migrants

ZARZIS, Tunisia: Thousands of Tunisians demonstrated and a general strike shut down the coastal city of Zarzis Tuesday to demand a renewed search for relatives who went missing during a September migration attempt.

The city has been rocked by days of protests also fuelled by anger over the burial of four people, suspected of being missing Tunisians, in a nearby cemetery for foreign migrants—allegedly without efforts to identify them.

The powerful UGTT trade union federation voiced support for the strike and demanded an inquiry into the rescue effort and how the bodies were buried. Tuesday's protests come four weeks after 18 Tunisians boarded a boat headed for Italy, joining tens of thousands of clandestine migrants who have attempted to reach Europe in recent years — many of them Tunisians exhausted by a chronic economic crisis.

Zarzis residents have been angered by reports that authorities buried four bodies found at sea—believed to be passengers from the boat—in a nearby cemetery for foreign migrants, mostly from sub-Saharan Africa, whose bodies regularly

wash up along the coast after similar tragedies.

Those bodies have since been exhumed for identification, while another two bodies believed to be Tunisians have been found. That would leave 12 passengers from the boat still missing. Media reports said as many as 4,000 protesters, including relatives of the missing, marched along the city's main street, many holding up pictures of lost loved ones or signs saying "we want the truth".

Shops and government offices were closed, along with health services, except for emergency cases. On Tuesday, President Kais Saied asked Justice Minister Leila Jaffel to open an investigation "so that Tunisians can know the full truth and who was behind these tragedies".

The Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH) said authorities had "not devoted the necessary resources to search and rescue operations in a timely way" and called for an inquiry into the burials. The North African country has a long Mediterranean coast, in places just 130 kilometres (80 miles) from the Italian island of Lampedusa.

Despite generally favourable weather from spring to autumn, the voyages on barely seaworthy boats often end in tragedy. Earlier this month, AFP journalists saw the coastguard intercepting migrants aboard overcrowded boats. Tunisian authorities intercepted nearly 200 migrants attempting to reach Europe over the weekend, the defence ministry said Tuesday. —AFP

Assembly based on the principles of the constitution. He also stressed on the need to upgrade education, health and housing welfare. Sheikh Ahmad also said his government's program will focus on diversifying non-oil revenues, restructuring the public sector, fighting corruption and draining the sources of money laundering.

MIP Marzouq Al-Hubaini, the oldest member who chaired the first part of the session, said the Amiri address on June 22 was a roadmap for exiting the political deadlock, but insisted that Kuwait badly needs political stability. He expressed hope that the Assembly will correct the course of the past, adding that cooperation with the government is the only way to achieve national goals. Hubaini said that fighting corruption has become an urgent necessity. He also stressed on the need for reforming laws that restrict public freedoms and amending legislation that governs the judiciary. Following the election of the speaker, his deputy and others, the Assembly for the first time ever elected all committees unanimously and without voting.

New beginning and development...

Continued from Page 1

But former speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said on Twitter that there was a procedural error in the election of the secretary and observer. He said according to the internal charter, the election of the two posts requires an absolute majority of the house membership and not just the majority of those present. He advised the Assembly to rectify the mistake before adjourning the session.

Before that, the prime minister said as the country enters a new era full of optimism and hope, it requires a new vision for national action based on reforms and away from disputes. The premier called for national unity and cooperation with the

58 killed in 10 days of Syria rebel clashes

BEIRUT, Lebanon: More than a week of inter-rebel fighting in Syria's Turkish-held north has killed 58 people, mostly combatants—a flareup that has allowed Al-Qaeda-linked fighters to gain ground, a war monitor said Tuesday.

The clashes since October 8, in a volatile area near the Turkish border, have been among the deadliest in years, killing 48 rebel fighters and 10 civilians, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. Among the 48 combatants killed, 28 were members of the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham alliance (HTS), which is led by Al-Qaeda's former Syria affiliate, according to the Britain-based war monitor, which relies on a wide network of sources inside Syria.

Dozens of rebel groups opposed to President Bashar al-Assad are confined to areas of northern and northwestern Syria that still evade government control after more than a decade of war. The latest fighting started this month between two rival pro-Turkish rebel groups in the town of Al-Bab in Aleppo province before spreading to other areas and drawing in other factions, including HTS.

HTS is widely seen as the strongest and best organised of the rebel factions and dominates the nearby Idlib region, Syria's last major opposition

Australia reverses recognition of...

Continued from Page 1

Bin Noun told Griffiths that the move would encourage extremism and jeopardize regional stability, a foreign ministry statement said.

The Zionist entity annexed east Jerusalem following the Six-Day War of 1967, and has declared the entire city its "eternal and indivisible capital". Palestinians claim the eastern sector as the capital of their future state. The Palestinian Authority's civil affairs minister, Hussein Al-Sheikh welcomed the move by Canberra as an "affirmation" that Jerusalem's status depends on the outcome of negotiations. Hamas, the Islamist group that controls Gaza, called it "a step in the right direction".

Indonesia also welcomed the decision. "This policy would hopefully contribute positively to Palestinian-Zionist peace negotiations," the foreign ministry in Jakarta said. Wong insisted that the decision - which has limited practical impact - did not signal any broader shift in policy or hostility towards the Zionist entity. "Australia will always be a steadfast friend of (the Zionist entity). We were amongst the first countries to formally recognize (the Zionist entity)," she

Kuwait reiterates staunch support...

Continued from Page 1

administrative and security restrictions and measures against the Palestinian people, shrugging off all international laws and norms, including relevant UN Security Council resolutions. He also decried continued Zionist attempts to change the demography of Palestinian territories, pointing to more than half a century of Zionist breaches of all human, moral and legal principles.



KAFR JANNAH, Syria: Turkish troops are pictured in the area of Kafr Jannah on the outskirts of the Syrian town of Afrin on October 18, 2022 as the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) jihadist group advances towards Syrian opposition-held areas in the northern Syria. —AFP

bastion. Last week, the group captured the Afrin region from rival Turkish-backed rebels, advancing in the area for the first time since civil war broke out in Syria in 2011.

The United States condemned the HTS advance in a statement Tuesday. "We are alarmed by the recent incursion of HTS, a designated terrorist organisation, into northern Aleppo (province). HTS forces should be withdrawn from the area immediately," the US embassy said.

HTS has leveraged the latest bout of fighting to expand its zone of influence, in a move green-lit by Turkey, which has never publicly backed it, the Observatory said. "Hayat Tahrir al-Sham would not have entered the area without Turkey's consent," said Observatory chief Rami Abdul Rahman. —AFP

said. "We will not waver in our support of (the Zionist entity) and the Jewish community in Australia. We are equally unwavering in our support of the Palestinian people, including humanitarian support."

The center-left Labor party, with Anthony Albanese as prime minister and Wong as foreign minister, came to power in May 2022 after strongly opposing the previous government's Jerusalem policy. Wong accused the Morrison government of making the Jerusalem decision to influence a by-election in a Sydney suburb with a sizeable Jewish community. "You know what this was? This was a cynical play, unsuccessful, to win the seat of Wentworth and a by-election," she said.

Canberra's shift was foreshadowed by the removal of language about the Zionist capital from the website of Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Although Australia is not a major player in peace talks, Ran Porat, a historian and researcher at Melbourne's Monash University, said the move was significant. "In the Middle East in general, symbolism is very much at the center of many conflicts. Symbolism is not negligible, it's not unimportant."

Porat added that the move could be seized on by the Zionist opposition Likud, led by Benjamin Netanyahu, as evidence of the government's failings ahead of next month's election. Netanyahu tweeted Tuesday that it was "no surprise" Australia made the decision while Lapid was in power, condemning the premier for supporting Palestinian statehood in an address to the UN General Assembly last month. —AFP

By so doing, the Zionist occupation authority is undermining all ongoing efforts aiming at achieving sustainable development goals by means of taking control of further Palestinian lands and building more settlements, Hamada regretted. On the occupied Golan Heights of Syria, the Kuwaiti diplomat echoed the UN Secretary General's recent comments that UNSC Resolution 497/1981, which states that the Zionist entity's decision to impose its laws and judicial and administrative authorities on the Golan Heights is null and void and has and of no international legal significance, is still in effect.

Hamada concluded by restating the continued construction and expansion of Zionist settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and the Golan Heights is a main obstacle to economic and social development there. — KUNA

International

Alleged accomplices on trial over Vienna jihadist shooting

Four of them could be sentenced to life in prison if found guilty

VIENNA, Austria: Six men accused of helping a gunman who carried out Austria's first deadly jihadist attack went on trial in a Vienna court on Tuesday. Convicted Islamic State sympathiser Kujtim Fejzulaj went on a shooting rampage on November 2, 2020 in downtown Vienna, killing four and wounding 23 others before police shot him dead.

In the wake of the EU member's deadliest shooting in decades, the Austrian government and in particular its intelligence service were accused of failing to monitor the Islamist movement in the country. According to the federal prosecutors' charge sheet seen by AFP, the six defendants—four Austrians, a Chechen and a Kosovar—were not directly involved in the deadly attack, but are suspected of actively helping Fejzulaj prepare for the shooting.

involvement or membership in a terrorist group. Four of them could be sentenced to life in prison if found guilty, while the two others face up to 20 years in jail. All except one have been held in custody on remand in the lead-up to the trial.

'Ensure justice is done'

According to the Vienna state criminal court, verdicts are not expected before February. Lawyer Mathias Burger, acting for the family of 21-year-old Nedzip Vrenezi, who was shot dead first by Fejzulaj during the attack, told AFP in an interview ahead of the opening of the trial that the family "still suffers to this day" from what happened to their son.

The victim's family had received compensation from the Austrian state, but his clients' main interest was to "ensure justice was done", Burger said. With the help of some of the accused, the gunman—an Austrian citizen whose parents are from North Macedonia—was allegedly able to obtain the weapons and the ammunition needed for the attack, while others provided logistical aid or encouraged Fejzulaj, according to prosecutors.

Lawyer Astrid Wagner, who represents 32-year-old Chechen Adam Makhaev, accused of selling weapons to Fejzulaj, told AFP ahead of the trial, that her client was going to plead not guilty.

Makhaev has confessed to illicit arms trafficking, but did not know what the weapons would be used for, she said. During the rampage, Fejzulaj opened fire on passersby with a Kalashnikov in central Vienna.

In 2019, Fejzulaj had been convicted and sentenced to 22 months in prison for trying to join the Islamic State group in Syria, before being arrested in Turkey and extradited to Austria. Last year, Austria adopted a heavily criticised anti-terror law that was formulated in the wake of the attack and allows for increased surveillance. — AFP



VIENNA: Lawyers Rudolf Mayer (L) and Astrid Wagner arrive at the regional court in Vienna, on October 18, 2022. The trial of the Vienna jihadist attack, the first to hit Austria, opened on October 18, 2022 with the appearance of six alleged accomplices of the killer, who was shot dead on the evening of the 2 November 2020 attack. — AFP



Cameras barred from the room

At the start of the trial, all six were led into the crowded court room, escorted by armed guards under tight security. Cameras were barred from the room. The six men—aged between 21 and 32 years old—are accused of "enabling... or otherwise promoting" the execution of the crimes "due to their shared affiliation with the radical Islamist scene and the terrorist organisation IS Islamic State," the confidential court document said.

The accused face charges ranging from participating in terrorist crimes in connection with murder to

Murder suspect of Philippine journalist surrenders

MANILA, Philippines: A suspect who had allegedly gunned down a Philippine journalist surrendered to authorities, the interior secretary said Tuesday, calling it a "major breakthrough" in a case that drew international concern. The archipelago nation is one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists, and most of the killers often go unpunished. Radio personality Percival Mabasa, who went by the name "Percy Lapid" in his programme, was shot dead in a Manila suburb on October 3 as he drove to his studio.

He was the second journalist to be killed since President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. took office on June 30. Mabasa was an outspoken critic of former president Rodrigo Duterte, as well as of Marcos' policies and aides. Interior Secretary Benjamin Abalos said the suspect, Joel Estorial, had surrendered and turned in a gun Monday "out of fear for (his) personal safety" as police had broadcast his face from security footage taken shortly after the shooting.

"The gun matched the slug (from the crime scene). The ballistics matched," Abalos told reporters, calling the surrender a "major breakthrough". Police briefly wheeled the suspect, in a bullet-proof vest and kevlar helmet, out to the media but gave few details about his background. He told reporters he and three others took part in the ambush on orders from an unnamed person at the country's national prison, and later split the 550,000 pesos (\$9,350) bounty among themselves. Estorial—who named his three other co-conspirators still at large—also said he was told he would be killed if he didn't go through with the attack.



MANILA, Philippines: Joel Estorial (C), the alleged gunman in the killing of Philippine journalist Percival Mabasa, is presented to the media as Philippine Interior Secretary Benjamin Abalos (L) speaks during a press conference at the national police headquarters in Manila on October 18, 2022. — AFP

He did not cite the motive nor identified the mastermind behind the killing. Mabasa's relatives welcomed the arrest but stressed the authorities needed to do more. "We hope this development leads to the identification, arrest and prosecution of the mastermind," the victim's brother Roy Mabasa said in a statement.

"We hope Percy does not become part of the statistics." The National Union of Journalists of the Philippines said holding the mastermind accountable "will help chip away at the culture of impunity around journalist killings" in the country. A total of 155 journalists and media workers have been killed in the Philippines since 1992, according to international media watchdog Committee to Protect Journalists. This is more than seven percent of the 2,175 media workers killings worldwide during the period, making the Philippines among the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists in recent years. — AFP



KABUL, Afghanistan: Afghan women hold placards during a protest in front of Kabul University in Kabul on October 18, 2022. — AFP

Afghan students expelled from university dorms

KABUL: About 30 Afghan women protested in front of Kabul University on Tuesday after authorities expelled students from the dormitories allegedly for breaking rules. The protesters claimed that all the evicted students were women in a move that comes as the Taliban has increasingly restricted girls' access to education. "Today's protest was for girls who have been expelled," organiser Zholia Parsi told AFP after Taliban forces dispersed the rally. Organisers also called for the reopening of girls' secondary schools, which have been shut since the Taliban returned to power last year.

In several cities, women have staged sporadic

protests against harsh restrictions imposed by the hardline Islamists. The rallies are usually swiftly put down—often harshly—and journalists have increasingly been prevented from covering them.

"Don't expel us... education is our red line," chanted the protesters in front of the university. The Ministry of Higher Education said Monday that an undisclosed number of students "who violated the rules and regulations of the university's dormitory" had been expelled from their accommodations.

It did not say if they were all women. In response to international pressure over girls' education, Taliban officials have said the secondary school closures are temporary, but they have also wheeled out a range of excuses for the shutdown—from lack of funds to time needed to remodel the syllabus along Islamic lines.

Late Monday, Taliban supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada replaced the minister of higher education with a loyalist cleric, Neda Mohammad Nadeem, a government statement said. It was the sector's second such reshuffle in a month, following the appointment of a new minister of education. — AFP

Ethiopian, Eritrean forces seize key Tigrayan city

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia: Tigrayan rebels said Tuesday that Ethiopian and Eritrean forces had seized a key Tigrayan city, a move coinciding with UN warnings of a spiralling conflict and an "utterly staggering" toll on civilians. "These invading forces have taken control for the moment of some areas including Shire," the Tigray Central Command said in a statement, adding that the rebels were in a "life or death" struggle. It said the joint forces had entered Shire, a strategic city of about 100,000 people which lies about 300 kilometres (180 miles) by road northwest of the Tigrayan capital Mekele, on Monday. "The enemies are massacring our people with heavy weaponry/armaments in the areas it invades," the statement said.

It is not possible to verify battlefield claims as Tigray is under a communications blackout and access to northern Ethiopia is restricted for journalists. The conflict began in November 2020, when Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed sent troops into Tigray after accusing the region's ruling Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) of attacking federal army

camps. The TPLF had dominated Ethiopia's ruling political alliance for decades before Abiy took power in 2018 and sidelined the party. Abiy's military campaign has received the support of Eritrea, with which Ethiopia was at odds until a rapprochement that earned Abiy the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize.

Tigray and its six million people are virtually cut off from the outside world, facing dire shortages of fuel, food and medicines and lacking basic services, including communications and electricity. An estimated two million people have been driven from their homes in northern Ethiopia and millions more are in need of aid, according to UN figures, with reports of widespread atrocities including massacres and rape. The death toll remains unknown. Fighting resumed between the warring sides in August, shattering a five-month truce that had allowed limited amounts of aid into the battered region. Both sides blamed the other for firing first.

On Monday, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres warned that the situation was "spiralling out of control". "Violence and destruction have reached alarming levels," he said, calling for the "immediate withdrawal and disengagement" of Eritrean forces.

The European Union (EU), the United States and African Union (AU) have also issued urgent appeals for a halt to the fighting. Abiy's government said in a statement Monday it was "committed to the peaceful resolution of the conflict through the AU-led peace talks," without addressing the bloc's call for a ceasefire the day before. — AFP

Kuwait, Years From Now Student Art Competition 2022

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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!

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Business

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2022

NBK reports KD 374.2 million in net profit for the first 9 months of 2022

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait ("NBK", the "Bank" or the "Group") has announced its financial results for the nine-month period ended 30 September 2022. The bank reported a net profit of KD 374.2 million (\$1.2 billion), compared to KD 254.8 million (\$819.9 million) for the same period in 2021, improving by 46.9 percent year-on-year.

Net profit for the three-month period ended 30 September 2022 reached KD 136.4 million (\$438.9 million), a year-on-year increase of 45 percent from the comparable period in 2021. Total assets as of end of September 2022 grew by 6.8 percent year-on-year to reach KD 34.7 billion (\$111.7 billion), whereas total loans and advances increased by 8.7 percent year-on-year to KD 20.6 billion (\$66.3 billion). Likewise, customer deposits increased by 11.0 percent to reach KD 19.3 billion (\$62.0 billion), while total shareholders' equity reached KD 3.5 billion (\$11.2 billion), growing by 1.5 percent year-on-year.

Commenting on the bank's 9M 2022 financial results, Hamad Al-Bahar, Group Chairman, said: "NBK continued to deliver healthy performance and improved growth trends during 9M 2022 on the back of favorable macroeconomic conditions. The operating environment witnessed strong signs of recovery and business sentiment has been improving in recent quarters; especially considering the gloomy outlook expected globally. The pickup in consumer spending, oil production and oil prices contributed positively in supporting the fiscal position of the government and in providing a likely scenario for improved capex."

"Alongside the bank's robust financial performance during the period, the bank remained committed to fulfill its national duty in promoting sustainable development. We were pleased to demonstrate our commitment to invest in technology by taking part in developing the Kuwaiti government digital transformation journey. NBK has committed to provide needed support to upgrade the government application 'Sahel

Hamad Al-Bahar

- NBK continued to deliver healthy performance and improved growth trends on favorable macroeconomic conditions
- We continued to invest in talent and digital capabilities to secure our future growth



Isam Al-Sager

- We achieved the highest quarterly profits in the history of the Bank
- NBK's prudent risk, capital, liquidity and dynamic-financial management, enables the Group to effectively overcome headwinds



and 'Sahel Business'; leveraging on the Bank's expertise in digital transformation and its efforts to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the services provided to nationals, entrepreneurs and small businesses."

"Furthermore, on promoting the private sector's social commitment, NBK launched a large expansion project for its Children's Hospital specialized in stem cell transplant, supporting the government's efforts in advancing healthcare services. The bank will finance the expansion project at an estimated cost of KD 13 million," Al-Bahar added.

"Our strategy for sustainable growth is geared towards focusing heavily on environmental governance and in following the international standards and frameworks. Likewise, we emphasize on launching initiatives that contribute to transitioning towards a sustainable and low-carbon economy and in promoting community initiatives in various health and education fields," Al-Bahar explained.

"Moreover, we take pride in the launch of NBK RISE, a Global Women Leadership initiative designed to elevate talented women to more significant leader-

ship roles. The program aims to work towards leading and inspiring positive global change in the corporate community, contributing to NBK's sustainability goals of driving diversity, equity and inclusion," Al-Bahar concluded.

Commenting on the Bank's 9M 2022 financial results, Isam Al-Sager, Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, said: "We achieved the highest quarterly profits in the history of the Bank, leveraging on the strength, quality and flexibility of our diversified business model. The bank delivered a healthy growth of 10.6 percent in operating income, reaching KD 753.5 million, driven by core banking activity while the lower cost of risk levels contributed positively in uplifting our bottom line."

"The bank witnessed strong growth in deposits which reflected positively on margins. Besides, the continuity of growth trends across strategic markets and segments, including Wealth Management and Islamic banking, asserts the sound financial position of the Group and its ability to generate income from diverse streams," Al-Sager added. "We continue to operate from a position of strength, building on our

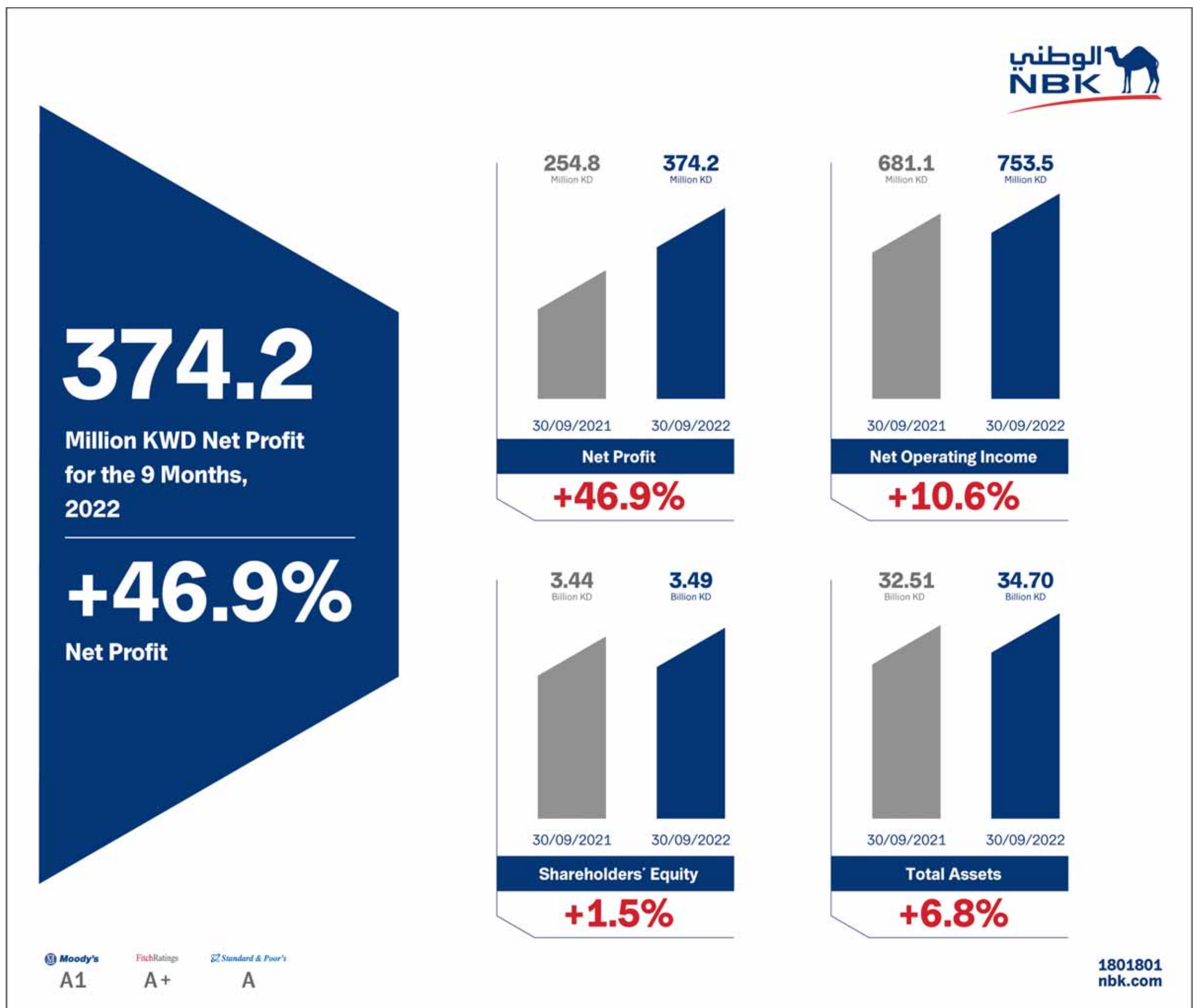
judicious strategy and financial solidness. This is underpinned by our strong balance sheet, competitive advantage and the ability to deliver innovative products and insightful advice to our customers. Additionally, our diversified business model continues to create room for long-term added value for our customers, communities and shareholders," Al-Sager noted.

"NBK's prudent risk, capital, liquidity and dynamic-financial management, enables the Group to effectively overcome headwinds; with special attention to gearing against concerns revolving around growth prospects, geopolitics and rising inflation," Al-Sager explained.

"The Group will continue executing its responsible growth strategy, investing in innovation and new technologies for optimal returns, while advancing our sustainable practices across businesses and operations. As a testament to our efforts on this front, NBK has been awarded 'Best Consumer Digital Bank in Kuwait and the Middle East' by Global Finance as well as 'Best ESG in Kuwait' and 'Best Bank for Diversity and Inclusion' by Euromoney; endorsing the Groups commitment to energy transition and its accelerating sustainable development," Al-Sager asserted.

The most prominent results and indicators during the first nine months of 2022

- Net operating income of KD 753.5 million (\$2.4 billion), increasing by 10.6 percent compared to 9M 2021
- Total assets grew by 6.8 percent year-on-year, to KD 34.7 billion (\$111.7 billion)
- Total loans and advances grew by 8.7 percent year-on-year to KD 20.6 billion (\$66.3 billion)
- Customer deposits increased by 11.0 percent year-on-year to KD 19.3 billion (\$62.0 billion)
- Strong asset quality metrics, with NPL/gross loans ratio at 1.24% and an NPL coverage ratio of 308 percent
- Robust Capital Adequacy Ratio of 16.3 percent, comfortably in excess of regulatory requirements.



Business



KUWAIT: Faisal Bader Al-Sayer, Bengt Schultz, Hiroshi Miyashita, Martin Aherne, Theo Kruger and Savio Alvares during the launch event.



KUWAIT: Top management of Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons and Toyota during the launch event.

Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons unveils all-new Toyota Yaris 2023

Toyota sets new benchmarks for the compact sedan segment

KUWAIT: Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons and Toyota are bringing new levels of style and sophistication to Kuwait's compact sedan segment with the eagerly awaited launch of the all-new Yaris. Combining powerful, elegant design and superior comfort with Toyota's uncompromising approach to quality, durability, and reliability, the 2023 Yaris delivers an exceptional experience that is set to further strengthen the model's appeal among the region's discerning drivers.

The launch event was attended by Faisal Bader Al-Sayer, Chairman, and Bengt Schultz, Chief Operating Officer from Al-Sayer Holding, along with Hiroshi Miyashita from Middle East & Central Asia Division Toyota Motor Corporation Japan, Martin Aherne Business Director Toyota Sales Division, Theo Kruger General Manager Retail Sales, Savio Alvares Deputy General Manager 'AL OSTOUL' Fleet Sales, distinguished fleet customers, members from Toyota Sales team, in the presence of representatives from the press and media. According to Theo Kruger "Toyota sedans specially have earned world-wide success and popularity; they have remarkable footprint and have achieved strong sales and market shares within the most competitive markets. We see millions of Yaris customers across the globe who are spreading the big smile of satisfaction, it is an impressive car in the GCC region too."

Savio Alvares said "users of Yaris find it extremely practical and convenient for personal use or business, economical in terms of fuel consumption as well as maintenance. The new Yaris has been developed keeping in mind the actual customer's needs to create a stronger emotional connect with the car".

Hideyuki Kamino, Chief Engineer of the all-new Toyota Yaris, commented: "With the all-new Yaris, we set out to ensure that the vehicle is not only functional, but also represents the lifestyle and values of our cus-

tomers. Our next-generation sedan adopts a powerful and elegant fastback style that embodies the Yaris' trademark stability and reliability that has won a loyal following across the region. We have also tried to ensure this high-quality sedan is as affordable as possible for our customers and hope it will capture the imaginations of countless drivers just as previous generations have done."



Faisal Bader Al-Sayer behind the wheel of all-new Toyota Yaris 2023

Kei Fujita, Chief Representative, Middle East and Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation, said: "We are delighted to launch the all-new Yaris in the Middle East. The 2023 model comes with significant upgrades to deliver optimal performance and an engaging driving experience, while also maintaining outstanding fuel economy in line with Toyota's commitment to achieving carbon neutrality. I would like to thank our customers in the region and beyond for continually inspiring us on our journey to innovate and build 'Ever-better Cars' that exceed their expectations."

With its striking interior and exterior design, multi-feature passenger compartment, and ultra-precise driv-

ing dynamics, the all-new Yaris once again strikes a balance between class-leading aesthetics and engineering. The width of the new model increased by 10 mm to 1,740 mm, while the length of the wheelbase increased by 70 mm to 2,620 mm. The length and overall height of the vehicle have been maintained at 4,425 mm and 1,480 mm respectively, making the new model the roomiest yet.

The 2023 Toyota Yaris boasts a striking and elegant exterior. Its front design features a low-profile bumper, along with a new glossy black front grille and ultra-slim LED headlamps. The vehicle's side design and sleek fastback silhouette heighten its hyper-modern aesthetic, while the distinctive diffuser shape at the rear expresses exceptional strength and stability.

The all-new Yaris' spacious cabin is designed to provide greater comfort and convenience for both the driver and passengers. Its thin and wide instrument panel exudes refined elegance, which is further emphasized by the soft padding throughout the interior. A 7-inch Thin Film Transistor (TFT) multi-information display and digital LED speedometer can be set to one of four layouts, allowing the driver to fully customize and optimize their experience. The interior was designed to provide drivers with an outstanding field of view, and also features multiple compartments in the front and rear doors including cup holders, small and large drink bottles, and other easy-to-access storage areas. The spacious 475-liter capacity trunk comes complete with a folding board that serves as a partition to enable more efficient luggage distribution.

The vehicle's cabin hosts a range of practical features, including an 8-inch multimedia screen with Apple CarPlay & Android Auto together with a USB port on the head unit and two ports at the rear console that enable passengers to connect external media devices. Additional features include a four or six-speaker sound

system and an automatic air conditioning system with two rear vents for extra passenger comfort. Meanwhile, parents benefit from the added peace of mind provided by Toyota's ISOFIX safety system, which attaches baby seats securely using specially designed tethers.

The all-new Toyota Yaris promises a dynamic driving experience thanks to its four-cylinder engine that is equipped with 16-valve DOHC and dual VVT-I. The vehicle is available with a choice of two engine sizes. The 1.3-liter capacity engine provides an ideal balance between power and fuel efficiency, generating 97 horsepower and 122 Nm of torque with outstanding fuel consumption of 22.4 km/l. Meanwhile, the 1.5-liter capacity engine delivers smooth acceleration and a quick response, producing 105 horsepower and 138 Nm of torque with fuel consumption of 20.5 km/l.

Both engine options come paired with Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT), which simulates a seven-speed sequential shift transmission to deliver powerful, smooth acceleration from start-off and at low speeds, and quiet, efficient transmission at higher speeds with excellent fuel efficiency. An enhanced body and platform structure and tuned suspension contribute to outstanding handling, stability, and ride comfort. The vehicle also boasts excellent maneuverability, with a 4.8-meter turning radius. The all-new Yaris maintains Toyota's sterling safety standards. Its safety system is complemented by Toyota Safety Sense, an advanced safety technology package that includes Pre-Collision System (PCS), Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC), Lane Departure Alert (LDA), Lane Departure Prevention (LDP), as well as a new Front Departure Alert (FDA) feature that gives drivers a visual and audible warning when a stationary vehicle in front begins to move forward. This makes the 2023 Yaris especially suited to the stop-and-go traffic found in urban areas.

Senegal not giving up on oil and gas

SAINT-LOUIS, Sebegal: The new offshore gas terminal appears through the morning mist cloaking the Atlantic Ocean near Saint Louis, where Senegal meets Mauritania. It has been hailed as a new economic beginning in developing Africa, and condemned as a new source of pollution in a world suffocating from global warming. On the beach, a dugout canoe is hauled up the wet sand after a night's fishing. "Not a lot of fish," scowls El Hadji Gaye, his eye catching the giant structure nearly 10 kilometers (six miles) out at sea.

Senegal, like the Democratic Republic of Congo, has discovered oil and gas reserves, raising hopes of future riches and industrialization. They have no intention of yielding to appeals to leave lucrative oil and gas in the ground in the name of fighting climate change.

Senegalese President Macky Sall says it would be "an injustice" and he has launched a diplomatic counter-offensive to justify extracting the resources, starting next year. "Not being the greatest polluters since we are not industrialized, it would be unfair in the search for a solution (to global warming) to ban Africa from using the natural resources which are underground," Sall told visiting German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in May. And the message seems even more likely to be heard now that Europeans, facing a major energy crisis following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, are looking to diversify their oil and gas supplies.

'Exacerbate' global warming

Niger, the world's poorest country according to the UN's Human Development Index, is also building Africa's longest oil pipeline—a nearly 2,000-kilometre (1,250-mile) link to Benin that will enable it to export crude from as early as next year. Greenpeace Africa's ocean cam-

paign manager Aliou Ba stressed that exploiting fossil fuel deposits will further "exacerbate" the climate crisis, with efforts to limit the temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius looking increasingly forlorn.

Francois Gemme, an expert with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, said: "When you are poor it is very difficult to give up on treasure, so something more interesting has to be on offer. 'What's at stake is that these countries can and do choose a decarbonized economy. 'And that requires the transfer of technology and investment in renewables, which is still generally lacking."

The pre-COP27 talks held in Kinshasa at the start of October heard calls for alternative technologies and major financing to sustain a green transition. But the government of the vast, rainforest-covered DRC is standing by its right to exploit petrol and gas, despite criticism from environmental groups warning against the release of huge quantities of carbon. At the pre-COP gathering, Congolese Prime Minister Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde pointed out that some European nations have returned to burning highly polluting coal due to gas shortages triggered by the Russian invasion. He warned against "discrimination", "with certain states free to carry on or even increase their emissions, and others prevented from exploiting their natural resources". DRC senior climate negotiator Tosi Mpanu Mpanu sees a positive outcome. "Paradoxically, it's the oil money that is seen as dirty which will allow us to have sufficient means to take back our environmental sovereignty and reduce emissions caused by deforestation," he said.

Senegal's oil and gas discoveries account for only 0.07 percent and 0.5 respectively of world reserves. But Energy and Oil Minister Sophie Gladima said "they are important enough to radically change the economy and industrial fabric of our country and thereby its future prospects." "Just exploiting our hydrocarbons will enable us to accelerate public access to electricity and above all to lower the cost of production and encourage industrialization." —AFP

number means that most investors are pessimistic, also recorded a steep drop in investor confidence about Germany's current economic situation.

That reading fell by 11.7 points in October to minus 72.2 points. "The current economic situation is once again assessed as significantly worse than in the previous month," Wambach said in a statement. "The probability that real gross domestic product will decline in the course of the next six months has also increased considerably. Overall, the economic outlook has deteriorated again," he said. The German government last week said the country was forecast to descend into recession next year and shrink by 0.4 percent because of the fallout from Russia's war in Ukraine.

Like other European nations, Germany is bracing for an energy crisis this winter after Russia shut down the crucial Nord Stream 1 gas pipeline, leaving the industrial powerhouse scrambling to diversify supplies. "Germany is already being hit harder than most other advanced economies... given its strong reliance on gas in energy generation, large energy-intensive industry sector and reliance on exports," said economist Franziska Palmas from Capital Economics.—AFP



LEJONE, Lesotho: This photograph taken on October 10, 2022, shows young boys selling trouts near the Malibamatso basin in Lejone, northern Lesotho. — AFP

Lesotho finds gold in trout fish farming

LEJONE, Lesotho: It's harvest time in Lejone, a small village nestling in mountains in southern Africa more than two thousand meters above sea level. The yield is not grain or fruit, but rainbow trout—the bounty from an undulating river at the foot of the peaks of Lesotho. Fishermen haul nets bulging with trout onto a floating platform.

The fish are killed and put on ice, the first step on their journey to dinner tables in neighboring South Africa. The settlement is home to one of Lesotho's two professional fish farms—pioneering ventures in the poor landlocked kingdom. Stephen Phakisi, 59, launched Katse Fish Farms with two partners in 2005. Today, he chuckles at how the trio leapt into the business with meager knowledge about some of its unknowns, including the best feed for fattening fish quickly. "For five years, it was totally uneconomical," Phakisi says.

He recalls how he once found a shoal of fish dead and belly-up in the water, while another time a full cargo of imported fingerlings died on a 16-hour drive from Cape Town. Today, the company is profitable, with a yearly output of 800 tons of fish, which is sold at about \$4 a kilogram.

It supplies a few local restaurants, where the trout is usually pan-fried in butter for a few minutes and served with a side dish of kale and potato chips or rice. But the bulk of its production lands on the shelves of high-end supermarkets in neighboring South Africa, where a vacuum-packed one-kilo bag can cost up to \$50.

'Heads and bones'

Trout farming in Lesotho has grown on the back of another of the mountain country's most famous exports: water. South Africa gets much of its water from its neighbor, which has dammed several of its waterways over the past three decades. The dams have widened riverbeds, creating inlets and basins that are ideal for trout farming.

Katse Fish Farms lies more than 2,000 meters (6,500 feet) above sea level on the Malibamatso River, upstream from the giant Katse Dam reservoir that supplies South Africa's capital Pretoria and the largest city, Johannesburg. Fish farming currently accounts for less than 0.1 percent of Lesotho's \$2 billion GDP.

Locals say they have always eaten salted, sun-dried freshwater fish. And young boys sell fresh catch to passing motorists. But as dam construction continues the country has the potential "to become the regional leader in aquaculture," according to the Lesotho National Development Corporation.

In this country of just over two million people, who rank among the poorest in the world, few seem to be benefiting so far from the water boom.

"We are selling water to South Africa but we have no water to our homes," says Joshua Sefali, a village leader in Lejone. Many of the village's stone houses with thatched roofs have no mains water or electricity.

Large swathes of land were flooded after dams went up. Some people lost their homes and access to farmland, receiving only small compensation in return.

Machaka Khalala, 31, said she received about \$165 when the field where she used to grow corn and spinach was submerged. Now she makes a living selling "fat cakes," a local doughnut.

But that's often not enough to make ends meet. A cap on her head, Khalala was among dozens of people queuing up in the cold, a bucket in hand, on a mountain roadside. Here, Lesotho's other fish farm hands out leftovers every week—"the heads and backbones," Khalala said. — AFP

German investor morale stays low as recession looms

BERLIN: German investor confidence climbed "slightly" in October but remained at a low level, a key survey said Tuesday, as Europe's top economy braces for a recession triggered by soaring energy costs.

The ZEW institute's economic expectations index unexpectedly inched up to minus 59.2 points, from minus 61.9 points in September. Analysts had predicted a fourth straight month of decline for October, as record-high inflation and skyrocketing energy prices in the wake of the Ukraine war weigh on the German economy. But ZEW president Achim Wambach said despite respondents' "slightly" improved expectations for the coming six months, the overall picture remained bleak. He noted that the survey, in which a negative

Business

British unions seek final nail in coffin of PM Truss

Mass winter strikes in the face of Britain's cost-of-living crisis loom

LONDON: As the sun beat down on Tuesday on the English seaside resort of Brighton, gathering union leaders warned of mass winter strikes in the face of Britain's cost-of-living crisis. The Trades Union Congress (TUC) conference kicked off with demands that embattled Prime Minister Liz Truss step down.

That coincided with news that coffin makers are the latest UK workers set to strike as their pay fails to keep up with decades-high inflation. In Brighton, on England's south coast, the National Education Union's joint leader was categorical. "It's inevitable that Liz Truss will go," Kevin Courtney told AFP, as the prime minister battled to stabilize her position after an economic crash forced her into humiliating U-turns on tax cuts.

"The total loss of credibility she's had means that there's no way the Conservative party will have her as their leader when they go into the next general election," he predicted. "They should call an election now."

'Struggling to make ends meet'

In a packed Brighton conference hall, outgoing TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady also demanded that the prime minister step down. "I have a message for Liz Truss: Working people are proud of the jobs we do. We work hard. We work the longest hours in Europe," she told delegates, who responded with loud applause. "Yet thanks to your party's 12 years in government, millions are struggling to make ends meet."

Keir Starmer, leader of the main opposition Labour party, is due to address the TUC on Thursday, when the conference wraps up. While unions are traditionally allied to the Labour party, Starmer is expected to face a frosty reception after

refusing to support the latest strike action and banning MPs in his senior team from joining picket lines.

It comes as tens of thousands of teachers and state-employed health workers are being balloted on possible walkouts. Should they strike, they will join tens of thousands of railway and postal staff carrying out some of Britain's biggest stoppages in decades.

"If I was the government, I would be very worried about it," Courtney said. He dismissed suggestions that teacher strikes would harm children already having to catch-up on learning because of earlier COVID lockdowns. "We really do not want to go on strike but we'll be harming children by not going on strike. "Having held down pay for so long, we have real problems with recruiting young people to come into teaching and we're losing loads of people out of teaching," the union leader insisted.

Strikes across the Channel

The TUC conference had been due to take place last month but was delayed following the death of Queen Elizabeth II. That also triggered the postponement of strikes as a mark of respect. Across the Channel, France faced disruptions on Tuesday after unions there called a nationwide transport strike. At the entrance of the Brighton conference centre looking out toward France, chanting conference attendees made their feelings known, urging the TUC umbrella group to also call a general strike.

Large banners adorned with the TUC conference message declared: "We Demand Better".

It comes as the government presses ahead with legal moves to introduce minimum service levels during strikes by transport workers. Truss promised in an interview with the BBC on Monday to keep the trains running in the face of strikes by what she



LONDON: A handout photograph released by the UK Parliament shows Britain's Leader of the House of Commons Penny Mordaunt (left) answering the Urgent Questions (UQ) session on behalf of Britain's Prime Minister Liz Truss (unseen) as Britain's main opposition Labour Party leader Keir Starmer (right) reacts at the House of Commons, in London, on October 17, 2022. —AFP

called "militant" unions.

Companies are not caving in to union demands either. British postal operator Royal Mail last week unveiled plans to axe up to 10,000 jobs, blaming the move partly on ongoing staff strikes that contributed to a first-half loss. Deals are being reached in some cases following long negotiations—the lat-

est being with thousands of bus staff, who are said to have secured a pay deal in line with inflation.

Senior criminal lawyers in England and Wales recently called off further strike action after voting to accept a government pay offer. Britain has experienced strike action this year also by port, refuse and telecom workers. —AFP

OPEC+ oil cut 'nothing political': UAE

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates on Tuesday insisted the output cut announced this month by oil cartel OPEC and its allies, including Russia, was not politically motivated against the United States. The 13-nation, Saudi-led OPEC cartel and its 10 allies headed by Russia angered Washington by cutting production by two million barrels a day from November, adding further upward pressure on elevated crude prices.

The decision drew a swift rebuke from the administration of President Joe Biden, which had hoped for lower prices ahead of November midterm elections, and drew criticism that Riyadh was providing Moscow with economic support that would help to finance its war in Ukraine.

Saudi Arabia has already previously insisted that the October 5 move by OPEC+ was taken "purely on economic considerations" and rejected as baseless allegations that it was politically motivated against Washington. On Tuesday, UAE energy minister Suhail Al-Mazrouei said the OPEC+ decision was "good", and that it had made it possible to "bring prices back and stabilize them at a level close to that of October 2021". "I would like to reiterate that there is nothing political about any decision we take within OPEC," he told reporters in the UAE capital Abu Dhabi, one of the largest oil exporters in the world.

However, "there was an attempt to politicize the decision, which forced many officials to clarify for the hundredth time that our decisions are technical decisions," he added. Each member of OPEC+ "takes into account the interest of their country and the interest of this industry, which is based on the balance between supply and demand". Other Gulf oil producers have also reiterated their support for the OPEC+ decision, emphasizing its economic dimension. All are close allies of the West and maintain good relations with Moscow. None have publicly supported Russia's invasion of Ukraine. —AFP

Tim Hortons set to open branches across Kuwait

By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

KUWAIT: Tim Hortons conducted its market grand opening in the presence of CEO of AG Cafe, the master franchisee of Tim Hortons brand in the Middle East Hesham Almekkawi and Ambassador of Canada to the State of Kuwait Aliya Mawani. Kuwait Times spoke to Almekkawi to learn more. Some excerpts:

Kuwait Times: Tell us more about Tim Hortons.

Hesham Almekkawi: Tim Hortons is Canada's largest coffee chain brand which was founded more than 55 years ago. We introduced the iconic brand to the Middle East by opening the first Cafe & Bake Shop back in 2011 in Dubai, and have been expanding in the region ever since. Today we are operating around 235 restaurants in the Middle East and recently opened our first three restaurants in India.

KT: Please tell us what makes Tim Hortons special and desirable in the GCC?

Almekkawi: There are many factors that differentiate us from other coffee brands. Freshness is always our main motto - we freshly bake our products in the restaurant and offer high-quality 100 percent Arabica coffee that are 100 percent authentically sourced. As for maintaining the same quality, we taste around 300 cups of coffee every day to make sure it conforms to our quality. Another major factor is the variety of our offerings as we offer breakfast, lunch, and dinner that cater to all ages. All these factors combined what make Tim Hortons a successful brand.

KT: How was the brand welcomed in Kuwait?

Almekkawi: We were overwhelmed by the reception in Kuwait. We realized this before our opening due to the Kuwaitis' feedback on social media who were eagerly waiting for the



Hesham Almekkawi, CEO of AG Cafe, the master franchisee of Tim Hortons brand in the Middle East



Aliya Mawani, Ambassador of Canada to State of Kuwait

brand. On the opening day, we were overwhelmed by the number of people who lined up at every branch. The Kuwaitis appreciate good-quality coffee and consider it as an artisanal product rather than just an energy booster. We appreciate the huge fans we have here and believe that a bright future awaits us in Kuwait.

KT: You have already opened five branches in Kuwait. How many more branches does AG Cafe plan to open and within what timeframe?

Almekkawi: The sky is the limit for us, and our goal is to reach 500 restaurants by 2025 across the Middle East. Kuwait is considered as one of the fastest growing coffee markets in the region and we have witnessed its potential - for that, we have set a fast and progressive plan to launch over 50 restaurants in the next three years here. The most important requirement for a successful brand is to have loyal customers, and this is exactly what Kuwait offers.

KT: Which country do you plan to open Tim Hortons next? What are your future plans?

Almekkawi: We will be opening in Egypt next year which is deemed as a huge market for us. This will be our eighth country in the region where we are operational. We believe that Egypt is a market that has a huge potential as its people, similar to Kuwait, are showing the same eagerness for our brand.

KT: A final word for Tim Hortons lovers in

Kuwait and the GCC.

Almekkawi: I would like to thank the Kuwaiti people for their warm welcome and the great reception we received in this lovely country. We promise our guests to offer them the same freshness they have experienced in Canada right here in Kuwait, each and every day. In the upcoming years, we will be around every neighborhood to welcome and serve you at all times of the day.

Aliya Mawani, Ambassador of Canada to the State of Kuwait said: "I have a big smile on my face; I am very excited to see Tim Hortons return to Kuwait. 'Timmies' as we call it in Canada, is an iconic Canadian coffee brand and we are very happy that our friends in Kuwait can enjoy this at home. There are many Kuwaitis who know Tim Hortons very well, because they have either studied or lived in Canada, so it's great to have a piece of Canada here. I am really pleased to support the launch and extension of Tim Hortons in the region, as I think it is a great example of the strong and growing ties between Canada and Kuwait.

On the opening day, she stated: "It's lovely and beautifully done - the coffee is great. It feels like my home away from home. It's so nice to meet the team and I feel very welcomed, and I think it's going to be a great addition to the coffee scene here in Kuwait. It's great to be surrounded by all these great details - it makes me so happy!"

Crisis-hit Sri Lanka opens fuel market to foreign firms

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's parliament on Tuesday approved legislation allowing foreign competition in the local fuel market, ending a 19-year duopoly as the bankrupt island struggles to import oil.

The move cleared the way for international oil firms to re-enter Sri Lanka for the first time since the nationalization of oil companies in the early 1960s, with the exception of the Indian Oil Corporation which has operated there since 2003. "This will allow global suppliers to enter as retail operators," energy minister Kanchana Wijesekera said. "This will liberalize the energy sector."

Officials said private companies will have to finance the import of oil from their own foreign exchange reserves and agree to retain their profits in Sri Lanka for at least a year. The new law was rushed through as the government is out of foreign exchange to import fuel, a predicament that has brought acute shortages and strict rationing. The shortages sparked widespread protests that toppled president Gotabaya Rajapaksa in July as Sri Lanka plunged into its worst economic crisis since



COLOMBO: An employee fills petrol in an auto rickshaw at Ceylon petroleum corporation fuel station in Colombo. —AFP

independence from Britain in 1948. Sri Lanka nationalized foreign oil firms in the early 1960s, handing a monopoly to the state-owned Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC).

CPC's monopoly ended in 2003 when Colombo introduced limited competition by allowing India's state-owned Indian Oil Corporation to enter the local retail market. The Indian company's Sri Lankan arm now controls about a third of the domestic fuel market while the rest is held by CPC, which is seeing huge losses and is out of dollars to pay for new imports. —AFP

US industrial output rises in September on manufacturing gain

WASHINGTON: US industrial production picked up more than anticipated in September, official data showed Tuesday, as manufacturing output continued to expand. The figures defied expectations for near-flat growth, as rising interest rates start to bite, consumer spending shifts from goods to services and a strong dollar makes US goods more pricey for customers abroad.

Total industrial production rose 0.4 percent in September, bouncing back from a revised 0.1 percent dip in August, Federal Reserve data showed on Tuesday.

In particular, factory output was up 0.4 percent, maintaining its August pace, with easing supply strains a boon for the sector. Products such as computers and electronics, along with motor vehicles and parts, logged gains of at least one percent last month.

But momentum in factory activity has markedly slowed in the third quarter, according to latest figures.

"Factory output faces headwinds from a

ratcheting up in interest rates, which will weigh on demand and slow economic activity," said Rubeela Farooqi, chief US economist at High Frequency Economics, in an analysis. Meanwhile, mining output picked up 0.6 percent in September, helped by gains in oil and gas extraction, while utilities output dropped 0.3 percent on a dip in electric power generation, the report said.

Apart from the Fed raising interest rates to tamp down inflation and a shift in consumer behavior, downturns in China and Europe have also taken a toll on manufacturing, said Ian Shepherdson, chief economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics, in a report. Europe has been struggling with an energy crisis, with fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine causing prices to rocket, pushing already-high inflation to new records. China's economy has been bogged down by a strict zero-COVID policy involving snap lockdowns that have kept consumers jittery and snarled supply chains. While Shepherdson expects US manufacturing to fare better than survey data suggested previously—as auto output improves on easing chip shortages—heightened uncertainty could also cause some firms to hold on to their cash instead, he cautioned. In September, industrial capacity in use ticked up 0.2 points to 80.3 percent, according to the report on Tuesday. —AFP

Business



KUWAIT: One-on-one business interaction between FIEO delegates and Kuwaiti businessmen at Indian Embassy on Monday.



KUWAIT: The 20-member business delegation from India poses for a group photo at the Indian Embassy.

Indian delegation explores new business opportunities in Kuwait

Delegation visits KCCI, holds networking event at Indian Embassy

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: A 20-member business delegation from India held a networking event at the Indian Embassy on Monday, seeking to enhance trade relations between Kuwait and India and explore fresh business opportunities in Kuwait. The event was organized by the Indian Embassy in association with Indian Business and Professional Council (IBPC).

The multi-product delegation comprising members from Federation of Indian Export Organizations (FIEO) arrived in Kuwait on October 16. The delegation was given a warm reception at the headquarters of Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) on Monday.

"India is Kuwait's fourth commercial partner with the value of trade exchanges between the countries amounting to \$2.362 billion last year," said Talal Al-

Kharafi, a member of KCCI. Assuring the support of the Chamber to Indian businessmen, he said the two countries have been bonded by historic ties both at economic and trade levels.

"India's exports to Kuwait reached over \$1.23 billion in 2021-22. The growth of exports to Kuwait was broad-based and part of the overall achievement of \$419 billion of merchandise exports from India in 2021-22, which was a record in itself, a 44 percent growth over 2020-21," said Dr Vinod Gaikwad, First Secretary at the Indian Embassy, while welcoming the delegation on behalf of Indian Ambassador Sibi George.

Pivotal changes

Pareesh Kantilal Mehta, the head of the delegation, highlighted the pivotal changes in the business environment in India, pointing out that FIEO has taken a

milestone step forward to develop a one-of-its-kind online business portal for Indian business entities across several sectors. FIEO, an apex body of all trade promotion organizations and commodity boards in India, plays a significant role in creating a suitable platform for Indian exporters to showcase and market their products and services globally.

"The delegation to Kuwait is organized under the theme, 'Not Just Building Business, it's all about Creating Relations,' Mehta said during his remarks. "Our meeting at KCCI was very encouraging and positive. My delegates are so happy to be here. We are looking forward to building good partnerships with our Kuwaiti counterparts," Mehta told Kuwait Times on the sidelines of the event.

"On the trade side, India currently has about 194 Kuwaiti import partners with a combined imports volume worth \$34 billion," said Kaizar Shakir, Vice

President, IBPC. Kuwait's main imports include machinery, mechanical appliances, electrical equipment and electronics (24 percent of total imports); transport equipment (14 percent); base metals and articles thereof (12 percent); chemicals and related products (9 percent) and vegetables (6 percent), he said.

"This delegation is just a beginning. We should have such regular visits of Indian business delegations to Kuwait and to have fruitful interactions with the Kuwaiti businesses. There is a huge potential to double the trade volume between the two friendly countries," Sunit Arora, General Manager, FAIQ, told Kuwait Times. A one-on-one business interaction was held following the inaugural session between the FIEO delegates and Kuwaiti businessmen, providing a platform for an effective business networking between the participants for exploring business opportunities.



Smoke rises from the nuclear power plant of Neckerwestheim 2 in Neckerwestheim, Germany in this Aug. 22, 2022.

Scholz extends life of Germany's nuclear plants

BERLIN: Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Monday ordered all three of Germany's remaining nuclear power plants to stay operational until mid-April, breaking an impasse that had caused a rift among his coalition partners as an energy crisis looms. Germany had initially planned to exit nuclear power by the end of the year, but Russia's war in Ukraine and skyrocketing power prices since then have forced a rethink.

"The legal basis will be created to allow the operation of the nuclear power plants Isar 2, Neckerwestheim 2 and Emsland beyond December 31, 2022 until April 15, 2023," Scholz said in a letter to cabinet ministers seen by AFP. Economy Minister Robert Habeck from the traditionally anti-nuclear Greens had recently said two of the three plants would be kept "on standby" until next spring, to help secure energy supplies if needed, in a major U-turn for the Greens.

But that did not go far enough for fellow coalition partner, the liberal FDP, who insisted the third plant, in Emsland in northern Germany, should also stay online.

Repeated rounds of talks in recent days failed to resolve the row, and Scholz's statement on Monday evening indicates he pulled rank.

'Clarity'

In the letter, Scholz, from the centre-left Social Democrats, said he was invoking his authority as chancellor to issue a directive. The order "is a smack in the face for Habeck", wrote the top-selling Bild daily. Even more embarrassing, it comes after the Greens at a congress this weekend backed Habeck's position on decommissioning the Emsland plant. The FDP meanwhile celebrated Scholz's decision to keep all three atomic plants online, although it fell short of their demand to extend their lifetimes until 2024.

Finance Minister Christian Lindner from the FDP, who has argued that Germany needs to use every energy source it has to help bring down prices and keep the lights on in Europe's top economy, said Scholz had "provided clarity". "It is in the vital interest of our country and its economy that we maintain all power generation capacity this winter," Lindner tweeted. "We can create the legal basis together immediately. We will also work out viable solutions together for the winter of 2023/2024. People can count on that," he wrote.

Thunberg weighs in

Green party co-leader Ricarda Lang criticized Scholz's decision, saying "the Emsland nuclear power

plant is not needed for grid stability". The final word on the matter had yet to be spoken, Lang said. "We will have conversations about this," she wrote on Twitter.

Lang did however welcome that Scholz had made clear that Germany would "definitively" quit atomic power by mid-April and that "no new fuel rods will be procured". Environmental group Greenpeace meanwhile slammed Scholz's move as "irresponsible". "Extending the operating lives of nuclear power plants exposes us all to an unjustifiable risk," said Greenpeace Germany's executive director Martin Kaiser.

Former chancellor Angela Merkel had pushed through Germany's nuclear exit in the wake of Japan's Fukushima disaster in 2011. But Germany, which was heavily reliant on Russian gas and oil before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, has been hit hard by the fallout from the war and the nation is now bracing for a painful recession. The conflict has sent energy prices soaring and Russia in late August halted the flow of gas through the crucial Nord Stream 1 pipeline, leaving Germany racing to diversify energy supplies and build up reserves ahead of the colder winter months.

The country has even restarted mothballed coal-fired power plants. Climate activist Greta Thunberg last week said it was "a mistake" for Germany to press ahead with its nuclear exit while ramping up its coal usage. — AFP

EU leaders to discuss energy crisis measures

BRUSSELS: EU leaders this week will attempt to overcome divisions on how to face Europe's energy crisis and end weeks of feuding over a gas price cap, a draft of the summit conclusions said on Monday. The bloc's 27 member states are deeply split on how to address skyrocketing energy prices caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine that have seen heating bills explode in Europe just ahead of winter.

Several meetings of EU energy ministers have failed to break the deadlock and the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, will propose a fresh set of options on Tuesday in a renewed effort to bridge differences. These will be taken up by leaders during a two-day meeting in Brussels on Thursday in hopes of achieving a better result than a summit earlier this month in Prague that ended in stalemate. A large group of EU countries, led by Italy, have pushed hard for some form of price cap on gas imports and vented frustration against Germany, Europe's biggest economy, for a 200-billion-euro plan to help Germans meet the high prices.

"The prices are insane: we agree on the diagnosis, but are still discussing the therapy to be administered," Italian Minister of Ecological Transition Roberto Cingolani said last week. According to the draft of summit conclusions seen by AFP, the commission's plans will include a vaguely worded proposal to "explore a temporary EU framework" to cap the price of gas used in electricity generation. This, however, must be done "without leading to overall increased gas consumption" nor replacing gas as the benchmark for setting the price of electricity in Europe.

In another bid for compromise, the commission is expected to propose something called a maximum "dynamic price", an emergency control on the benchmark that sets gas prices across the bloc.

The benchmark, known as the Dutch Title Transfer Facility, also helps set the price for electricity, a situation that the commission said it would speed up efforts to change. An ambition to encourage joint purchases among EU countries will also get a fresh push. The EU-27 agreed in March to a purchasing platform, but many countries have continued going-it-alone without consultation with their EU peers. The commission now wants to negotiate joint deals with "reliable" producers such as Norway and the United States by bringing together EU energy giants in a consortium or cartel of buyers. — AFP

US to offer leases for Pacific offshore wind energy platforms

WASHINGTON: The US Interior Department announced plans on Tuesday to offer leases for the first offshore wind energy platforms in the Pacific Ocean. An offshore wind energy lease sale will be held by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) on December 6, the department said.

The leases will be to build floating offshore wind energy platforms in areas on the Outer Continental Shelf off central and northern California.

"The demand and momentum to build a clean energy future is undeniable," Interior Secretary Deb Haaland said in a statement. "Today, we are taking

another step toward unlocking the immense offshore wind energy potential off our nation's west coast to help combat the effects of climate change," Haaland said. BOEM will offer five lease areas with the potential to produce over 4.5 gigawatts (GW) of offshore wind energy, enough to power more than 1.5 million homes.

More than two dozen commercial wind leases have previously been issued for the Atlantic Ocean, stretching from Massachusetts to North Carolina. The Biden administration has announced plans to deploy 30 GW of offshore wind energy by 2030 and 15 GW of floating offshore wind energy by 2035.

It seeks to reduce the cost of floating offshore wind energy by more than 70 percent by 2035.

Floating platforms can be built in deep-water areas where turbines cannot be secured directly to the seafloor. Two-thirds of America's offshore wind energy potential is in deep-water areas such as off the coast of California and Oregon that require floating platforms, according to US officials. — AFP



The US Interior Department announced plans on Tuesday to offer leases for the first offshore wind energy platforms in the Pacific Ocean.

Lifestyle | Features



Workers use cranberry booms in a flooded bog to coral floating cranberries to a pump as they are harvested at Mann Farms.



A worker uses a cranberry boom in a flooded bog to coral floating cranberries to a pump as they are harvested at Mann Farms in Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts. — AFP photos



A worker uses a cranberry boom in a flooded bog to coral floating cranberries to a pump as they are harvested at Mann Farms in Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts. — AFP photos

Cranberry farmers fight climate change to protect Thanksgiving staple

American farmers growing cranberries, a quintessential component of Thanksgiving feasts, have had to adapt their traditional methods to fight the effects of climate change. The tart red berries, boiled with a heaping dose of sugar to make classic cranberry sauce, thrive only in the right environment—but climate change threatens to make conditions more unpredictable and extreme. After a terrible 2021 season, Massachusetts farmer Billy McCaffrey is ecstatic for a bumper crop this year. “Phenomenal, unbelievable,” the 70-year-old former teacher says, surrounded up to his waist by a sea of floating berries.

His cranberry farm, south of Boston, is one of hundreds in the northeastern US state of Massachusetts—the second largest producer after midwestern Wisconsin. “Every year is up and down... I just hope we can keep it and get paid,” says McCaffrey, worrying that an unexpected hail storm could still cause disaster for him and his wife Mary.

The McCaffreys had worried that 2022



A fully loaded truck with cranberries, to be sent to Ocean Spray for weighing and sorting, sits at Mann Farms in Buzzards Bay.

could see a repeat of the previous year, which the head of the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association (CCCGA), Brian Wick, says was “one of our worst crops in quite some time.” “The rains and the environment in the vine canopy created the perfect conditions for rot (and) fungus” the expert told AFP.

“Double Whammy”

This year’s growing season started with a drought, the exact opposite of last year, but farmers were able to use pumps and water to keep their crops alive. That

eats into their bottom line. Now this year looks like one of the biggest crops ever with a prediction of 1.9 million barrels (189 million pounds) produced in Massachusetts according to the CCCGA. Keith Mann, 54, has outfitted his large farm in Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts, with solar panels to help offset fuel costs. He has also installed several windmills on his property and sells electricity back to the grid.

Though he’s not sure the average temperatures have noticeably increased, Mann says the “weather extremes cause real troubles for us.” “We had drought all summer... Then late in the summer we had torrential downpours, (which) caused flooding, and the flooding causes fungal infections.” “Too much rain all at once is a problem. Not enough rain most of the season was another problem. Put them together it’s a double whammy,” said Mann.

As for this year’s Thanksgiving and those in the relative near future, Americans don’t need to rush and stock



Keith Mann, 54, holds a handful of ripe cranberries at Mann Farms in Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts.

up on cranberry sauce just yet. Farmers are adapting to the changing climate and producing new varieties to be processed by the massive Ocean Spray farm cooperative in Massachusetts. “Thanksgiving, we get up for that. It drives us,” said McCaffrey. “You’re going to have to change your technique and tweak it a little bit at a time.” — AFP



Cranberries grow in a healthy section of a cranberry bog at Spring Rain Farm in Taunton.



Cranberries grow in a healthy section of a cranberry bog at Spring Rain Farm in Taunton.



Billy McCaffrey, 70, works on his pump system as he begins to harvest cranberries on one of his bogs at Spring Rain Farm in Taunton.

Alyssa Milano: Women ‘refusing to be silenced’ since MeToo

Five years after lighting the fuse of MeToo, US actor Alyssa Milano says she is delighted with the way women are “refusing to be silenced.” “A lot has changed,” Milano told AFP, since sending her famous tweet on October 15, 2017 asking women to share their stories of sexual harassment under the hashtag #MeToo. The 49-year-old, who grew up in public as the star of “Who’s the Boss?” and “Charmed”, was herself a victim of sexual assault during a shoot in the 1990s.

“The most obvious thing is that we are refusing to be silenced and really coming together,” she said in Cannes, where she was taking part in the Mipcom TV festival. She pointed to new legislation against gender discrimination and harassment across the United States, as well as the introduction of “intimacy coordinators” to assist during sex scenes in movies. “It made no sense to me how, if there was an

animal on the set, we would have to have someone from the humane society to oversee the health and welfare of the animal, and yet the actors are in such vulnerable situations not only with love scenes, but with all sorts of emotional scenes,” Milano said. Recent moves to ban abortions in the United States were a reaction against the empowerment of women triggered by MeToo, she added.

“Equality and equity are terrifying to a lot of white men in power,” she said. “Taking away our body autonomy is the most extreme case of trying to impede our evolution and our growth and our drive for a more equitable future.” Milano’s activism did not start with MeToo, however. When “Who’s the Boss?” was the number one show in the United States, a 15-year-old Milano received a request from none other than Elton John. The singer asked her to meet a young fan, Ryan White, who had been expelled from his school after contracting HIV.

“He asked me if I could go on TV and kiss him to prove that you couldn’t get HIV/AIDS through casual contact, and I said yes,” she said on a panel at Mipcom. “That was the moment that my life completely changed because I realized what it meant to be famous, and to do good with that voice,” she said. — AFP



Alyssa Milano attends Michael Rubin’s MLB-PA x Fanatics party at City Market Social House in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

Swiss author shaves head on stage after winning award

Swiss author Kim de l’Horizon shaved their head on stage after winning the prestigious German Book Prize on Monday, in a show of solidarity with the women protesting in Iran. “This award is not just for me,” the author, who identifies as non-binary, told the audience at the award ceremony in Frankfurt. “I think the jury chose this text also to send a signal against hatred, for love and for the fight of all those people who are being suppressed because of their bodies,” they said.

After being announced as the winner for their debut novel “Blutbuch” (Blood book), the moustachioed author took to the stage and sang a song, before using an electric razor to shave off their hair on the podium. The jury said it had been “inspired” by the novel. “With tremendous creative energy, the non-binary narrator of Kim de l’Horizon’s novel... searches for a language of their own,” the jury said.

The German Book Prize honors the best German-language novel of the year and comes with a 25,000 euro prize (\$24,600). The award ceremony traditionally precedes the start of the Frankfurt book fair, the world’s largest, which will



Swiss writer Kim de l’Horizon shaves their hair in solidarity with the protesting women of Iran having received the German Book Prize in Frankfurt. — AFP

run from Wednesday until Sunday. Iran has been rocked by a wave of protests since 22-year-old Mahsa Amini’s death last month, days after she was arrested by the morality police in Tehran for allegedly violating Iran’s strict dress code for women. — AFP

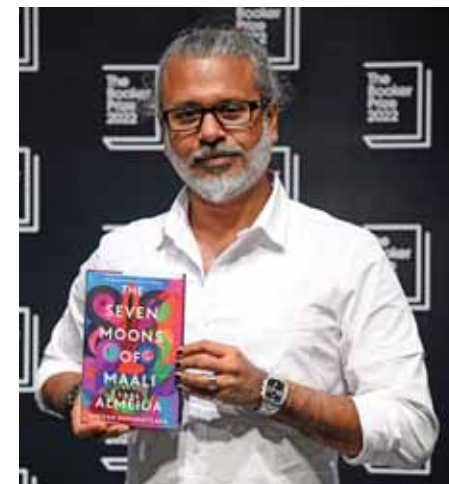
Lifestyle | Features



Sri Lankan writer Shehan Karunatilaka (left) poses next to Britain's Camilla, Queen Consort (right) after winning the British Booker Prize for his novel "The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida", during the Booker Prize for Fiction 2022 awards ceremony, in London. — AFP photos



Britain's Camilla, Queen Consort meets shortlisted author Sri Lankan writer Shehan Karunatilaka (right) during the Booker Prize for Fiction 2022 awards ceremony, in London.



In this file photo Sri Lankan author Shehan Karunatilaka holds his book 'The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida' during a photocall at the Shaw Theatre in King's Cross in London, ahead of Monday's announcement of the winner of the 2022 Booker Prize for Fiction.

SRI LANKAN AUTHOR SHEHAN KARUNATILAKA WINS BOOKER PRIZE

Sri Lankan author Shehan Karunatilaka on Monday won Britain's Booker Prize for fiction for his work "The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida", about a journalist murdered amid the country's sectarian strife. "My hope for Seven Moons is this... that in the not-so-distant future... that it is read in a Sri Lanka that has understood that these ideas of corruption and race-baiting and cronyism have not worked and will never work," he said.

"I hope it's in print in 10 years but if it is, I hope it's written in (a) Sri Lanka that learns from its stories, and that Seven Moons will be in the fantasy section of the bookshop... next to the dragons, the unicorns (and) will not be mistaken for realism or political satire," he added.

Karunatilaka, 47, is the second Sri Lankan to win the award, following Michael Ondaatje's victory in 1992 for "The English Patient". Aside from the £50,000 (\$56,000) prize, winning the Booker can provide a career-changing boost in sales and public profile.

Chair of judges, Neil MacGregor, called the book "an afterlife noir that dissolves the boundaries not just of different genres, but of life and death, body and spirit, east and west". The book is set amid the mayhem of a civil-war wracked Colombo in the late 1980s. War photographer and gambler Maali Almeida has been killed, and sets out in the afterlife to work out who was responsible and expose the brutality of the conflict, having seven moons in

which to do so. Booker Prize judges called it a "whodunnit and a race against time, full of ghosts, gags and a deep humanity".

Mantel tribute
Karunatilaka's debut, Chinaman (2011), won the Commonwealth Prize and was selected for the BBC and The Reading Agency's Big Jubilee Read last year. The London award ceremony was the Booker's first large-scale in-person event since 2019. Queen Consort Camilla awarded the coveted prize at the televised ceremony, in one of her highest-profile appearances since her husband King Charles III ascended the throne last month.

"Without meaning to sound trite, we

are all winners for being part of this magnificent shortlist, though, perhaps I might pocket the extra cash if that's OK?" Karunatilaka joked as he picked up the award. The evening event also featured a speech by singer-songwriter Dua Lipa. All but one of the six shortlisted authors attended in person, with Englishman Alan Garner, who turned 88 on Monday, appearing virtually.

Garner, who made his name with children's fantasy titles and folk retellings, was shortlisted for "Treacle Walker", which is the shortest finalist novel by word count. Other shortlisted authors included NoViolet Bulawayo, for "Glory", an animal fable set in her native Zimbabwe. American Percival Everett was included for "Trees", earning inde-

pendent publisher Influx Press its first Booker shortlist place. Fellow US writer Elizabeth Strout featured for "Oh William!" while Irish author Claire Keegan's "Small Things Like These" completed the shortlist.

The Booker is Britain's foremost literary award for novels written in English. Its previous recipients include Salman Rushdie, Margaret Atwood and Hilary Mantel. Monday's ceremony featured a special tribute to Mantel, who died last month aged 70. She was the first British writer, and first woman, to win the prize twice with the first two novels in her "Wolf Hall" trilogy. — AFP

Netflix defends 'The Crown' after ex-PM lambasts 'malicious nonsense'

Netflix on Monday defended its latest series of "The Crown" after former British prime minister John Major lashed out at a story line showing King Charles plotting to oust the late queen. Major's tenure as prime minister from 1990-1997 covered a turbulent period for the royals that included the divorce of Charles and his wife Princess Diana. But reported scenes in the fifth series-defended by streaming giant Netflix as a "fictionalized dramatization"-have incensed the former premier. In one scene, heir to the throne Charles attempts to draw Major into a conspiracy to force the abdication of his mother Queen Elizabeth II.

A statement issued by Major's office castigated Netflix for the scenes describing them as "damaging and malicious fiction". "There was never any discussion between Sir John and the then Prince of Wales about any possible abdication of the late Queen Elizabeth II-nor was such an improbable and improper



subject ever raised by the then Prince of Wales (or Sir John)," it added. "The Crown" has been wildly successful but has also faced criticism over its fictional story lines.

In one episode from series two, the queen's late husband Prince Philip is blamed by his own father for the death of one of his sisters in an air crash. His father tells him that his sister had only been making the journey to the UK that ended in her death because Philip's bad behaviour meant he was banned from visiting her in Germany. "You are the reason we are all here, burying my

favorite child," his father Prince Andrew of Greece and Denmark tells him at her funeral.

'Terribly dishonest'
Writer William Shawcross, who wrote a biography of the late queen's mother, on Monday called "The Crown" "an odious series, filled with lies and half-truths". In a letter published in The Daily Telegraph newspaper, he accused Netflix and writer Peter Morgan of a campaign to destroy the monarchy "by lies". Shawcross told AFP the royal family were unique in that unlike other prominent families they were not in a position to sue.

He said it made them "sitting ducks for someone like Morgan who detests them and has a political agenda". He said the story line about Philip's sister was totally factually incorrect and that "Philip was incredibly upset by it".

"The two people who have been most abused in the series are Prince Philip and... King Charles," he said, adding that Morgan steered clear of targeting the queen for such treatment because of her popularity. "It ('The Crown') is very clever. It is full of lies but they are disguised in lace and velvet. There is no real disclaimer it is terribly dishonest.... disgraceful," he said.

Health warning needed?
"The Crown" rejected the criticism, insisting that the series "has always

been presented as a drama based on historical events". "Series five is a fictional dramatization, imagining what could have happened behind closed doors during a significant decade for the royal family-one that has already been scrutinized and well-documented by journalists, biographers and historians," a spokeswoman told the PA news agency on Monday. Netflix suspended filming of the drama last month "as a mark of respect" following the death of Elizabeth at the age of 96. The monarch famously vowed on her 21st birthday to serve her country "my whole life", meaning that her son Charles only acceded to the throne at the age of 73.

The fourth season, which depicted the ill-fated marriage of Charles and Diana, last year swept the Emmys, winning best outstanding drama series as well as a host of acting awards for its stars including Gillian Anderson, Olivia Colman and Josh O'Connor. But the series also prompted Britain's then Culture Minister Oliver Dowden to say in 2020 he planned to write to Netflix and request that a "health warning" be displayed before "The Crown" so viewers were aware it was a work of fiction. The new series, which will launch on November 9, features recast roles with Dominic West starring as Charles, while Elizabeth Debicki plays Diana and Imelda Staunton the queen. —AFP



Kevin Spacey denies sex assault charge in US court

Disgraced movie star Kevin Spacey takes the stand at his New York trial, rejecting as "not true" accusations he sexually assaulted fellow actor Anthony Rapp when he was a minor. Rapp, who stars in the series "Star Trek: Discovery," is claiming damages of \$40 million against the two-time Oscar-winner for "emotional anguish," for what allegedly happened in 1986, when he was 14 and Spacey was 26. Spacey said he had no recollection of attending a private party in a Manhattan apartment with Rapp, as the now 50-year-old claims.

Before appearing in court Monday, Spacey, 63, won a small victory when the judge presiding over the case, Lewis Kaplan, dismissed Rapp's claim that Spacey had intentionally caused him emotional distress. In his lawsuit, Rapp accused Spacey of having come into a bedroom where he was watching television during a party the two had attended, of picking him up, lifting him onto a bed and laying down next to him.

Addressing the court earlier this month, Rapp recounted that he "felt frozen" during the alleged incident-until he managed to "wiggle his way" out. Since Rapp's accusations first emerged in 2017, at the height of the #MeToo movement against sexual abuse, Spacey has disappeared from screens and theaters. During Monday's cross-examination, Spacey described his own troubled family, with a father he described as a "white supremacist" and a "neo-Nazi," something he had never said in public before, and who disliked gay people and did not appreciate his son's interest in the theater.

Spacey said that Rapp's accusations, published in late 2017 in a Buzzfeed article, made him feel "shocked, frightened and confused." On recommendation of his advisors, he issued a public apology which he said he now regrets. "I was being encouraged to apologize and I've learned a lesson, which is never apologize for something you didn't do," he told the court.

At the time of the accusations, he came out publicly as gay for the first time, which he said led to accusations that he was "trying to change the subject, or trying to deflect." Wiping away tears, the star of "American Beauty" and "House of Cards" said he would "never have done anything to hurt the gay community." —AFP



Daft Punk join TikTok

Dance legends Daft Punk may have hung up their robotic helmets last year, but they are hoping to build a new generation of fans with their own TikTok channel launching on Monday. The deal with TikTok means that users will have access to the French duo's back catalogue of music for the first time to use in their own videos. From the start of their career in the 1990s, Daft Punk-aka Thomas Bangalter and Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo-held on to the rights to all their music.

That means they were not covered by the deals that TikTok made with record companies in recent years to license music for the platform, requiring a direct deal with the band. From Tuesday, fans will also be able to use two new filters for their videos, giving them a customisable robot helmet or the iconic Charlie the dog, who first appeared in the 1997 video for "Da Funk" by director Spike Jonze. —AFP

The princess and the shaman: The romance Norway doesn't love

A princess who speaks to angels and a self-proclaimed shaman who sells pricey healing medallions: the unusual couple are madly in love but struggling to win hearts in Norway. Martha Louise, the divorced 51-year-old daughter of Norway's king and queen, has rebuilt her life with Durek Verrett, a popular Hollywood spiritual guru. The princess and Shaman Durek, as he is known to his star followers such as Gwyneth Paltrow and Antonio Banderas, announced their engagement in June, with King Harald's blessing.

But the romance has not gone down well in Norway because the African-American "sixth generation shaman" suggested cancer is a choice in his book "Spirit Hacking". And on his website, he sells a medallion — for \$222 — dubbed a "Spirit Optimizer" which he claims helped him overcome COVID. All of which has raised eyebrows in no-nonsense Norway. "He's an imposter, a charlatan and a crook," according to columnist and humourist Dagfinn Nordbo.

Racism?
A poll last month found 17 percent of Norwegians now have a lower opinion of the royal family, nearly all citing the princess and the shaman as the reason. The criticism comes amid debate over the role of monarchy in many European countries, with several royal houses announc-

ing moves to slim down and modernize. Denmark and Sweden have cut back their households, and Britain is reportedly considering the same under King Charles. Norway's monarchy has long enjoyed broad support, due largely to its down-to-earth ways, with 85-year-old King Harald—who married a commoner-known for adopting the country's progressive values.



In this file photo Norwegian princess Martha Louise is pictured on stage with shaman Durek Verrett (left) during a session at Clarion Hotel in Stavanger, Norway. — AFP

While Verrett has said he understands his beliefs may be unsettling for some, he claims he is a victim of racism-echoing fellow African-American Meghan Markle complaints since she joined Britain's royal family. "White people write all this hate and death threats to us and all this stuff for being together because... they don't want to see a black man in the royal family," he said in a video posted to Instagram on June 9. Martha Louise said she was "really shocked" to see how he and "black people and people of color get treated."

Oslo's former mayor, Fabian Stang, is one of the few to have spoken out in support of the couple. "Selling medallions to bring good health is going too far... but it's

strange that so many of those who hate Durek had nothing against the Snasa man," he wrote on Facebook in a reference to a famous Norwegian faith healer who died last year. "In 2022, should we not be able to welcome Durek with open arms and invite him to a serious debate on the line between science and hoax?"

Still, more than half of Norwegians want Martha Louise to renounce her title of princess, recent polls show. Several groups of healthcare professionals have also dropped the princess as a patron because of her fiancé's penchant for alternative medicine.

'Culture clash'
This is not the first time Martha Louise, fourth in the line of succession behind her younger brother Crown Prince Haakon and his two children, has courted controversy. A fan of alternative therapies, she claims to be able to speak with angels, a gift she has shared-and profited from-in books and courses. She lost her honorific "Her Royal Highness" in 2002 when she withdrew from royal duties to be a clairvoyant, and in 2019 she agreed not to use her princess title in her commercial endeavors. Her first husband, the flamboyant writer Ari Behn, with whom she has three daughters, also made waves. He committed suicide in 2019, three years after their divorce. This time the eccentricities displayed by the princess and Shaman Durek appear to be too much for normally phlegmatic Norwegians. "The royal family is meant to be a unifying force. The problem is that Martha Louise and Durek Verrett are exactly the opposite: controversial and polarising with suspicions of charlatanism," said historian Trond Noren Isaksen. —AFP

Sports

Roma beat Sampdoria 1-0 to cruise into Italy's top four

Sampdoria rooted to the bottom of the league

MILAN: Roma moved into Serie A's top four on Monday with a 1-0 win at Sampdoria which left their hosts rooted to the bottom of the league. Lorenzo Pellegrini's ninth-minute penalty ensured Roma leapfrogged local rivals Lazio into fourth place, four points behind league leaders and Sunday's opponents Napoli. Jose Mourinho's side earned a hard-fought win at the Stadio Luigi Ferraris without the injured Paulo Dybala, who will potentially be out of action for Roma until January.

"It's a very important result for us, because we showed character, intelligence and heart," Mourinho told DAZN. Samp's seventh defeat of their 10 league fixtures was the first for coach Dejan Stankovic after replacing the sacked Marco Giampaolo earlier this month. Former midfielder Stankovic, who resigned from the Red Star Belgrade job after they failed to qualify for the Champions League group stage, won the competition as a player with Mourinho at Inter.

"I'm also very happy to know that a club I like very much is being managed by someone who is like a little brother to me. I hope that we play here next season," added Mourinho. Stankovic's team did little to merit anything from Monday's match, which left them three points from safety. Substitute Nicolo Zaniolo would have given Roma a more comfortable win had he not been dragged wide from close range in the 77th minute after pinching the ball from Omar Colley.

There was more drama in the stands than on the pitch as former Samp president Massimo Ferrero had to be escorted from the stadium by

Italian Serie A Table

Italian Serie A table after Monday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Napoli	10	8	2	0	25	9	26
Atalanta	10	7	3	0	16	6	24
AC Milan	10	7	2	1	20	10	23
Roma	10	7	1	2	13	9	22
Lazio	10	6	3	1	21	5	21
Udinese	10	6	3	1	19	10	21
Inter Milan	10	6	0	4	18	14	18
Juventus	10	4	4	2	13	7	16
Sassuolo	10	3	3	4	12	12	12
Empoli	10	2	5	3	9	11	11
Torino	10	3	2	5	8	12	11
Salernitana	10	2	4	4	12	16	10
Fiorentina	10	2	4	4	8	12	10
Monza	10	3	1	6	9	15	10
Spezia	10	2	3	5	9	19	9
Lecce	10	1	5	4	9	11	8
Bologna	10	1	4	5	10	17	7
Hellas Verona	10	1	2	7	9	19	5
Cremonese	10	0	4	6	9	21	4
Sampdoria	10	0	3	7	5	18	3

security staff after unexpectedly showing up to watch the match. Ferrero was forced to step down from his role at Samp after he was charged with fraudulent bankruptcy and spent time in prison. Samp fans found out that Ferrero had arrived and tried to make get at him in the stands and according to media reports even in the hospitality centre,



AS Roma's Portuguese coach Jose Mourinho

forcing his exit before the match finished.

Promoted Lecce moved three points clear of the relegation zone following their 1-1 home draw with 13th-placed Fiorentina. Assan Ceasey pushed Lecce into the lead two minutes before the break but Fiorentina, who had two goals disallowed,

took a point back to Tuscany thanks to Christian Kouame's header two minutes after the restart. The hosts finished the match with 10 men when deep in stoppage time Antonino Gallo, who had only just been booked, rugby tackled Jonathan Ikone. —AFP

LIV Golf president not 'hung up' on paying for air-time

KING ABDULLAH ECONOMIC CITY: The disruptive new LIV Golf circuit could pay for TV coverage temporarily as it tries to build a long-term presence, its president told AFP, adding that the tour's Saudi backers were looking a decade ahead or more. LIV, whose luring of top players with record purses has enraged golf's establishment, is currently on a "roadshow" of US and international broadcasters, president and chief operating officer Atul Khosla said at the Jeddah Invitational. Responding to a report that LIV will buy air-time from US network Fox Sports, Khosla said LIV did not have "commercial terms figured out with any partner".

"It could be that, it could be (revenue) share, it could be advertising dollars," he said in an interview, when asked if LIV would buy air-time for a season before receiving any payment. "There's so many different ways to build deals out... I personally don't get too hung up on any of it at this point." Khosla referred to Major League Soccer, the NBA in China and Formula One in the US, which all started with small-scale TV deals before building up. LIV's initial season is available on YouTube but it is not on TV despite being offered to broadcasters free of charge.

But Khosla said LIV's backers, oil-wealthy Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, were playing the long game. "I think we have an investor who has a long-term horizon. If the horizon was two years I would say okay, we have to have a very different deal structure," he said. "But if their horizon is 10-plus years, it's a very different arrangement. You have to set it up now for five, seven years out." Khosla was speaking at the Jeddah Invitational, LIV's first stop in Saudi Arabia and the last individual tournament of the season, which ends with a team event in Miami later this month.

'Ageing product'

The new venture, with seemingly bottomless funding, has polarized golf and its fans, with many critics slamming it as an attempt to "sportswash" Saudi Arabia's human rights record. It also coincides with a row between the US and Saudi Arabia over oil after Saudi-led OPEC+ slashed production despite Washington's pleas for it to help lower prices. Undeterred by the controversies, LIV is discussing a women's version - with initial approaches to the LPGA and Ladies European Tour - and is strongly pushing its team structure. Under that model, LIV golfers compete individually and as part of four-strong teams, which will ultimately be sold as franchises with the ability to trade players.

"We have commitments from players for multi, multi, multi years. We have a deep commitment from our primary investor, which has been fantastic," said Khosla. "(Golf) is an ageing product today, it has been for a long period of time. How can you make it younger? How can you make it faster? How can you make it hipper and cooler?" he added. LIV's innovations include 54-hole tournaments with no cuts and a limited field of 48. Players can wear shorts - still forbidden in traditional golf - and music plays from on-course loudspeakers.

With huge financial rewards, including a reported \$200 million signing-on fee for 52-year-old Phil Mickelson, and at least \$4 million for tournament winners, the attraction for players is clear. However, they cannot earn world rankings points on LIV, affecting their chances of playing the four major championships. They are also barred from playing the US PGA Tour, while a similar suspension in Europe is currently before the courts. —AFP

Binny replaces Ganguly as Indian cricket board chief

MUMBAI: World Cup winner Roger Binny was Tuesday appointed head of India's cricket board - the sport's richest body - replacing Sourav Ganguly after he was reportedly forced out in a political tussle. Binny, 67, was elected president at a meeting of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) in Mumbai, where secretary Jay Shah won another term in office, vice-president Rajeev Shukla told reporters.

The BCCI, which has a net worth reported at \$2 billion, enjoys significant clout internationally in cricket but has been in chaos and there have been a slew of court cases involving the powerful organization. Bangalore-born Binny, who was part of India's historic 1983 World Cup-winning squad, steps into the shoes of Ganguly, widely regarded as one of cricket's greatest captains.

Ganguly, 50, had initially been tipped to earn a second term as president but reports said he was shunted out because he refused to join India's ruling party. Ganguly's political allegiance has been a regular source of media speculation, especially after the country's Home Minister Amit Shah, father of BCCI secretary Jay, visited him at home earlier this year. Politicians from Ganguly's home state of West Bengal, where the former player enjoys near-godlike status, alleged that the former batsman was forced out.

'Political vendetta'

India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been pushing hard to win power in the eastern state, falling short in elections marred by deadly violence last year. Ganguly's departure was a "political vendetta" by the

Defense best form of attack as Lakers seek renaissance

LOS ANGELES: Gritty, no-nonsense defense is not the first thing that springs to mind when assessing the NBA championship credentials of the Los Angeles Lakers. Ever since the 1980s heyday of the "Showtime" Lakers, the franchise has become synonymous with the kind of in-your-face flamboyance befitting a team based in the entertainment capital of the world.

Yet a dismal 2021-2022 campaign has forced the Lakers to spend their pre-season focusing on rebuilding a defense that last year leaked 115.2 points per game—the third-worst total in the league. Two years after winning a record-equaling 17th NBA crown, last season's Lakers regressed badly, finishing with a 33-49 record and missing out on a playoff berth.

A roster rebuild that saw the arrival of Russell Westbrook and the departure of several players involved in the 2020 title run was seen by many as the main reason behind the Lakers' defensive demise. "Defense," was the verdict of LeBron James recently when asked what areas he hoped to see the team improve this year. "Obviously you've gotta be able to put the ball in the hole for sure. You know in our

Kuwait's Mishal wins silver medal

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Mishal Rasheed Al-Bader won the silver medal in the 50 meters Back Stroke during the world swimming championship for down syndrome being held in Portugal until October 22. Al-Bader who is participating in the M2-T21 Category made the first Kuwaiti achievement in the championship in which swimmers from 20 countries are participating.

Al-Bader was happy to lift his country's flag in



MUMBAI: Newly elected Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president Roger Binny (centre right) and secretary Jay Shah (centre left) pose with other board members after the 91st BCCI annual general meeting in Mumbai on October 18, 2022. —AFP

government, opposition lawmaker Santanu Sen said on Twitter. Shah's Hindu nationalist BJP has denied any involvement in Ganguly's removal and accused their opponents of politicizing the issue.

Ganguly has not spoken publicly on his departure but reports said he had been hoping to continue, especially after India's top court recently relaxed a rule that barred sporting officials from consecutive terms in office in the same position. Commentators said Binny was well suited for the high-profile role, having burnished his credentials on and off the field. "He has got the cricketing stature and he is no stranger to cricket administration," said sports journalist R Kaushik. "He has what it takes when it comes to administration and

obviously what he has achieved as a cricketer, we know what he has done on the field," he told AFP.

Born in an Anglo-Indian family, Binny as a batsman could either open the innings or bat in the middle order. In 27 Tests, he scored 830 runs while accumulating another 629 runs from 72 ODIs. But it was his medium-pace bowling and his ability to swing the ball both ways that made him a useful player to have in the squad. He picked 47 wickets in Test cricket and 77 in ODIs. After hanging up his boots in 1987, Binny dabbled in coaching and sports administration. He coached the junior team that won the Under-19 World Cup in 2000 and after a stint at the Karnataka State Cricket Association became a national selector in 2012. —AFP

league there's teams that can do that," James added.

"But teams that can defend and get stops when needed—they're just simply more successful in our league. "The defensive side of the floor is what we're going to be hammering home on every single day. "Understanding that we can defend, make teams take tough shots, keep them to one shot at the goal, and then rebound and secure the ball puts us in position to be successful throughout the season."

'360-degree' basketball

Lakers coach Darvin Ham, meanwhile, says the Lakers' defensive problems can be solved by a holistic tactical approach, describing his coaching style as "360-degree" basketball. "You hear about these offensive gurus, or these defensive gurus—both sides of the ball affect one another," Ham said. "If you're able to play great defense, then your offense is going to look great, because you're not playing against a set defense."

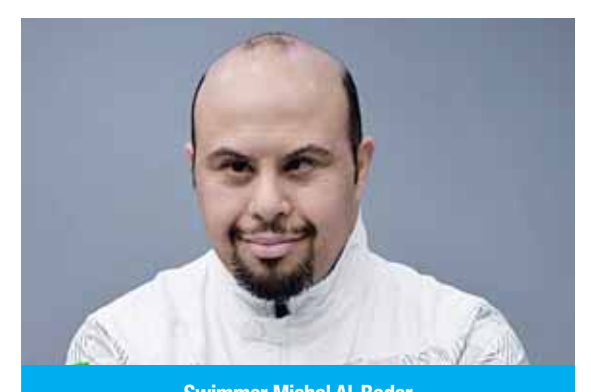
"If you're allowing people to score, then your offense is going to struggle because you're playing against a set defense. "So you just have to be well-rounded." The Lakers have made personnel changes which reflect the emphasis on defense. The arrival of veteran Patrick Beverley gives the team an elite defender renowned for work-rate and hustle.

Beverley believes the Lakers lacked a "will factor" on defense last season. "I don't know if they wanted to get on the floor, get dirty, scrape your knees and dive for a loose ball," Beverley said at the team's



LAS VEGAS: LeBron James (left) #6, Anthony Davis (back) #3 and Patrick Beverley #21 of the Los Angeles Lakers look on from the bench in the fourth quarter of a preseason game against the Minnesota Timberwolves at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas. —AFP

recent media day. "I'll do that and hopefully people will pick up from there. That's all I care about—to lead by action." The other imponderable hanging over the Lakers season is the issue of whether James and Anthony Davis can maintain fitness throughout the 82-game campaign. Davis played just 36 times in 2020-2021, and only 40 times last season. —AFP



Swimmer Mishal Al-Bader

Sports

Indonesia to demolish football stadium where crush killed 133

FIFA vows to 'transform' Indonesian football after tragedy

JAKARTA: The Indonesian football stadium where a stampede killed 133 people will be torn down and rebuilt, President Joko Widodo said Tuesday, as the head of FIFA pledged to help "reform and transform" the sport in the country. Gianni Infantino met Widodo in the capital Jakarta, just over two weeks after the tragedy, and a year before the Under-20 World Cup is due to be held in the Southeast Asian nation.

More than 40 children were among those killed in the city of Malang, East Java on October 1, in what Infantino described as "one of the darkest days for football". After supporters invaded the pitch at the end of a league match between Arema FC and rivals Persebaya Surabaya, police fired tear gas into packed stands, sparking a stampede. "For Kanjuruhan stadium in Malang, we will demolish and rebuild it according to FIFA standards," Widodo told reporters.

He said the replacement stadium will have "proper facilities that can ensure the safety of both players and supporters". "We will reform and transform football in this country," Infantino added, flanking Widodo. His assurances came as hospital officials said a 33-year-old man had died from injuries sustained in the crush, bringing the confirmed death toll to 133.

"What I can guarantee to all the people of Indonesia: FIFA is here with you, FIFA is here to stay, FIFA is here to work in a very close partnership with the government, with the Asian Football Confederation and with the federation of Indonesia," Infantino said. The main focus would be improving stadium operations and fan behavior, he added, as well as creating programs for football in schools. "We will bring our experts, we will help and invest and we will make sure that Indonesia shines on the global football stage," Widodo said he agreed with FIFA "on a thorough transformation of Indonesian football to ensure all aspects of the matches follow the international safety standards".

Safety review

The gates at the 42,000-capacity Kanjuruhan stadium, which was opened in 2004, were big enough to fit only two people at a time and some were not open when the disaster struck, officials have said. Infantino said FIFA would work with the Indonesian government to ensure the Under-20 World Cup can go ahead safely. The youth tournament is scheduled to take place in May-June 2023, in multiple cities across the archipelago nation.

Three police officers are among six people who have been charged over the tragedy. An investigating task force has called on the country's football association chief and all of its executive committee members to resign. It also found that more than three hours of footage from CCTV in the main lobby and parking area of the stadium had gone missing. Representatives from FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) have been in Jakarta since last week to investigate what happened, along with the national FA and the government. Widodo has suspended all football matches until the probe is complete and ordered a safety review of all stadiums.

Visiting FIFA president

Meanwhile, visiting FIFA president Gianni Infantino pledged to help "reform and transform" Indonesian football on Tuesday, two weeks after the country suffered one of the worst disasters in the sport's history. Infantino met President Joko Widodo in the capital Jakarta, a year before the Under-20 World Cup is due to be held in the Southeast Asian nation. "We will reform and transform football in this country", Infantino said, flanked by Widodo.

His assurances came as hospital officials said a 33-year-old man had died from injuries sustained in the Kanjuruhan stadium crush, bringing the confirmed death toll to 133. More than 40 children were among those killed in the city of Malang, East Java on October 1, in what Infantino described as "one of the darkest days for football". After supporters invaded the pitch at the end of



JAKARTA: Gianni Infantino (right), president of football's world governing body FIFA, presents a souvenir ball to Indonesia's President Joko Widodo during a joint press statement at the Presidential Palace in Jakarta on October 18, 2022. —AFP

a league match between Arema FC and rivals Persebaya Surabaya, police fired tear gas into packed stands, sparking a stampede.

"What I can guarantee to all the people of Indonesia: FIFA is here with you, FIFA is here to stay, FIFA is here to work in a very close partnership with the government, with the Asian Football Confederation and with the fed-

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City's stumble gives Spurs, Chelsea hope of EPL title fight

LONDON: Manchester City's first defeat of the season has given the rest of the English Premier League (EPL) hope that the title race is not a foregone conclusion as Tottenham and Chelsea seek to close at the top of the table on Wednesday. The arrival of rampaging forward Erling Haaland to supplement Pep Guardiola's squad, which has won the English top flight four times in the past five years, made City even stronger favorites to win the league again.

However, a rejuvenated Arsenal have opened up a four-point gap at the top of the table, while Spurs have kept pace with the defending champions. Arsenal and City were supposed to be facing off this midweek in a top-of-the-table clash. But that match has been postponed due to rescheduling caused by the death of Queen Elizabeth II last month, with the Gunners instead facing PSV Eindhoven in the Europa League.

With the top two not in action, Tottenham could move to within a point of the summit if they win at Manchester United on Wednesday. Spurs have not won a league title for 61 years but have, in Antonio Conte, a manager who has won the league at each of his previous three clubs—Juventus, Chelsea and Inter Milan. "We are showing stability," said Conte. "I always say, to play against us is not easy. "We have to continue to work and improve but we are a team, and I consider us really strong. If we are good to improve and continue to grow in other aspects, not only tactical but also to show this maturity, then we'll have great satisfaction." The strength in depth of Tottenham's squad is being fully tested by injuries to Dejan Kulusevski and Richarlison in forward areas. But Harry Kane is carrying the burden, with the England captain scoring nine goals in 10 league games to stay on the coat-tails of Haaland in the race for the Golden Boot.

Potter works his magic

Chelsea looked to have blown their title chances with two defeats in their opening five league games under Thomas Tuchel. But Graham Potter, who replaced the German as manager in September, has masterminded a turnaround in results for the Blues, with five consecutive wins in all competitions putting them back on track in both the Premier League and Champions League.

Chelsea have a game in hand on the top three and victory at Brentford would lift them just two points behind City. Potter has brought the best out of Kepa Arrizabalaga, who is performing to a level expected of the world's most expensive goalkeeper and keeping Edouard Mendy out of the side. "Kepa found a fantastic level, he made brilliant saves which kept us in the game," said Potter after the Spaniard shone in Sunday's 2-0 win at Aston Villa. "He is contributing to us with clean sheets, how we are trying to play and the environment around the place."

Liverpool have been the side carrying the fight to City over the past five years and looked more like their old selves in defeating the champions 1-0 at a frenzied Anfield on Sunday. The Reds still have a mountain to climb to get back in the title race, with just three wins under their belts in their opening nine games. And they cannot afford a hangover from their exploits against City when they host West Ham on Wednesday. "We were obviously brilliant but we need consistency," said Liverpool defender Andy Robertson. "It's important, it's such a big win for us against an unbelievable team that put us under so much pressure. But it's only a massive three points if we use it to our advantage." —AFP

'I sign what my father tells me to': Neymar

BARCELONA: Brazil superstar Neymar said Tuesday his manager father always handled his contracts as he took the stand at his trial in Spain over alleged irregularities in his transfer to Barcelona in 2013. "My father has always been in charge" of contract negotiations, the 30-year-old told the Barcelona court hearing the case. "I sign what he tells me to."

He also said he did not remember if he took part in the negotiations which led to an agreement sealed in 2011 with Barcelona over his transfer two years later to the Catalan side from Brazilian club Santos. Spanish prosecutors are seeking a two-year prison term for Neymar, a key member of the Brazil team that will be heading to the World Cup in Qatar next month, and the payment of a 10-million-euro (\$9.7 million) fine.

The trial is the culmination of a years-long legal saga over Neymar's 2013 move from Santos to Barcelona. He then joined Qatar-owned PSG in a world record 222-million-euro transfer in 2017. Neymar is one of nine defendants on trial on corruption-related charges, among them his parents and their N&N company, which manages his

affairs. He had originally been set to testify on either October 21 or 28 but the Barcelona court hearing the case agreed to bring forward his hearing to avoid a clash with his commitments with PSG.

'Complicity to defraud'

The player spent two hours at the court on Monday on the opening day of the trial before he was excused by the judge after his lawyers argued he needed to rest after playing Sunday night. The player scored the only goal of the Ligue 1 match against Marseille.

Investigators began probing the transfer after a 2015 complaint filed by DIS, a Brazilian company that owned 40 percent of the player's sporting rights when he was at Santos. Barcelona said the transfer cost 57.1 million euros, but prosecutors believe it was at least 83 million euros.

The club said it paid 40 million euros to N&N and 17.1 million to Santos, of which 6.8 million was given to DIS. But DIS alleges that Neymar, Barcelona and the Brazilian club colluded to mask the true cost of the deal.

Among the other defendants are two former Barca presidents, Sandro Rosell and Josep Maria Bartomeu, and ex-Santos boss Odilio Rodrigues Filho. DIS is seeking to recover 35 million euros. The company's lawyer Paulo Nasser said last week that Neymar had "with the complicity of his parents and FC Barcelona and its directors at the time, and Santos FC at a later stage, defrauded DIS of its legitimate financial interests."



BARCELONA: Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian forward Neymar (center) leaves with his mother Nadine Goncalves da Silva Santos (left) after attending a hearing at the courthouse in Barcelona on October 18, 2022, on the second day of his trial. —AFP

'Legal signing bonus'

Neymar's lawyers insist their client is innocent, saying the 40 million euros was a "legal signing bonus which is normal in the football transfer market". They have said Spanish authorities lack jurisdiction to hear the case since the transfer involved Brazilian nationals in Brazil. The trial is due to end on October 31. Neymar's abrupt departure for PSG five years ago sparked a string of legal disputes, with Barcelona withholding its contract extension bonus and suing the player for breach of contract, as Neymar countersued.

Both sides eventually reached an "amicable" out-of-court settlement in 2021. The footballer is having one of his best seasons since he joined PSG. His goal against Marseille on Sunday was his ninth league goal of the season, and he has seven assists in 11 Ligue 1 matches. Neymar is expected to play a key role for Brazil at the World Cup in Qatar, as the South American giants seek to win the trophy for the first time since 2002, and the sixth in total. He will lead the Selecao into their Group G opener against Serbia on November 24. —AFP

NYCFC knock out Miami, Dallas edge Minnesota

NEW YORK: Defending Major League Soccer champions New York City FC eased into the Eastern Conference semifinals after a comfortable 3-0 win over Inter Miami at Citi Field on Monday. In Texas, FC Dallas needed penalties

to beat Minnesota United in Texas after the game ended 1-1 after extra-time. The swift exit for Miami means the loss was the final game for the club's veteran Argentine striker Gonzalo Higuain, the former Real Madrid and Juventus forward, who had announced he would retire at the end of this season.

NYCFC, owned by Manchester City's City Football Group, will now face Montreal in the next round on Sunday. That match had been moved from City's normal home, Yankee Stadium, due to the primary residents, baseball's New York Yankees, being involved in playoff competition of their own and the visitors started brightly, Finnish winger Robert Taylor went close for Miami with a drive from a tight

angle on the right which City keeper Sean Johnson did well to push over the bar. But Miami looked far from comfortable at the back and their hesitance from a corner allowed Thiago Martins a free header which he put against the bar.

Higuain, who ended the regular season in fine scoring form, was inevitably the danger man for Phil Neville's Miami and he had an effort disallowed for offside in the 23rd minute after slotting home a lovely through ball from Christopher McVey. New York then saw Miami defenders twice hit their own woodwork in the same bizarre move when a chipped effort from Brazilian Heber was cleared against the bar by Aime Mabika and McVey's misdirected clearance struck the post. —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Adaliya	22517144
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Khaldiya	24848075
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Kaifan	24849807
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Shamiya	24848913
Chest Hospital	24849400	Shuwaikh	24814507
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Adan Hospital	23940620	Nuzha	22526804
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Qadsiya	22515088
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Dasmah	22532265
		Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
		Shaab	22518752
		Qibla	22459381
		Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
		Mirqab	22456536
		Sharq	22465401
		Salmiya	25746401

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Mohamed Aslam Abdul Rajack Jaheer Hussain holder of Passport No. M6102421 do hereby change my name to Mohammed Aslam (as given name) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Mohammed Aslam and I also undertake to carry out this change in all my documents. (C#2419) — 19-10-2022



EMBASSY OF INDIA KUWAIT

INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR THE POST OF BI-LINGUAL TYPIST

Minimum Qualifications: Degree/Diploma in Arabic Language, with preferably 5 years of work experience in English ⇌ Arabic Translation in a Diplomatic/International/reputed organization. Candidate should be Computer Literate and Fluent in Typing.
Age limit: Max 35 years as on 01.10.2022
Having valid Kuwaiti residency (transferable). Knowledge of English, Arabic (spoken & written) is essential. Knowledge of Hindi and another Indian regional language is preferable. Interested candidates may send their applications by e-mail with bio-data by 05 November 2022 to First Secretary (HOC), Embassy of India, P.O. Box No.1450 Safat 13015, Kuwait.
E-mail: eoikwaitrecruitment@gmail.com

For labor-related inquiries and complaints: Call MSALHOTLINE 128

Automated enquiry about the CivilID card is 1889988



GEELONG: UAE's Karthik Palaniappan Meiyappan tries to play a sweep shot as Sri Lanka's wicketkeeper Kusal (right) follows the ball during the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup 2022 cricket match between Sri Lanka and United Arab Emirates at Kardinia Park in Geelong on October 18, 2022. — AFP

Sri Lanka, Netherlands win at T20 WCup as Meiyappan bags hat-trick

Sri Lanka crush UAE at T20 World Cup

GEELONG: Karthik Meiyappan lit up the Twenty20 World Cup with a hat-trick Tuesday but it was in vain as Sri Lanka crushed the United Arab Emirates to get their campaign back on track, while the Netherlands toppled Namibia. The Asian champions were stunned by Namibia in the tournament's opening game on Sunday, a crushing 55-run defeat that left no room for error against the UAE.

They responded by bowling out the UAE for 73 for a convincing 79-run victory, but not before some drama. Sri Lanka were cruising at 117-2 in Geelong when spin bowler Meiyappan derailed their plans in the 15th over, removing Bhanuka Rajapaksa, Charith Asalanka and skipper Dasun Shanaka in successive balls. It was only the fifth hat-trick at a T20 World Cup, and the first-ever for the UAE in any T20 international.

Shanaka's team recovered to post 152-8 with Pathum Nissanka making a gritty 74 and

Meiyappan ending with 3-19. "Really disappointed with the way we ended the innings (with the bat). We could have scored 180-190," said Shanaka. "But it was important to get a win, we focused on a win only. He (Nissanka) was outstanding."

Earlier, Bas de Leede took two wickets and made an unbeaten 30 as the Netherlands took a giant step towards the Super 12 stage with a tense five-wicket victory over giant-killing Namibia.

It left Group A finely poised heading into the third and final matches on Thursday, where net run rate could prove decisive. Sri Lanka, the 2014 champions, face the unbeaten Netherlands next, needing another win, while Namibia take on the winless UAE. After being put into bat, Sri Lanka made a strong start, reaching 42 before Kusal Mendis (18) was trapped lbw by Aryan Lakra. Nissanka was joined by Dhananjaya de Silva and with the trumpets blowing from the Sri Lankan

fans, they both crunched big sixes.

But their 50-run partnership came to an end with an amateurish runout. Nissanka drove the ball and De Silva set off, but his partner did not respond, leaving him stranded. Nissanka brought up his eighth T20 half-century with a cover shot but then watched as Rajapaksa, Asalanka and Shanaka all fell to Meiyappan. Wanindu Hasaranga de Silva was snared by Aayan Afzal Khan four balls later as they lost four wickets for three runs. Nissanka kept calm at the other end and began swinging his bat, before being dismissed in the final over.

Self-belief

Dushmantha Chameera quickly rattled the UAE in their reply, clean bowling Muhammad Waseem and Aryan Lakra in the space of five balls. The UAE had no answer to the pace attack, slumping to

21-4 in the sixth over and they never recovered as Sri Lanka ran riot. Chameera ended with 3-15 but hobbled off late in the game. In the earlier match in Geelong, Namibia were restricted to 121-6, with the Dutch using seven different bowlers to put the clamps on.

The Europeans, boosted by former South Africa and India coach Gary Kirsten on their staff, were cruising at 91-1 in the 14th over in reply before Namibia took four late wickets to set up a nervous finale. The Netherlands needed six runs off the last over, with De Leede the hero, hitting a boundary and then scoring two to secure the win with three balls left. "We lost wickets at bad times, we can't afford to do that and we can learn from that as a team," said De Leede. "But the self-belief has always been there and it's nice to win two tight games. Maybe it opens up a bit more freedom for the boys." — AFP

Putellas retains Ballon d'Or, eyes return from injury

PARIS: Alexia Putellas said she hoped to return from a serious knee injury before the end of this season but refused to discuss her future with the Spanish national team after winning her second successive women's Ballon d'Or on Monday. The reward for Putellas, 28, came after a season in which she was the top scorer as her club Barcelona reached the Champions League final.

The prize, awarded at a star-studded ceremony at the Chatelet Theatre in central Paris, is also a consolation for Putellas who is currently recovering from a serious knee injury. The injury saw her miss the Euro in England in July and means she faces a battle to play at all this season. "The knee is doing well. I just need to focus on recovering and if everything goes as I hope—and as the doctors and my club hope—I hope to be back playing this season," she said.

There is a World Cup in Australia and New Zealand in July and August next year, although the presence of Putellas appears in some doubt anyway for reasons other than her injury. The Barcelona captain recently published a statement calling for change, along with 15 national team players who asked not to be called up by Spain, amid differences with the coach Jorge Vilda and the Spanish football federation. "All I am going to say today about the national team is that obviously it is a topic that makes me very sad," she said.

'Day for celebration'

"I think it needs to be spoken about but today is not the day. This is a day for celebration, a historic day, and that's all." Putellas saw off stiff competition, notably from three stars of the England team that won the European Championship, to take the Ballon d'Or following a campaign which also saw Barcelona win a domestic league and cup double.

"It makes me even more annoyed to be injured,



PARIS: FC Barcelona's Spanish midfielder Alexia Putellas receives her second Women's Ballon d'Or award during the 2022 Ballon d'Or France Football award ceremony at the Theatre du Chatelet in Paris on October 17, 2022. — AFP

but I am very happy to be here," Putellas added. "To retain the trophy is much harder. When I injured my knee I thought my chances of winning it had gone but in the end the jury based their decision on the whole of last season, of which I only missed one month." Putellas scored 11 goals in the Champions League last season as holders Barcelona reached the final but lost to Lyon.

It is just the fourth time that a women's Ballon d'Or has been awarded, with Norway's Ada Hegerberg winning the inaugural prize in 2018 before United States superstar Megan Rapinoe succeeded her in 2019. There was no Ballon d'Or gala in 2020 due to the pandemic before Putellas won it for the first time last year after helping Barca to Women's Champions League glory for the first time in their history.

Putellas had already won the UEFA player of the year prize in August. While Karim Benzema of Real Madrid was the overwhelming favourite to win the men's prize, the identity of the women's winner appeared far less certain. Beth Mead had been a leading contender after scoring six goals for England on their run to Euro glory on home soil, their first major tournament victory. —AFP

Ballon d'Or confirms Benzema's career redemption

PARIS: For Karim Benzema, winning the most prestigious individual award in football is the ultimate recognition for his remarkable performances with Real Madrid last season and confirmation that he is a player and a man transformed since his years in exile from the French national team because of a sextape scandal.

Benzema, fresh from scoring for Real against Barcelona in Sunday's Clasico, was the overwhelming favorite to win the Ballon d'Or in Monday's ceremony in Paris. He is the fifth Frenchman to claim the prize, the first since Zinedine Zidane in 1998. His victory was seen as such a foregone conclusion in France that the front page headline of newspaper Le Parisien on Monday was dedicated to him. "The revenge of the unpopular one," it said.

It is not long ago that Benzema, now 34, was a pariah, frozen out of the France team for five and a half years because of his involvement in a blackmail scandal over a sextape involving his former teammate Mathieu Valbuena. The Lyon native went on trial late last year and was handed a one-year suspended prison sentence and a fine of 75,000 euros (\$73,848). In June he decided not to appeal his conviction, eager to turn the page and keep the focus on football. By then he had completed a stunning season with his club, propelling Real to glory in the Champions League as well as the Spanish title.

Astonishing season

With the criteria for the prize having been changed to only take into account the last full season, rather than the calendar year, his performances meant there was little prospect of anyone else winning the Ballon d'Or. The figures speak for themselves. Benzema scored 44 goals in 46 games for Real last season, including 27 in La Liga as he ended the campaign as the top scorer in Spain's top



PARIS: Real Madrid's French forward Karim Benzema receives the Ballon d'Or award during the 2022 Ballon d'Or France Football award ceremony at the Theatre du Chatelet in Paris on October 17, 2022. —AFP

flight by a distance.

But his very best form came in the Champions League, in which he was also the leading marksman with 15 goals in 12 appearances. Wearing the captain's armband, Benzema scored five times in the group stage for Carlo Ancelotti's side, but the best was to come in the knockout rounds. He scored a stunning hat-trick in 17 second-half minutes in the spectacular last-16 comeback win over Paris Saint-Germain, and another away to Chelsea in the quarter-final first leg.

It was also his extra-time goal in the return leg of that tie that nipped a Chelsea comeback in the bud, and he scored three more over both legs of the semi-final against Manchester City, including an extra-time spot-kick in the return leg which secured Real's spot in the final. He was not the standout player in the final, with Vinicius Junior scoring the only goal of the game, but that victory over Liverpool in Paris would not have been possible without Benzema's prior contribution. The former Lyon striker has now won five Champions Leagues since moving to the Spanish capital aged 21 in 2009. "What is most important to me is to win collective trophies." —AFP