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Next Assembly 'must shoulder' responsibility of accountability

We should treat bedoons like humans: Dossari

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Opposition candidate Saud Al-Asfour, running from the Fifth Constituency, yesterday highly praised the "historical" speech of the Amir delivered on his behalf by Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on June 22, and described the speech as a "major development in the relations between the ruling family and the constitution".

He said the speech and its implications have positively changed the political environment in the coun-

try. Asfour however said the next Assembly must shoulder the responsibility of accountability and should open all the previous corruption cases. "The country will not develop without seriously fighting corruption," he said. He also said that the next Assembly must be thoroughly cleaned and warned that corrupt MPs are more serious than corrupt ministers.

"The real battle for the Kuwaiti people is the battle against all corrupt people," he said. "The Kuwait we admire is the one where people will not be jailed for saying a word, will not be forced to immigrate for

expressing opinion and their citizenship will not be under threat for taking a stance," Asfour said.

Candidate Mohammad Musaed Al-Dossari meanwhile called on the government to treat thousands of stateless people or bedoons like "humans". "We should deal with the bedoons like humans before we use the law ... Every human has the right to have an identity and enjoy good education, medical care and housing," Dossari said.

"We have been dealing with bedoons in a horrible way. We have not given them any right, they are deprived of jobs and barred from leaving the coun-

try for those who want" because they have no passports, he said. Dossari warned that the issue of bedoons, estimated at around 120,000, is a time-bomb which will explode if left unresolved.

On another issue, Dossari said he will work to amend the election law if he wins a seat in the assembly in order to achieve equality among Kuwaiti voters, adding that the distribution of voters is unfair. In the meantime, the administrative court yesterday set next Sunday to issue its verdict on some 15 candidates who had been disqualified and barred from running in polls by the interior ministry.

Woman arrested over dead children found in suitcases

SEOUL: South Korean police said Thursday they have arrested a woman accused of murdering her two children, whose remains were found in suitcases in New Zealand last month. The 42-year-old - reportedly a South Korean-born New Zealand national - was arrested in the southeastern city of Ulsan and will be transferred to the capital Seoul to face extradition proceedings, police said.

"Police arrested the suspect at an apartment in Ulsan on Thursday following a stakeout with tips on her whereabouts and CCTV footage," South Korea's National Police Agency said in a statement. "The suspect is accused by the New Zealand police of having murdered her two children - aged seven and 10 at the time - in around 2018 in the Auckland area." "She's been found to have arrived in South Korea after the crime and has been in hiding ever since," it added.

Images in local media showed the woman, who has not been identified by police in South Korea or New Zealand, being led out of the Ulsan police station by plainclothed investigators, covering her head with a large brown coat. The woman, who was wearing ripped jeans and sandals, was asked by local media whether she would confess to the killings.

"I didn't do it," the woman said repeatedly, as she was led away and put into a police vehicle. South Korea's Yonhap News Agency said the woman is a South Korean-born New Zealand citizen. It added that she started living in an acquaintance's apartment in Ulsan this year, having earlier stayed in Seoul. "Police plan to transfer the woman to the Seoul Central District Prosecutors Office in preparation for an extradition screening by the Seoul High Court," Yonhap said.

Grisly discovery

The remains of the two children were discovered in August after an unsuspecting family bought a trailer-load of items - including the suitcases - at an auction for abandoned goods near Auckland, New Zealand's biggest city. New Zealand police have said the bodies were likely to have been in storage for several years, which has complicated the investigation.

Authorities have repeatedly stressed that the family who found the bodies were not connected to the homicide, and were being given support to help deal with the trauma. Detective Inspector Tofilau Fa'amanuia Vaaelua in Auckland said Thursday that the case was "a very challenging investigation". "To have someone in custody overseas within such a short period of time has all been down to the assistance of the Korean authorities and the coordination by our New Zealand Police Interpol staff," the detective said. — AFP

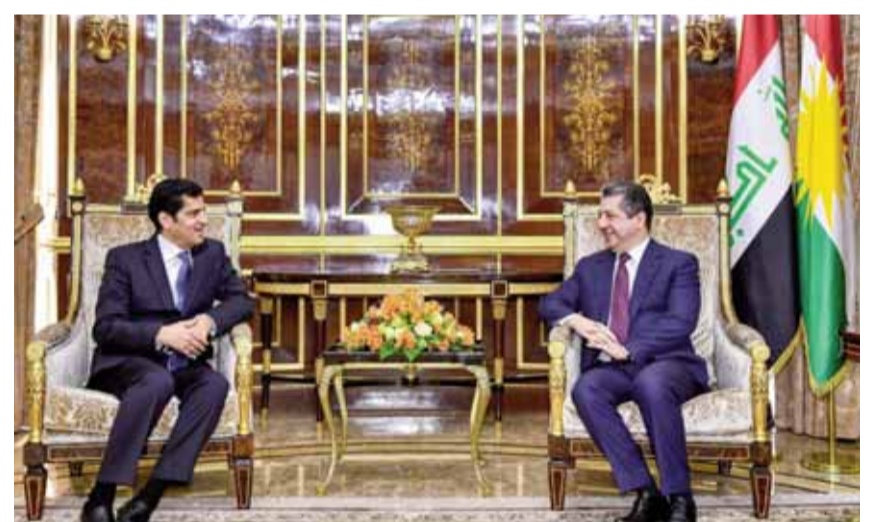
Kuwait cements ties with Iraq's Kurdistan

IRBIL: A Kuwaiti diplomatic envoy has affirmed that Iraq's Kurdistan Region and Kuwait have been bonded with deep-rooted relations, underlining the desire to enhance these ties further. In a statement to KUNA, Othman Daoud, the General Consul in Irbil, affirmed Kuwait's resolve to serve the two sides' interests and broaden the mutual cooperation, underscoring its humanitarian role in the region in line with guidelines by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His

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

He has noted that Kuwait leadership has given instructions to stand on the region side in crises, particularly aiding displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees. Kuwait is committed to implement its obligations, made during Kuwait's international convention for reconstructing Iraq held in February 2018 in Kuwait.

In this respect, the Kuwait mission has been supervising relief projects in the region, he noted. The General Consul indicated at Kuwaiti envoys' role in encouraging Kuwaiti businessmen to invest in the Kurdish region to boost the local development. Daoud met on Wednesday the region president, Mesrur Barzani, discussing means of elevating the friendly relations to higher levels. Kuwait opened the general consulate in Irbil in 2015. — KUNA



IRBIL: General Consul in Irbil Othman Daoud delivers his credentials to Iraq's Kurdistan president Mesrur Barzani. — KUNA

Syria former prisoners haunted

GAZIANTEP: When a Syrian prison guard tossed him into a dimly-lit room, the inmate Abdo was surprised to find himself standing ankle-deep in what appeared to be salt. On that day in the winter of 2017, the terrified young man had already been locked up for two years in war-torn Syria's largest and most notorious prison, Sednaya.

Having been largely deprived of salt all that time in his meagre prison rations, he brought a handful of the coarse white crystals to his mouth with relish. Moments later came the second, grisly, surprise: as a barefoot Abdo was treading gingerly across the room, he stumbled on a corpse, emaciated and half-buried in the salt. Abdo

soon found another two bodies, partially dehydrated by the mineral.

He had been thrown into what Syrian inmates call "salt rooms"-primitive mortuaries designed to preserve bodies in the absence of refrigerated morgues. The corpses were being treated in a way already known to the embalmers of ancient Egypt, to keep up with the industrial-scale prison killings under President Bashar Al-Assad's regime.

The salt rooms are described in detail for the first time in an upcoming report by the Association of Detainees and the Missing in Sednaya Prison, or ADMSP. In additional research and interviews with former inmates, AFP found that at least two such salt rooms were created inside Sednaya. Abdo, a man from Homs now aged 30 and living in eastern Lebanon, asked that his real name not be published for fear of reprisals against him and his family.

Continued on Page 6



GAZIANTEP: Diab Serriya, a founding partner at the 'Association of Detainees and The Missing in Sednaya Prison' (ADMSP), views a computer screen displaying a page on the prison hosted by the website of Amnesty International during an interview at his office in Gaziantep. — AFP

Mayyas wins 'America's Got Talent'

BEIRUT: Lebanese celebrated the local dance troupe Mayyas on Thursday after it won the "America's Got Talent" TV contest, stoking joy and pride in a country battered by years of political and economic turmoil. Many fans, across age groups and religious lines in the crisis-tested country and its large diaspora, tearfully cheered the all-women group for what judges and viewers hailed as a

hypnotic and mesmerizing performance.

"Congratulations Mayyas, proud, proud, proud," tweeted Lebanese pop star Elissa, while caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati gushed that "Lebanese creativity shines" in the performance. A Twitter user called Wael summed up the mood about the group that beat all the odds: "They come from a country ravaged by crisis and, despite the difficulties, they managed to be the best. Lebanese all around the world are proud of you." The troupe led by choreographer Nadim Cherfan scooped a \$1 million prize and the chance to headline a Las Vegas show for their extravagant performance featuring belly dancing, feather fans and white orbs of light.

— AFP (See Page 11)



BEIRUT: In this file photo, some members of the Lebanese dance group Mayyas, headed by Choreographer and founder Nadim Cherfan (3rd-right), pose for a picture following their meeting with Lebanon's Minister of Culture in Beirut. — AFP

UK, Ukraine embassies honor Queen at memorial



Oleksandr Balanutsa



Belinda Lewis



KUWAIT: Ukrainian paintings on display.



KUWAIT: Guests at the memorial. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KUWAIT: Ukrainian nationals display their cultural fare at a stall at the memorial.



KUWAIT: Music being played at the memorial.

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The UK Embassy in Kuwait held a commemorative ceremony in the memory of Queen Elizabeth II, on Wednesday, in cooperation with the Embassy of Ukraine, where ambassadors and Kuwaiti officials paid tribute to Britain's Queen.

In a press statement, UK's Ambassador to Kuwait, Belinda Lewis said "It is a musical event dedicated to the memory of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, where her favorite music was played. The embassy aims to make today's event a very personal tribute to her."

Ambassador Lewis praised Kuwait's gesture in honoring the memory of Queen Elizabeth, adding, "We are deeply grateful for the many heartfelt messages of condolences that we have received."

"I was very touched by the Kuwaiti government, the ruling family, and Kuwaiti nationals who sent us texts and signed the book of condolences. There was also a wonderful gesture made by the Kuwait government, to lower the flags at half-mast to mourn the departure of Britain's Queen," she continued.

Regarding the ceremony, Lewis indicated that it included live piano music and photos projected on the screen of Her Majesty's life. "She is a unique figure in history - we wanted a more personal and a different event. It felt right to think about her as a human being - she was a mother, grandmother, as well as queen. We thought about what she enjoyed. She would want us to continue with activities to bring people together. Also, she loved music and that is why we wanted music to be the theme of our

event today."

She pointed out "It is a joint event planned in cooperation with the British and Ukrainian embassies. Before the sad news of her Majesty's death, we were planning to help celebrate Ukrainian cultural week, because the Ukraine embassy will not celebrate its national day this year due to the war. We originally planned a fabulous catwalk show with beautiful dresses, jewelry, glasses, and accessories from Ukrainian designers."

In turn, the Ambassador of Ukraine to Kuwait, Oleksandr Balanutsa, stated "I would like to thank Ambassador Belinda for this event as initially we had planned an event to support Ukraine, although we changed the concept after the death of the Queen."

He also expressed the Ukrainian embassy's love

and passion for music, devoting it to the memory of the queen, adding "We will be praying for the queen and the royal people. We will give back the love to the British people."

Balanutsa emphasized that within the last six months, the Kuwaiti government has been providing Ukraine with the needed humanitarian support. "We do believe that even with the change of the parliament and the new government, this support will continue." "In today's event, we have four exhibitions representing Ukraine, as well as a Ukrainian artificial intelligence start-up, where the computer presents the painting," Balanutsa noted.

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II died at the age of 96 at her Balmoral residence in Scotland. She was Britain's longest-serving monarch and celebrated 70 years on the throne this year.



NEW YORK: Dr Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets UNGA chief Csaba Korosi.

Kuwait's foreign minister meets UNGA President

NEW YORK: Dr Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah met the President of the United Nations General

Assembly, Csaba Korosi. The meeting was held on the sidelines of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly. The Kuwaiti diplomat congratulated the UNGA chief on his post and wished him success in his mission. Al-Sabah reiterated Kuwait's full support to the UN General Assembly, stressing Kuwait's eagerness in strengthening its ties with the UN. —KUNA

172 unwell children commended

KUWAIT: The women's activity department at the Patients Helping Fund Society has congratulated a new group of young patients who participated in the Quran contest 'Kunooz'. The event took place at the society's headquarters, attended by

the head of the department, Dr Mohammed Al-Sharhan, Sheikh Al-Zain Al-Sabah among others. The head of the women's activity department, Safaa Abdin has thanked the endowment for providing gifts for the winners and appreciated the role of the authorities for their effective cooperation.

At the end of the event, which included active participation from the children, certificates, gifts and monetary gifts were distributed, with the attendance of their mothers, alongside some private companies who provided presents for the participating children.



KUWAIT: Members and parents of the participants of the Kunooz contest.

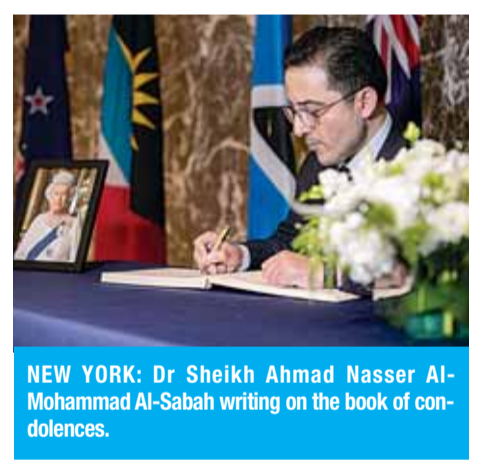


KUWAIT: Participants of the Kunooz Quran contest.

Kuwait's FM writes tribute to Queen in condolences book

NEW YORK: Dr Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah wrote a tribute to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, in a book of condolences opened by the UK mission to the United Nations in New York. In his note, the minister extended the Kuwaiti leadership and people's condolences to the UK Royal Family, government and people following her demise. He also

lauded the late Queen's pivotal role in cementing the deeply-rooted Kuwait-UK ties. Meanwhile, Ambassador Majdi Al-Dhafri, Deputy Foreign Minister, visited the UK embassy in Kuwait, to present his condolences on the demise of Queen Elizabeth II. In his note, Al-Dhafri wrote a note in the book of condolences, recalling her achievements, traits as well as her historic contributions in the service of her country and people and the role she played in cementing the relations between Kuwait and the UK. During his visit, Al-Dhafri was received by Ambassador Belinda Lewis at the British Mission Headquarters. —KUNA



NEW YORK: Dr Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah writing on the book of condolences.

Health minister opens medical center

KUWAIT: Health Minister Dr. Khaled Al-Saeed opened a 5,000 square meters two-storey medical center in Abu Futaira. "With the opening of this center, we now have 32 medical centers in Ahmadi district and we will open the Sabah Al-Ahmad city and Wafra medical centers in the upcoming days, as we stress the importance of expansion in providing high quality medical care," Al-Saeed said, during a press conference.

"Ahmadi Medical District now has 32 medical centers, of which, 15 are available with limited staff after-hours, 13 centers are open throughout the day and four specialized centers are also open to the public," said the head of the Ahmadi Medical District.

"The Abu Futaira medical center will operate initially from 7 am to 2 pm from Sunday to Monday, and its services will include diabetic, chronic illnesses and general medical clinics, as well as an advanced basic medical services center and they will be expanded gradually depending on patients' statistics," he added. "On the second floor, the center provides dental services, labs and other parental specializations," he added.

"Kuwait has taken first place in complete medical coverage in the Middle East region, as services are provided within less than 10 minutes, and medicine available for everybody without exception," he added. The official speaker of the ministry, Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said, "The importance of expansion comes from the belief of the ministry and its service in coordination with Kuwait's



KUWAIT: Dr Khaled Al-Saeed inaugurates the Abu Futaira clinic.



KUWAIT: Dr Khalid Al-Saeed interacting with the medical staff at Abu Futaira clinic.



KUWAIT: The facilities at Abu Futaira clinic.



KUWAIT: Dr Khalid Al-Saeed with the team at the Abu Futaira clinic.

vision 2035, by giving high quality medical services."

"There are three new centers under

Ahmadi medical center - Fahaheel, Wafra and Sabah Al-Ahmad which will be opened soon," he added.

Local

Why do children bully each other?

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Bullying in schools has become a critical issue that threatens the mental health safety of students and the proper functioning of the teaching process, as this issue affects the psychology of students and prevents them from studying and achieving academic excellence and from establishing close and solid friendships among them. Specialists and educators have warned the dangers that arise from this issue and the increase in violence between students, especially in the governmental education sector.

Reports show that when the child bullies, he does it for several purposes, such as - to draw the attention of others, appear as a strong and solid person, express his desire to show strength and control over all the people around him, whether they are colleagues or teachers, desire for leadership, self-love and selfishness, as well as the bully's extreme jealousy of the student's superiority over him in studies or in any other activity.

Regarding the reasons that lead to existence of the school bullying issue, reports have revealed that families play an important role in the bullying issue between students due to the wrong way of upbringing and use of strict punishment and vio-

lence with children. Toxic school life, the absence of the school's role in teaching students the importance of respecting each other mainly affects the student's morals, in addition to the absence of the school's activities that contribute to releasing the energy of students, which, due to its absence, may resort to causing harm to their friends. Media and technology also contribute to the spread of bullying in schools, especially since most of the mass media and films directed at children, encourage the idea that being the strongest is the only way to survive and that violence is the necessary way to control others. Studies state that when social class differences widen between children, the danger of this type of bullying among children is likely and it would also disrupt the school framework and affect the society through the forming of criminal gangs.

On the other hand, the reports show the importance of the family's role to help their bullied child through sharing the child's concerns, investigating the problem and teaching their child how to deal with bullying, teaching the child sports to increase his self-confidence, visit the school administration and discuss with them the problem and most importantly, boosting the child's self-confidence.



Union Cooperative Societies supports 'Kuwaitization' Program

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies, Badah Al-Dosari stressed the Union's support for the National Labor Replacement Program in the cooperative sector and for employing Kuwaitis in different positions across the stores. Al-Dosari said that the Union is also working on the implementation of the Commerce Minister Fahad Al-Shuraan's decision issued recently, regarding the policy of Kuwaitization of supervisory jobs, in the catering branches of cooperative societies.

He stressed the need to put a developed mechanism in place, to ensure the employment of those who meet the appropriate conditions to work, according to the needs of cooperative societies in the supply branches, noting that the Union has actually benefited from the trained Kuwaiti cadres working in this sector. Al-Shuraan also praised the pioneering role played by the cooperative movement in providing basic commodities at reasonable



Badah Al-Dosari

prices in addition to the social services provided to shareholders. He noted the Union's contribution to the development and support of national companies, in revitalizing internal and external trade and in dealing with economic challenges. Al-Dosari also explained how Kuwait promoted the cooperative movement and helped this sector to achieve its national goals and assume a prominent position in the country's retail sector. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Chairman of the UCCS Badah Al-Dosari during the inspection tour.

National Guard rewards servicemen

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Guard honored 50 guardsmen from various units, in recognition of their daily performance and hard work. The nominated servicemen were selected through an open draw.

Meanwhile, Assistant for financial affairs and resources administration, Major General, Riyadh Mohammad Tawari conveyed greetings from National Guard Chief His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah and N.G. undersecretary Lieutenant General Staff engineer Hashim Abdelrazaq Al-Refae. Tawari also said that the command is keen on rewarding the hard-working servicemen and increase competition between guardsmen, so that they are encouraged to serve their country better. He added that the chosen guardsmen will be rewarded with an Umrah coupon for the servicemen and their family.



KUWAIT: National Guard servicemen being rewarded for their service.

Year-on-year increase in Kuwait rental market

KUWAIT: In accordance with the latest issue of the Public Authority of Civil Information's Guide for Buildings and Units, total number of buildings in Kuwait at the end of June 2022 reached 213,000 buildings versus 209,700 buildings at the end of June 2021, achieving a growth rate of 1.6 percent during 12 months, which is higher than the growth rate of 1.2 percent at the end of June 2021 versus June 2020.

Buildings are divided into different units, reaching 764,100 units by the end of June 2022 compared to 752,400 units at the end of June 2021, reflecting a 1.6 percent rise. The compound growth rate for total units during the period from the end of 2011 to June 2022 scored 2.2 percent, while the compound growth rate in the number of buildings for the same period came lower at 1.4 percent. This confirms a continued trend in reducing units' areas within each building, indicating that the change in the demand pattern continued in the same manner. Most buildings in Kuwait are used for residence and form about 68.4 percent of the total number of buildings, followed by units assigned for both housing and work, and finally those which are assigned for work only. Vacant buildings dropped during the same period as per PACI figures and reached 9.4 percent, approximately 20,000 buildings out of a

total of 213,000 buildings versus 21,400 vacant buildings out of a total of 209,700 buildings at the end of June 2021 - 10.2 percent out of total building.

Meanwhile, according to a KPMG report, in order to make the property market more commercially viable, Kuwait needs to work on making its existing rental units saleable and have a proper feasibility study in place where units are prioritized for sale based on market needs and within the country's legislative framework. However, the report adds that, the actual situation of the property market in the country might indicate, that market changes may not always go in tandem with the dynamics of the regulatory system in place. It is also a point to be noted that often a city's infrastructure planning may be a complex network of residential and commercial units, often planned in the form of mega units with heavy investments. Even then, market fluctuations and other external factors may play the final role in making a unit's sale successful in the market.

Meanwhile, according to PACI data, apartments form the majority of units and represent 46.1 percent of the total number of available units, followed by houses by 21.7 percent and shops by 19.7 percent. Apartments and houses sector maintained its regular increase in its share between the end of 2011 until June 2022, contrary to the percentage of house-extensions which dropped. Compound annual growth rate (2011- June 2022) for shops, apartments and houses reached 3.1 percent, 2.4 percent and 1.4 percent respectively; it however decreased for house-extensions by -3.2percent. The percentage of vacant units in June 2022, according to PACI estimates, decreased to 23.9 percent compared to 25.6 percent at the end of June 2021.

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News in brief

CSC to start its
new hiring phase

KUWAIT: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) will begin its second phase of Kuwaitization in the government sector once the national assembly elections are over. "After the elections, the CSC, after the appointment of the new head, Issam Al-Rubayyan, will begin filling vacant positions with Kuwaiti employees after appointing an undersecretary and providing their name to the Cabinet and at the same time, new managers will be employed in vacant positions in the commission, after some heads were forced to retire previously," sources told Kuwait Times. "The second phase includes two decisions - the first will be the supervision of government departments that have not nationalized its department completely - a request made five years ago, because either they are not meant for national candidates or expatriate workers are needed," sources added. Meanwhile, the head of the civil service commission, Dr Issam Al-Rubayyan has started his tenure with an inspection visit to the CSC departments, as he listened to ideas and suggestions on Thursday. "Our priorities include the Kuwaitization of the CSC, remove paper contracts and make procedures simpler, as a new strategy will be provided soon regarding the human development of national staff," Al-Rubayyan said during a press conference.

Indian Embassy to hold
'Namaste Kuwait' event

KUWAIT: Embassy of India, Kuwait, in collaboration with Indian Community Support Group (ICSG), will organize a record-breaking event titled 'Namaste Kuwait' to celebrate 75 Years of India's independence (Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav) on Friday, Sept 23, 2022 from 8am to 8pm at the Embassy premises, Daeya Diplomatic enclave. During the event under the theme '75 Art Forms- 750 Minutes,' 75 art forms of India will be presented in which more than 750 artists will feature. The artists will perform continuously without a break for 750 minutes. Diverse art forms from all over India will be showcased during the event, illustrating the rich Indian heritage and commemorating the glorious 75 years of independent India, according to a press release issued by the Indian Embassy. The event will be held at the Embassy auditorium from 8am to 8pm in hybrid mode - virtual and offline. Links for the live-streaming of the event will be shared on Embassy's official social media handles. Due to the limited seating available, entry for the offline event will be on a first-come-first-entry basis. Civil ID will be mandatory to attend the offline event at the Embassy's auditorium, the release added.

Electricity minister
announces new jobs

KUWAIT: The minister of public works, electricity, water and alternative power, Ali Al-Mousa has announced on Thursday the availability of jobs for nationals within the frame of the Kuwaitization process within the electricity ministry. "Employment should cover all regulations according to the legal systems in place and applicants must have accredited degrees from the ministry of higher education and provide all documents online as nomination processes will all be online," the ministry announced.

PAM receives Nepalese,
Tanzanian ambassadors

KUWAIT: The acting head of the Public Authority of Manpower (PAM), Dr Mubarak Al-Azmi, received the ambassador of Nepal, Durga Prasad Bhattarai and the Tanzanian ambassador, Saeed Musa expressing his welcome for the two ambassadors. "We hope to increase our cooperation in bringing skilled workers from the two countries to work in Kuwait," Al-Azmi said. "The PAM is spending great effort in organizing the workforce for the purpose of economic development, which will benefit both countries and the work force," he added. "It is important that we ensure legal protection for our workers to ensure a stable working environment."

Defense Minister
inspects Doha port

KUWAIT: The Public Relations department at the Ministry of Interior has announced that the Deputy Prime Minister, Acting Interior Minister, Minister of Defense, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled along with the head of Kuwait Customs, Sulaiman Al-Fahad among others, have inspected Doha port, where they reviewed procedural operations and ensured the correctness of inspection procedures for inspecting cargo, in order to stop smuggling illegal substances.

"Workers in the port have an important role in cooperating with government departments, like in this case, as it's important to keep pursuing a common goal which is to stop smugglers and reduce smuggling which hurts our national security," Al-Khaled added.

He said "The reason for the visit is to encourage and increase confidence of the employees in order to stop the spread of illegal substances," he said.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A close-up of the Liberation Tower. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Through the doors
of a Kuwaiti home

KUWAIT: For some, a journey through Kuwait is a reminder of a nostalgic past, partly because some of the building landmarks that dot the landscape carry strong memories. The Abdul Rahman Al-Husaini House in Faiha is one such building that brings back such memories for many people in Kuwait. While on the outset, it looks past its demolishing date with cracked walls and peeling paint spread over its facade, the trademark open air Diwaniya and the Middle Eastern styled vestibule reflects of a prosperous time not long ago.

Today, the house has become one of the most famous monuments in Kuwait, as it has also become a daily destination for visitors, because of its attractiveness of being built in the old style with walls, doors and windows.

The owners of the house had initially resolved to destroy the house and rebuild it again, but they changed their decision as the house brought

back nostalgic memories for Kuwaitis, so the heirs responded to the demands of many families and personalities not to demolish it and to preserve the beautiful heritage from extinction, because of its material and moral values that are precious to the Kuwaiti memory.

Lawyer Ali Abd Al-Rahman Al-Husaini, the owner of the house, says, "Our house was built before 1960, more than 60 years ago, when my father bought it from the previous owner, Ghalia Al-Somali, in 1967.

Looking at the interiors of the building, Al-Husaini reviewed the components of the house, and said that - "the building system of the house is old and it is spacious and open, as the sun enters it during the day and the air circulates in it, but it is flawed, in the sense that the external air particles, like dust affects it"

On the possibility of the place being a museum for visitors, Al-



Husaini said, "Many people have appealed to the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, to preserve this house as a heritage landmark to be a place for new

generations, to know the nature of the people of Kuwait and their previous lives."

—Mahmoud Zakaria
(Researcher in Heritage)



KUWAIT: Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled inspects procedures at Doha Port.



KUWAIT: Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled discusses inspection procedures with officials at Doha Port.

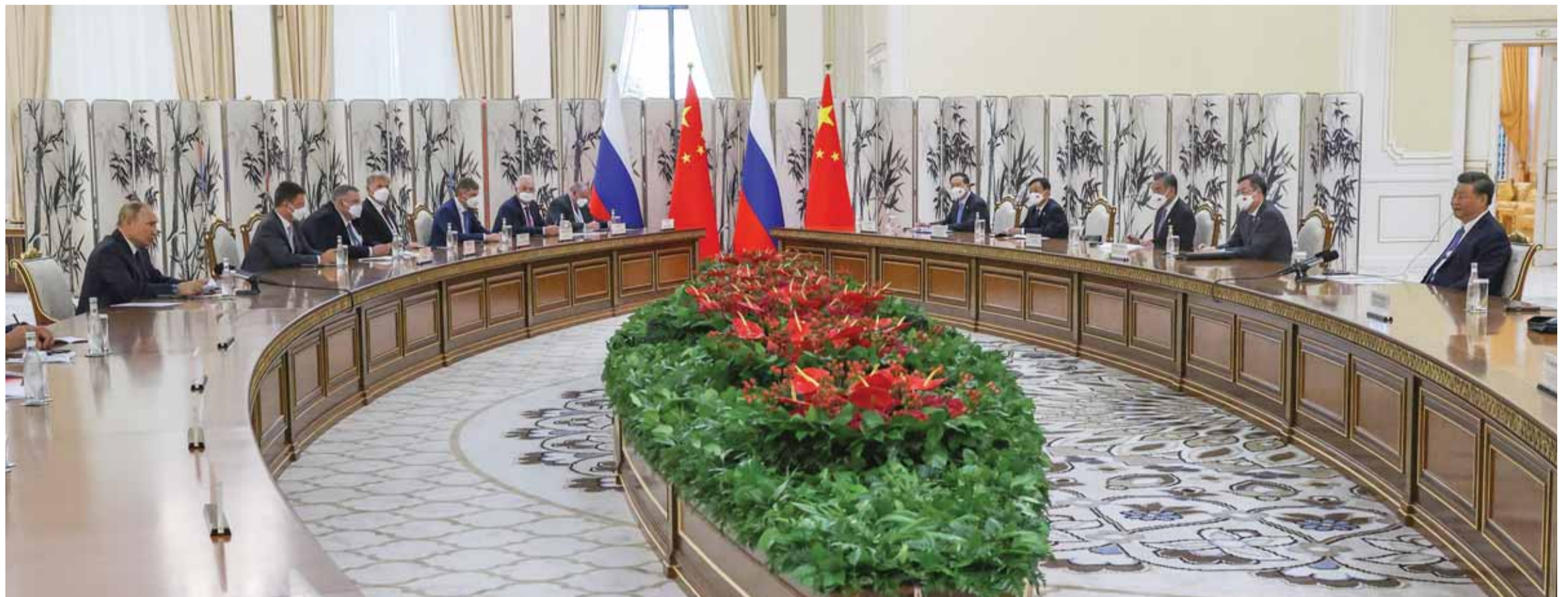


Typhoon Muifa lashes China, forcing 1.6m from their homes

Spain arrests Europe's biggest money launderers

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SAMARKAND, Uzbekistan: Russian President Vladimir Putin meets with China's President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) leaders' summit in Samarkand on September 15, 2022. —AFP

Putin, Xi meet for high-stakes talks

Asian leaders gather for talks defying West

SAMARKAND, Uzbekistan: Russia's Vladimir Putin and China's Xi Jinping gathered with other Asian leaders in the ancient Silk Road city of Samarkand on Thursday for a summit touted as a challenge to Western global influence.

Putin and Xi were being joined by the leaders of India, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey and several other countries for the meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in the Uzbek city on Thursday and Friday.

The main summit day will be Friday, but a meeting of the Chinese and Russian leaders later Thursday is set to be closely watched, with talks about the conflict in Ukraine expected. Earlier on Thursday, the two first held separate meetings with leaders of ex-Soviet Central Asian nations. Putin sat down with the presidents of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan while Xi met Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

Putin then saw Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, announcing that ties were "developing positively" between Moscow and Tehran, and giving his full backing to Iran's application to become a member of the SCO. Raisi told Putin that US-backed sanctions on both countries would only make their relationship "stronger". "The Americans think whichever country they impose sanctions on, it will be stopped, their perception is a wrong one," Raisi said. For Putin, the summit is a chance to show that Russia is not isolated internationally, at a time when Moscow's forces are facing major battlefield setbacks in Ukraine.

Rare trip abroad for Xi

For Xi-on his first trip abroad since the early days of the coronavirus pandemic-it is an opportunity to

shore up his credentials as a global statesman ahead of a pivotal congress of the ruling Communist Party in October.

The summit is also a chance for both leaders to thumb their noses at the West, especially the United States, which has led the charge in imposing sanctions on Russia over Ukraine and angered Beijing with recent shows of support for Taiwan.

Entry to Samarkand, a city of grand tiled mosques that was one of the hubs of Silk Road trade routes between China and Europe, has been restricted for



Ties were "developing positively"

days, with its airport shut to commercial flights. Security was tight across the city, with a huge police presence on the streets and armoured vehicles parked downtown.

Residents told AFP of their joy at hosting the meeting, pointing to Samarkand's long history as an international crossroads. "We are proud that so many leaders of various countries are gathering in our city. Samarkand from ancient times was a legendary city," said 26-year-old Shakhboz Kombarov.

The SCO-made up of China, India, Pakistan, Russia

and the ex-Soviet Central Asian nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan was set up in 2001 as a political, economic and security organisation to rival Western institutions. Much of the focus, however, will be on bilateral talks.

'No-limits' friendship

Besides Xi, Putin was also set Thursday to meet Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, then on Friday to hold talks with Indian premier Narendra Modi and Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan. It was not clear who else Xi might meet, although talks with Modi would be their first since 2019. China-India relations turned frosty over deadly fighting in 2020 on their disputed Himalayan border.

Formerly Cold War allies with a tempestuous relationship, China and Russia have drawn closer in recent years as part of what they call a "no-limits" relationship acting as a counterweight to the global dominance of the United States.

Xi and Putin last met in Beijing in early February for the Winter Olympic Games, days before Putin launched the military offensive in Ukraine. Beijing has not explicitly endorsed Moscow's military action but has steadily built economic and strategic ties with Russia during the nearly seven-month conflict. Xi has assured China's support of Russian "sovereignty and security". Russia has in turn backed China over Taiwan, calling US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to the island this summer a "clear provocation". The two countries have also stepped up military cooperation in recent years, with China sending hundreds of troops to take part in military exercises last month in Russia's Far East. —AFP

Over 170 die as Azerbaijan and Armenia clash

YEREVAN: Azerbaijan said Thursday that 71 of its troops had died in border clashes with Armenia over the last two days in the worst fighting since 2020. Yerevan said a ceasefire was holding on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, with no fresh violence reported overnight. The earlier death toll given by Azerbaijan was 50.

Azerbaijan's defense ministry published a list of 71 servicemen killed in clashes between the historic rivals since Tuesday while Yerevan said 105 of its troops were killed. The clashes ended "thanks to the international involvement" overnight on Thursday, Armenia's Security Council said, after earlier failed attempts from Russia to broker a truce.

The European Union welcomed the ceasefire, which it said was "being respected so far." "The EU remains strongly involved in the normalization process between Armenia and Azerbaijan," Peter Stano, the bloc's spokesman for foreign affairs and security policy, said in a statement. EU Special Representative, Toivo Klaar, was holding high-level consultations in Baku on Wednesday and in Yerevan on Thursday, he said.

Baku and Yerevan have traded accusations of initiating the violence, which saw hundreds of Armenian civilians flee their homes. A delegation of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) - a Moscow-led grouping of several ex-Soviet republics - is due in Yerevan later, Armenia's foreign ministry said. Armenia is a member of CSTO but Azerbaijan is not. On Tuesday, Armenia's Security Council asked for military help from Moscow, which is obliged under the treaty to defend Armenia in the event of a foreign invasion.

Fragile peace process

In Yerevan, opposition supporters staged an anti-government protest overnight, demanding Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's resignation, after rumors he was planning to agree on concessions in the decades-long territorial dispute with Azerbaijan. The Caucasus neighbors fought two wars - in the 1990s and in 2020 - over the contested Nagorno-Karabakh region, Azerbaijan's Armenian-populated enclave.

The six weeks of fighting in 2020 claimed the lives of more than 6,500 troops from both sides and ended with a Russian-brokered ceasefire. Under the deal, Armenia ceded swathes of territory it had controlled for decades, and Moscow deployed about 2,000 Russian peacekeepers to oversee the fragile truce. The Ukraine conflict has changed the balance of power in the region, as Russia faces and increasing international isolation.

The European Union has since led the Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization process, which involves peace talks, border delimitation and the reopening of transport links. During EU-mediated talks in Brussels in May and April, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and the Armenian leader Pashinyan agreed to "advance discussions" on a future peace treaty. They last met in Brussels on August 31, for talks mediated by the European Council President Charles Michel. Analysts have said the latest escalation has largely undone Brussels' efforts to bring Baku and Yerevan closer to a peace agreement. Ethnic Armenian separatists in Nagorno-Karabakh broke away from Azerbaijan when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. The ensuing conflict claimed around 30,000 lives.—AFP

EU chief talks cooperation with Zelensky

KYIV: EU commission president Ursula von der Leyen was in Kyiv Thursday for her first visit to Ukraine since the war-scarred country became a candidate for bloc membership, angering Moscow. Her trip coincides with a highly-touted meeting between the leaders of Russia and China in ex-Soviet Uzbekistan for a regional summit that Moscow and Beijing have said offers an alternative to Western global influence.

It also comes as Ukrainian forces have been consolidating gains against Russian forces in the east of the country in a dramatic offensive aided by Western weapons. Von der Leyen said Thursday's visit was her third to Ukraine since Russia invaded in February, but that this one was different.

"So much has changed. Ukraine is now an EU candidate," she said on social media. "I'll discuss with (President Volodymyr) Zelensky and (Prime Minister) Denys Shmygal how to continue getting our economies and people closer while Ukraine progresses towards accession," she said.

Ukraine gained EU candidacy status in June at the same time as ex-Soviet Moldova, which borders Ukraine and like its neighbour has had Russian troops stationed in an eastern breakaway region.

The historic vote angered Moscow, which has tried to retain political and military influence in both countries since the collapse of the Soviet Union three decades ago. EU countries have staunchly supported Ukraine since Moscow invaded in February by hitting Russia with waves of economic penalties.

And many members of the bloc have supplied Kyiv with advanced weapons that have helped Ukrainian forces in recent weeks recapture swathes of territory from Russia. Von der Leyen said just ahead of her trip that the successive waves of EU



KYIV, Ukraine: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky (R) and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen arrive to deliver a press conference following their talks in Kyiv on September 15, 2022. —AFP

sanctions against Russia for its invasion of Ukraine would remain and that Europeans must keep their resolve against Moscow.

Zelensky pledges Ukraine victory

"I want to make it very clear, the sanctions are here to stay," she told the European Parliament during her annual State of the Union speech. The Kremlin maintains that Russia has weathered the economic penalties and Moscow has responded by reducing or halting entirely gas flows to European countries. With winter fast approaching, this has forced the EU to source alternative supplies, agree plans to cut consumption and roll out financial support in the face of skyrocketing prices. Ukraine and its allies however have been buoyed by gains in the eastern Kharkiv region that borders Russia over recent days and Zelensky promised an overall Ukrainian "victory" while visiting the crucial hub of Izyum recaptured this week.

Ukraine's forces have also posted slower, but steady gains in the southern Kherson region near

the Black Sea. The Ukrainian presidency said on Thursday that intense fighting was ongoing around that southern front and that the military situation there "remains extremely difficult."

In the eastern Donetsk region, which has been partially controlled by Russian-backed separatists since 2014, fresh shelling killed two civilians and left another 13 wounded. Ukraine launched a mandatory drive to evacuate civilians from the eastern industrial region, where its forces have also announced gains, ahead of the counter-offensive but many civilians remain.

The meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping is a chance for them both to thumb their noses at the West, especially the United States, which has led the charge in imposing sanctions on Russia over Ukraine.

Beijing has not explicitly endorsed Moscow's invasion, it has steadily built economic and strategic ties with Russia over the six months of the war, and Xi has assured his counterpart of his support of Russian "sovereignty and security". —AFP

International

Palestinian teenager killed in clashes with Zionist forces

'Mapping out homes of terrorists who killed Major Bar Falah'

KAFR DAN, Palestinian Territories: A Palestinian teenager died Thursday during clashes with Zionist forces in the occupied West Bank that broke out as the military was pursuing targets allegedly linked to a soldier's killing.

The Palestinian health ministry identified the victim as Uday Salah, 17, saying he was "killed by a bullet to the head fired by the Zionist occupation soldiers in Kafr Dan, Jenin governorate", an area that has seen near daily violence in recent months.

The Zionist army said its forces were "mapping out the homes of the terrorists who killed Major Bar Falah", who was shot dead at a checkpoint north of Jenin in pre-dawn clashes on Wednesday. Two Palestinian, Ahmed Abed and Abdul Rahman Abed, also died in Wednesday's violence.

The army added that the aim of the mapping exercise was "to examine the possibility of demolishing the residences of the terrorists," who killed Falah, part of Zionist's controversial practice of destroying the homes of Palestinian fighters accused of deadly attacks.

"During the mapping process, armed suspects hurled explosive devices and Molotov cocktails and fired toward the soldiers," the statement said. "In

response, the soldiers fired toward the suspects. Hits were identified."

Palestinian news agency Wafa reported that soldiers had raided the family homes of both Ahmed and Abdul Rahman Abed, and arrested "Amer Taha Abed, who is the cousin of the martyr Ahmed Abed". The army said that "two suspects were apprehended for assisting the terrorists who shot Major Bar Falah." It said six more suspects were arrested in other West Bank locations.

Hamas, the militant movement that rules Gaza, "saluted" the "heroes of Jenin who fought tonight," praising Palestinians who "stand up to the daily raids by the occupation throughout the occupied West Bank."

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, the armed wing of Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas's secular

Fatah movement, said its fighters were involved in Thursday's clashes. The same movement had claimed responsibility for the Zionist major's death on Wednesday.

Jenin has suffered frequent violence in recent months, part of a deadly flare-up that began in mid-March following deadly attacks on Zionist targets, mostly by Palestinians. In response, Zionist entity



NETANYA: Mother (C) of slain Zionist Major Bar Falah, killed overnight during operational activity adjacent to the Gilboa Crossing, mourns during his funeral in the coastal city of Netanya. —AFP

has launched near nightly raids on West Bank towns and cities that have killed dozens of Palestinians, including fighters.

Last week, Zionist army chief Aviv Kohavi said

"around 1,500 wanted people were arrested and hundreds of attacks prevented" in the operations. Zionist has occupied the West Bank since 1967 when it captured the territory from Jordan. — AFP



Hamas saluted heroes of Jenin

Welsh turn against Prince William's new title

CAERNARFON, United Kingdom: The faded photo shows two tiny but unmistakable figures atop Wales' imposing Caernarfon Castle, a snapshot taken by a schoolgirl in 1969 that captured a moment in history. "He came to stand on this balcony here with his mum," says Maria Sarnacki, holding up the picture in front of the balcony where Queen Elizabeth II and the newly anointed Charles, Prince of Wales, greeted the crowds.

"It was an amazing day. I was convinced she was pointing and waving to me-being a little girl of 11 it was like something you see in films," adds Sarnacki, now 66. The investiture of the now King Charles III as Prince of Wales by his mother in an archaic ritual in the magnificent 13th century castle was watched by millions of people around the world live on television.

"But I don't think there's a purpose for it any more," says Sarnacki, who is now mayor of the mountain-fringed town on Wales' north coast. Charles's investiture may be the last at the castle, with growing opposition to any similar ceremony for his son William, whom he named Prince of Wales last week.

The queen's death has also sparked calls for the centuries-old title to be scrapped altogether, as nationalist sentiment swells in Wales and other parts of the United Kingdom. Almost 25,000 people have signed a petition to scrap the title as an "insult to Wales and a symbol of historical oppression".

'Divided'

"There is mixed opinion. A lot of people don't want



SANDRINGHAM, United Kingdom: Britain's Prince William, Prince of Wales poses for a selfie photograph as he chats with well-wishers outside Norwich Gate on the Sandringham Estate in Sandringham. — AFP

the title Prince of Wales because they think it should be a Welsh person," said Sarnacki. The Welsh dragon flag and the British Union Jack fly together at half mast over the castle following the queen's death, but Caernarfon's royal history does not make it royalist.

"Opinion would be very much divided" about proclaiming William Prince of Wales, said Geraint Thomas, 49, who runs a photographic gallery in Caernarfon. The town boasts the highest percentage in Wales of people who can speak Welsh-which Charles spent a term at university trying to learn before his investiture.

While children play with toy spears in the castle courtyard, which is now a UNESCO world heritage site, the bloody history of England and Wales has never been forgotten here. The title Prince of Wales was originally used by native princes, but the last, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, was killed in 1282 during the conquest of Wales by England's King Edward I. —AFP

of Reyhanli, the 42-year-old recounted finding himself standing on thick layer of the kind of salt used to de-ice roads in winter.

"I looked to my right and there were four or five bodies," he said. "They looked a bit like me," Moatassef said, describing how their skeletal limbs and scabies-covered skin matched his own emaciated body. "They looked like they had been mummified." He said he still wonders why he was taken to the makeshift mortuary, on the day of his release, May 27, 2014, but guessed that "it might have been just to scare us".

Black hole

The ADMSP, after extensive research on the infamous prison, dates the opening of the first salt room to 2013, one of the deadliest years in the conflict. "We found that there were at least two salt rooms used for the bodies of those who died under torture, from sickness or hunger," the group's co-founder Diab Serriya said during an interview in the Turkish city of Gaziantep.

It was not clear whether both rooms existed at the same time, nor whether they are still being used today. Serriya explained that when a detainee died, his body would typically be left inside the cell with the inmates for two to five days before being taken to a salt room. The corpses remained there until there were enough of them for a truckload. The next stop was a military hospital where death certificates-often declaring a "heart attack" as the cause of death-were issued, before mass burials.

The salt rooms were meant to "preserve the bodies, contain the stench... and protect the guards and prison staff from bacteria and infections," Serriya explained. US-based professor of anatomy Joy Balta, who has published extensively on human body preservation techniques, explained how salt could be used as a simple and cheap alternative to cold rooms. "Salt has the ability to dehydrate any living tissue ... and can therefore be used to significantly slow down the decomposition process," he told AFP.

A body can remain in salt without decomposing longer than in a purpose-built refrigerated chamber, "although it will alter the surface anatomy," said Balta, who founded the Anatomy Learning Institute at Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego. The ancient Egyptians are known to have used the mummification

Spain arrests Europe's biggest money launderers

THE HAGUE, Netherlands: Police have arrested "one of Europe's biggest money launderers" after a raid in southern Spain, saying the British-Irish suspect is believed to have shifted more than 200 million euros (\$200 million) in illicit cash.

The operation led by Spain's Guardia Civil and coordinated by Europol is seen as a major blow against the notorious Kinahan organised crime group, which US law officials called "a threat to the entire licit economy".

The chief suspect in the case was detained Monday "as a result of an international law enforcement operation led by the Spanish Guardia Civil", Europol said. "Two of his associates were also arrested in Spain, and one in the United Kingdom," Europol said in a statement on Thursday.

Europol did not name the suspect, but a source close to the investigation and Irish newspapers said he was John Francis Morrissey, 62, a known associate of the notorious Kinahan gang.

Based out of Dubai, the Kinahan crime group-led among others by Irishman Daniel Kinahan-smuggles deadly narcotics, including cocaine, to Europe, and is a threat to the entire licit economy through its role in international money laundering," US Treasury Department Under Secretary Brain E Nelson said.

Morrissey peddled a brand of vodka along Spain's tourist-heavy Costa del Sol, allegedly to disguise his white-washing activities, law officials said. He also worked as an enforcer for the Kinahan car-

tel and helped with drug shipments from South America.

Morrissey "and his associates were in charge of collecting large amounts of cash from criminal organisations, which they would then 'deliver' to other criminal organisations in other countries," said Europol. Using the so-called hawala underground banking system, which works on the base of face-to-face transactions, "it is believed that the suspects have laundered over 200 million euros using this method", Europol said.

'High-value target'

Morrissey "is one of our high-value targets", Europol spokeswoman Claire Georges told AFP. "His arrest followed a complex investigation," she said. The probe was led by the Spanish Guardia Civil, who worked with the British National Crime Agency, Dutch police, the Irish Garda and Europol, which coordinated the international operation.

Earlier this year the US Treasury Department sanctioned the Kinahan crime family, as well as Morrissey and several other alleged associates of the group. Morrissey was "designated for materially assisting, sponsoring, or providing financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, the Kinahan group", the US Treasury Department said in April.

Employed as a "brand ambassador" for Nero Drinks, a British-based company that makes a premium vodka, Morrissey was "heavily invested in the company", it added. Morrissey however has given "a significant portion of the business to Daniel Kinahan to compensate for loads of drugs seized by law enforcement", the US Treasury Department said. "The main members of the organisation in Spain had created a brand of vodka promoted in nightclubs and restaurants in the Costa del Sol to disguise the source of their earnings," said Europol. — AFP

Syria former prisoners...

Continued from Page 1

Speaking in his small rental flat in an unfinished building, he recounted the day he was thrown into the salt room, which served as his holding cell ahead of a military court hearing. "My first thought was: may God have no mercy on them!" he said. "They have all this salt but don't put any in our food! "Then I stepped on something cold. It was someone's leg."

'My heart died'

Up to 100,000 people have died in Syrian regime prisons since 2011, a fifth of the war's entire death toll, according to Britain-based monitoring group the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Abdo, fortunate to have survived, described the salt room on the first floor of the red building as a rectangle of roughly six by eight meters, with a rudimentary toilet in a corner. "I thought this would be my fate: I would be executed and killed," he said, recalling how he curled up in a corner, crying and reciting verses from the Quran. The guard eventually returned to escort him to the court, and Abdo lived to tell the tale.

On his way out of the room, he had noticed a pile of body bags near the door. Like tens of thousands of others, he had been jailed on blanket terrorism charges. He was released in 2020 but says the experience scarred him for life. "This was the hardest thing I ever experienced," he said. "My heart died in Sednaya. If someone announced the death of my brother right now, I wouldn't feel anything." Around 30,000 people are thought to have been held at Sednaya alone since the start of the conflict. Only 6,000 were released.

Most of the others are officially considered missing because death certificates rarely reach the families unless relatives pay an exorbitant bribe, in what has become a major racket. AFP interviewed another former inmate, Moatassef Abdel Sater, who recounted a similar experience in 2014, in a different first-floor cell of around four by five meters, with no toilet. Speaking at his new home in the Turkish town

process, which includes the immersion of the body in a salt solution called natron. The tons of rock salt used in Sednaya are thought to have come from Sabkhat al-Jabal, Syria's largest salt flats, in Aleppo province. The report by ADMSP is the most thorough study yet of the structure of Sednaya, which has manufactured death on a terrifying scale for years. It provides detailed schematics of the facility and of how duties were split between various army units and wardens. "The regime wants Sednaya to be a black hole, no-one is allowed to know anything about it," Serriya said. "Our report denies them that."

'Salt was a treasure'

The fighting in Syria's brutal war has ebbed over the past three years, but Assad and the prison that has become a monument to his bloody rule are still there. New layers to the horror of the war are still being uncovered as survivors abroad share their stories, and investigations into regime crimes by foreign courts fuel a drive for accountability.

"If a political transition ever occurs in Syria," said Serriya, "we want Sednaya to be turned into a museum, like Auschwitz." Prisoners recall that, aside from torture and disease, their biggest torment was hunger. Moatassef said his weight more than halved, from 98 kilograms when he was jailed in 2011 to 42 kilograms when he got out.

The ex-inmates also see as a sickening irony the fact that the salt they craved so badly formed an integral part of the horrific death machine that was decimating them. The wheat, rice and potatoes they were sometimes fed were always cooked without salt, or sodium chloride, a lack of which can have serious health impacts on the human body. Low sodium levels in the blood can cause nausea, dizziness and muscle cramps and, if sustained, coma and death.

Detainees used to soak olive pits in their water to salt it, and would even spend hours sifting through laundry detergent to pick out tiny crystals which they treated like a delicacy. Former inmate Qais Murad recounted how, on a summer day in 2013, he was called out of his cell to see his parents, but on his way to the visitation area was shoved into a room. Inside, he stepped on something like grit on the floor. Kneeling with his bowed head against the wall, he caught a glimpse of guards dumping around 10 bodies behind him. —AFP

TikTok 'search results' rife with misinformation

SAN FRANCISCO: TikTok is serving up misinformation to users searching for news about politics, climate change, COVID-19, the war in Ukraine and more, according to a report released Wednesday. Toxicity and false claims are a "significant threat" at TikTok, which is becoming a go-to online venue for young people to search for information, according to a study by NewsGuard, a media watchdog.

NewsGuard describes itself as a "journalism and technology tool" that rates the credibility of websites and online information. "Even when TikTok's search results yielded little to no misinformation, the results were often more polarizing than Google's," NewsGuard said of its findings. NewsGuard in September analyzed the top 20 results from 27 TikTok searches on news topics, finding that 19.5 percent of the videos suggested contained false or misleading claims, the report stated.

Researchers said that they compared TikTok and Google results from searches for information about school shootings, abortion, COVID-19, US elections, Russia's war on the Ukraine and other news. False or misleading claims in results included conspiracy theories promoted by QAnon and supposed home recipes for hydroxychloroquine, a prescription drug used to treat malaria and lupus, according to NewsGuard. TikTok says the methodology used in the analysis is flawed, and that it makes a priority of fighting misinformation.

"Our Community Guidelines make clear that we do not allow harmful misinformation, including medical misinformation, and we will remove it from the platform," a TikTok spokesperson said in response to an AFP inquiry. "We partner with credible voices to elevate authoritative content on topics related to public health, and partner with independent fact-checkers who help us to assess the accuracy of content." —AFP

International

Typhoon Muifa lashes eastern China, forcing 1.6 million from their homes

Giant waves seen crashing onto the coastline in Hangzhou bay

SHANGHAI, China: High winds and heavy rain lashed China's densely populated east coast on Thursday, after Typhoon Muifa forced around 1.6 million people to leave their homes and grounded most flights at Shanghai's main airports.

Muifa is the strongest tropical cyclone to hit Shanghai-home to more than 25 million people-since record-keeping began in 1949, state broadcaster CCTV said. However, there were no immediate reports of any deaths or casualties.



Air travel slowly resumed in Shanghai

At least 426,000 people were evacuated in Shanghai and another 1.2 million people were taken to temporary shelters in neighbouring Zhejiang province, CCTV added. Heavy rainfall led to traffic tailbacks and floods in several areas of the Yangtze river delta region, a major global manufacturing hub.

Giant waves were seen crashing onto the coastline in Hangzhou bay, to the south of Shanghai, and national radio reported a landslide in Ninghai county in Zhejiang province. Packing winds of up to 125 kilometres (78 miles) per hour, the storm made landfall at 12:30 am Thursday (1630 GMT Wednesday) in Shanghai's Fengxian district.

It had earlier led to the cancellation of all flights to China's biggest financial hub. Muifa previously hit the city of Zhoushan in Zhejiang on Wednesday, according to state news agency Xinhua. Air travel slowly resumed in Shanghai as the storm moved north, but most flights from the city's two main airports were cancelled Thursday morning, according to aviation data provider Flightradar24. Operations at some of



HANGZHOU, China: People watch waves generated by Typhoon Muifa breaking along the coast in Hangzhou in China's eastern Zhejiang province. — AFP

Asia's largest container shipping ports in Shanghai and neighbouring Ningbo that were halted because of the typhoon were scheduled to resume later Thursday, according to statements from port officials.

Officials ordered all fishing vessels in the Yellow Sea and Bohai Sea to anchor in ports as northeast China braced for the typhoon. The storm entered east China's Jiangsu province on Thursday morning and the wind speed weakened to about 90 kilometres (56 miles) per hour, the Central Meteorological

Observatory said.

The storm came soon after Typhoon Hinnamnor hit Shanghai and its neighbouring region last week, causing the suspension of Shanghai ferry services and school closures in parts of Zhejiang. Muifa is the 12th typhoon to hit China this year, according to state media. Tropical storms, which are expected to increase as the planet warms, were sharply up in 2021, a report by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said earlier this month. — AFP

Pakistan court bails ex-PM Khan's aide

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan: A Pakistan court granted bail Thursday to former prime minister Imran Khan's close aide, whose arrest and alleged torture led to the ex-leader facing charges of his own in the high-stakes legal case.

Shahbaz Gill, an official in Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, was arrested last month over comments about the nation's all-powerful army, which acts as a political kingmaker. Gill said on TV that junior officers should not follow orders that violate "the will of the majority", but he was detained soon after on charges of sedition "tantamount to inciting the rank and file of armed forces towards revolt".

Since then Khan has been charged under the anti-terrorism act, and with contempt of court, after criticising the magistrate who signed off on Gill's detention-claiming she kept him in custody despite knowing he was being tortured by police.

The byzantine case against Khan could see him barred from high office if it results in a conviction. Pakistan's courts are often used to tie up lawmakers in tedious and long-winding proceedings that rights monitors have criticised for stifling political opposition.

Gill's lawyer Salman Safdar told AFP the Islamabad high court granted him bail on Thursday morning, with a bond of 500,000 rupees (\$2,000). "We are waiting for court's orders, and he will be released later today," he said.

Khan is set to be indicted on contempt charges at the Islamabad High Court on September 22, and has been bailed until September 20 on separate charges by the Anti-Terrorism Court. The former cricket superstar swept to power in 2018, supported by an electorate weary of dynastic politics and a promise to sweep away decades of entrenched corruption and cronyism. But under his rule the economy slipped backwards and he lost support from the nation's military. — AFP



ISLAMABAD, Pakistan: Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan (C) arrives to appear before the Anti-Terrorism Court in Islamabad. — AFP

US Senate takes first step to provide military aid to Taiwan

WASHINGTON, United States: A Senate committee took the first step Wednesday toward the United States directly providing billions of dollars in military aid to Taiwan and making ties more official, ramping up support following soaring tensions with Beijing.

The United States has for decades sold weapons to Taiwan but the new legislation will go further by providing US security assistance to the tune of \$4.5 billion over four years, a move that has infuriated Beijing.

It also lays out sanctions on China should it use force to try to seize the island. With support from both parties, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved the Taiwan Policy Act, billed as the most sweeping upgrade of the relationship since the United States switched recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979.

US lawmakers moved ahead on the act amid heightened worries for Taiwan after Russia invaded Ukraine and following a visit to Taipei by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, which prompted China to stage major military exercises seen as a trial run for an invasion.

Senator Bob Menendez, who leads the committee and is a member of President Joe Biden's Democratic Party, said that the United States "does not seek war or heightened tensions with Beijing" but needs to be "clear-eyed."

"We are carefully and strategically lowering the existential threats facing Taiwan by raising the cost of taking the island by force so that it becomes too high a risk and unachievable," Menendez said. Senator Jim Risch, the top Republican on the committee, said it was "imperative we take action now to bolster Taiwan's self-defense before it's too late." The bill still must clear the full Senate and House. The White House has not said whether President Joe Biden will sign the bill, although the strong support it has may mean Congress could override any potential veto.

China slammed the bill on Thursday, saying it had lodged "solemn representations" with Washington over legislation it claimed "violates the one-China principle" and "sends serious wrong signals to Taiwan independence and separatist forces."

If the bill continues to move forward, "it will greatly shake the political foundation of China-US relations, and will have extremely serious consequences for ... peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait," China's foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a briefing. The office of Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen on Thursday said it expressed "sincere gratitude" to the United States "for once again demonstrating its bipartisan friendship and support for Taiwan."

Less ambiguous relationship

Under the act, the United States will still not diplomatically recognize Taiwan. China considers the island where the mainland's defeated nationalists fled in 1949 — to be its territory and strongly opposes any international legitimacy for Taipei, which has transformed into a vibrant democracy and major economic power.

But the new law would shed many of the runarounds and codewords that have been in place so as not to anger China by implying recognition. The de facto US embassy — now officially the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office — would be renamed the Taiwan Representative Office and the US government would be instructed to interact with Taiwan as it would with any government. The top US envoy in Taipei, now called the director of the American Institute in Taiwan, would be renamed the "representative" of the office and need confirmation by the Senate, as would a US ambassador. — AFP



YONAGUNI, Japan: Picture shows Chiyoki Tasato, a local activist who opposes the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) base on Yonaguni island, posing for a photo in his office following an interview with AFP. — AFP

Chinese moves on Taiwan rattle remote Japanese island

YONAGUNI, Japan: Life may seem tranquil on Japan's remote Yonaguni island, where wild horses graze and tourists dive to spot hammerhead sharks, but China's recent huge military exercises have rattled residents.

The western island is just 110 kilometres (70 miles) from Taiwan, and a Chinese missile fired during the drills last month landed not far from Yonaguni's shores. "Everyone is on edge," Shigenori Takenishi, head of the island's fishing association, told AFP.

"Even if we don't talk about it, we still have the memory of the fear we felt, of the shock." He told fishing boats to stay in port during the drills that followed US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in defiance of Beijing's warnings.

The incident was the latest reminder of how growing Chinese assertiveness has affected Yonaguni, shifting debate about a contentious military presence on the island. People used to say Yonaguni was defended by two guns, one for each policeman stationed there.

But since 2016, the island has hosted a base for Japan's army, the Self-Defense Forces, which was established despite initial objections from residents. The base for maritime and air surveillance is home to 170 soldiers, who with their families make up 15 percent of Yonaguni's population of 1,700.

An "electronic warfare" unit is also due to be installed there by March 2024. "When we see Chinese military activity today, we tell ourselves that we got our base just in time," Yonaguni's mayor Kenichi Itokazu told AFP. "We've succeeded in sending a message to China."

'Can they really help us?'

That view was not always held so widely on the island. Yonaguni is part of Okinawa prefecture, where resentment against military presence traditionally runs high. A quarter of the region's population perished in the World War II Battle of Okinawa in 1945, and it remained under US occupation until 1972.

Today, Okinawa hosts most of the US bases in

Japan. Yonaguni is closer to Taiwan, Seoul and even Beijing than the Japanese capital Tokyo. Conscious of its vulnerability, officials have built up a military presence on the Nansei island chain, which extends 1,200 kilometres from Japan's main islands to Yonaguni.

In addition to the security benefits, the government argued a base would bring economic windfalls to the 30-square-kilometre (11-square-mile) island. Local officials once felt that Yonaguni's economic future lay with Taiwan and other nearby commercial hubs, even campaigning to become a "special zone for inter-regional exchange".

But the government rejected that and instead began in 2007 to pave the way for the base. Support for the plan received a boost from a diplomatic crisis with Beijing in 2010, and by 2015, around 60 percent of Yonaguni's residents backed the base in a referendum.

Since then, Chinese sabre-rattling and a string of maritime incidents have helped solidify support. "Almost no one is against the base now," said Shigeru Yonahara, 60, a resident who supported the base.

There are holdouts though, including some who fear the base will instead make Yonaguni a target, particularly if China seeks to forcibly bring Taiwan under its control. "If there is a crisis, will they protect those living here? And can they really help us in the case of an invasion of Taiwan?" said Masakatsu Uehara, a 62-year-old fisherman.

'It's about deterrence'

Both backers and critics agree that the base has changed Yonaguni, including the radar facility's lights that compete with the starry sky over the island. A long-awaited incinerator that started operating last year was financed almost entirely by the defence ministry, and rent from the base helps pay for free lunches at the island's schools.

Yonaguni has no high school and limited employment. It saw decades of decline after its thriving commercial links with Taiwan were severed following World War II. Now, taxes paid by base residents account for a fifth of Yonaguni's revenue.

But not everyone sees the changes as positive, including municipal council member Chiyoki Tasato, who has long opposed the base. He resents the fact that Japanese army families can influence policy by voting in local elections, and argues the base's economic impact makes it hard for residents to speak freely on the issue. — AFP

Angola's Lourenco is to be sworn in after disputed win

LUANDA, Angola: Angolan President Joao Lourenco is to be sworn in for a second term on Thursday amid tight security after a disputed electoral win last month. The inauguration will be held on the historic palm tree-lined Praca da Republica square in the centre of the capital, Luanda.

Security forces set up a heavy cordon around the venue ahead of the ceremony, AFP correspondents saw, which the main opposition party said was aimed at stifling dissent. Around 20 military tanks were stationed at a large traffic circle, around a kilometre from the square.

Large numbers of police and military forces had started patrolling the streets on the eve of the ceremony. "This set up aims to intimidate citizens who want to demonstrate against the election results on the day of the inauguration of a president without legitimacy," the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) said in a statement.

The guest list for the ceremony is strictly by invitation and limited to some 15,000 selected Angolans and 50 foreign heads of state and government. State Minister Adao de Almeida told reporters. Lourenco, 68, returned to power after the August 24 vote gave his Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) a thin majority, winning just 51.17 percent of the votes.

The vote was to choose members of parliament, where the leader of largest party automatically ascends to the presidency. It was the MPLA's poorest showing in the oil-rich African country it has controlled since independence from Portugal in 1975.

UNITA — a former rebel movement which fought a bitter 27-year civil war against the MPLA government — made significant gains, earning 43.95 percent of the vote, up from 26.67 percent in 2017.

Opposition parties and civic groups say the vote was marred by irregularities. UNITA disputed the results in court but its appeal was tossed out. "Tomorrow I will stay at home. There are too many police forces around town," Joao, a high school student who only gave his first name, said Wednesday at a bus stop on the outskirts of Luanda. — AFP

Business

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2022

Ford unveils newest Mustang, extending gasoline-powered life

Launch event a morale boost for 'Motor City' in post-COVID era

DETROIT: Ford unveiled Wednesday its seventh-generation Mustang in a brash and boisterous launch event in downtown Detroit that pointed to the staying power of gasoline-powered vehicles.

The big reveal had been teased for months by company officials and organized as a celebration of the 58-year-old model. The event, organized for Ford employees and Mustang mavens, featured pulsating music, slickly produced videos on wide screens and a light projection of the brand's horse logo onto a city building that loomed in the background.

The 50-minute event culminated with the arrival of three sleek new sedans in different trims and, later, a fourth option, a racing vehicle called "Dark Horse" that was introduced dramatically by Ed Krenz, Ford's chief functional engineer for performance.

"Its name is indicative of its design and its aspirations," Krenz told a cheering crowd. "Its demeanor: absolutely sinister. Dark Horse is for the enthusiast who wants purebred force of nature."

Ford, which has dived into EV investment as much as any company in recent years, had refrained ahead of Wednesday from saying whether the new Mustang would be electric or gasoline-powered. But the company made no apologies for its choice to go with the internal combustion engine (ICE).

"Investing in another generation of Mustang is a big statement at a time when many of our competitors are exiting the business of internal combustion vehicles," said Jim Farley, CEO of Ford Motor Company in a press release.



DETROIT: US President Joe Biden speaks with Ford Motor Company Executive Chairman William Clay Ford Jr (second right) and President of the United Auto Workers Ray Curry during a tour of the Ford exhibit at the 2022 North American International Auto Show at Huntington Place Convention Center in Detroit, Michigan on September 14, 2022. — AFP photos



DETROIT: Crowds surround the new Ford Mustang Dark Horse following its debut at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit, Michigan on September 14, 2022.

adding that the company is "turbocharging" ICE growth even as it invests \$50 billion in EV growth through 2026.

Mustang brand manager Jim Owens said some customers prefer the "visceral" feeling of an ICE vehicle, adding that the company has already released an EV version of the Mustang, the Mach-E sport utility vehicle. "We know that there are customers out there in the sports car segment who still want the internal combustion engine," he told AFP in an interview before launch.

"There are a lot of late millennials and early Gen Zers who are into the sports car segment, and we think we have some wonderful things in here that are going

to draw them in," he said.

Rival muscle cars exit

The latest Mustang—once the inspiration for a Serge Gainsbourg song and seen in some 3,000 movies—features a "fighter jet-inspired" interior and performance features that make it "the most exhilarating and fun-to-drive yet," Ford said. The newest Mustang nods to earlier versions in its lighting and grille design, while also employing the latest in digital technology. This includes a key fob that lets drivers who love the sound of an engine revving satisfy their fix with the press of a button.

By extending the Mustang's run, Ford

runs counter to some other brands such as Dodge, which in August said it was phasing out its gasoline-powered muscle car models, the Challenger and the Charger. Ford's vehicle launch event also harked back to the spectacle of past car shows, even though the industry has been moving away from that marketing model in favor of online launches. The Detroit Auto Show of yore was known for stunts such as the 1992 arrival of the Jeep Grand Cherokee, which announced itself by crashing through glass.

For Wednesday's Mustang launch, Ford organized a "Stampede" of earlier Mustangs that caravaned from around the country to Hart Plaza in downtown

Detroit, creating an impressive row of Mustangs that went on for blocks. Participants were encouraged to participate in a best-dressed contest of "attire inspired by their favorite period in Mustang history, from the 1960s through today," with the first-place prize a two-year car lease for a new Mustang.

The event also appeared to be intended as a morale boost for "Motor City," where the auto show has been revived for the first time since 2019 after pandemic cancellations. Presenters repeatedly acknowledged the contribution of local Ford employees, especially at the nearby Flat Rock Assembly Plant, where the Mustang is built. —AFP

US industrial output dips on drop in electricity output

WASHINGTON: A drop in electric power generation and a modest uptick in manufacturing led to a small decline in overall US industrial production in August, the Federal Reserve said Thursday.

Total output slipped 0.2 percent, worse than economists expected, on the 2.3 percent drop in utilities, which was the second straight decline. Manufacturing edged up 0.1 percent, while mining output was flat after five consecutive months of gains, the report said.

Rubeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics noted the downside surprise in the data.

"Momentum in factory activity has slowed," she said. "Supply chain constraints and price pressures appear to be easing, which is a positive for manufacturing. "But factory activity is likely to moderate in response to slowing demand amid a rising interest rate backdrop," she added.

Production of vehicles and parts fell 1.4 percent, and the big gain in July was cut in half after revisions, the data showed. A 3.5 percent jump in petroleum output and a 2.1 percent increase in aerospace and other transportation equipment helped offset other losses, the report showed.

Overall industrial production is up 3.7 percent compared to August 2021, while manufacturing output is 3.3 percent higher, according to the figures. Industrial capacity in use slipped to 80 percent, from 80.2 percent, in the prior month, the report said.

Meanwhile, US consumers buying cars and going to restaurants and bars in August drove a surprise bounce in retail sales, even as spending on gasoline fell as prices at the pump dropped, according to government data Thursday. Americans flush with savings have been a key driver of the US pandemic recovery and the Federal Reserve is keeping a careful eye on economic data as it battles to quash red-hot inflation without tipping the world's largest economy into recession. Retail sales last month rose 0.3 percent compared to July, to \$683.3 billion, the Commerce Department said.

But while the headline gain was much better than the flat result economists had projected, the figure for July was revised down to show a 0.4 percent drop, so the August increase means the total remains below the level in June. The 3.0 percent jump in auto sales was the main factor behind the increase, and when that segment is excluded, retail sales would have declined 0.3 percent, according to the report. Gasoline stations saw sales drop 4.2 percent following weeks of declining energy costs.

US gas prices at the pump soared in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in late February, but in recent weeks have been trending down and have fallen by more than \$1 a gallon after hitting an all-time high of over \$5 in mid-June, squeezing family budgets.

Meanwhile, restaurants and bars rose 1.1 percent, as did building supplies, the report said, but online sales fell. "Households continue to spend, supported by strong job growth and rising nominal incomes. However, households face headwinds from elevated inflation that is not yet showing any significant sign of abating," said Farooqi.

The data are seasonally adjusted but do not take into account changes in prices, so as costs rise, a



WASHINGTON: Total industrial output in US slipped 0.2 percent on Thursday, worse than economists expected, on the 2.3 percent drop in utilities, which was the second straight decline.

shopping dollar does not stretch as far and American families have had to use more of their earnings on staple goods. The latest consumer price data showing widespread inflation has solidified expectations that the Federal Reserve will announce a third consecutive three-quarter-point interest rate increase at its policy meeting next week.

The central bank has raised the benchmark borrowing rate four times this year, including two massive three-quarter point increases in June and July after US annual inflation spiked to 9.1 percent in June. While the annual pace slowed to 8.3 percent in August, Fed officials have made it clear they will continue to hike borrowing costs until inflation moves down. —AFP

Crisis-hit Sri Lanka economy shrinks 8.4%

COLOMBO: Bankrupt Sri Lanka's economy shrank 8.4 percent year-on-year in the second quarter, official data showed Thursday, as the island nation's unprecedented financial crisis reached its peak.

Months of acute food, fuel and medicine shortages, extended blackouts and runaway inflation have plagued the country after it ran out of dollars to finance even the most essential imports.

Sri Lanka has defaulted on its \$51 billion foreign debt and in July angry protesters stormed the home of then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, with the leader subsequently fleeing the island before resigning. Industrial output fell by 10 percent in the June quarter while the agricultural sector contracted by 8.4 percent, according to Sri Lanka's statistics department.

Thursday's figures follow a 1.6 percent contraction in the first quarter with the economy already

weakened in 2021 by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sri Lanka's central bank expects the country's economy to shrink by eight percent this year, with inflation running at over 64 percent and the rupee losing nearly half of its value against the dollar since January. Shortages pummeled the economy after the government ran out of foreign currency to finance essential imports. The pandemic was a hammer-blow to the island's tourism industry and dried up remittances from Sri Lankans working abroad—both key foreign exchange earners.

Rajapaksa's government was accused of introducing unsustainable tax cuts that drove up government debt and exacerbated the country's economic woes. Chinese debt, accounting for about 10 percent of Sri Lanka's external borrowings, is also partly blamed for the crisis. The latest data was released on the same day Sri Lanka opened its white elephant Lotus Tower, a \$113-million observation deck built with Chinese loans, to the public.

At the peak of Sri Lanka's petrol supply problems, motorists had to wait for weeks to top up, although strict fuel rationing has since shortened queues. The UN warned in August that at least half of Sri Lanka's child population was in urgent need of support to prevent malnutrition. Authorities have



COLOMBO: Members of police personnel visit the observation deck of the Sri Lankan 'white elephant' Chinese-built Lotus Tower after it was opened for public in Colombo on September 15, 2022. — AFP

hiked taxes and taken the axe to fuel and electricity subsidies to raise revenue and qualify for an International Monetary Fund bailout, which was conditionally approved earlier this month. —AFP

Tesla hits breaks on slated battery factory in Germany

NEW YORK: Tesla has paused plans to make battery cells in Germany as it looks to qualify for tax breaks for electric vehicle (EV) and battery manufacturers in the United States, the Wall Street Journal reported.

Manufacturing batteries domestically could make the Texas-based electric car maker eligible for tax credits under the newly passed Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Signed into law in August, the IRA sets sourcing requirements for federal EV subsidies meant to prod automakers into using EV batteries produced in North America as well as critical materials sourced from North America or countries with which the United States has a free trade agreement.

Buyers can also benefit from a \$7,500 tax credit for purchasing an EV, provided that the car's final assembly is carried out in North America and that the raw materials for the batteries are sourced in the same region. The Journal cited sources familiar with the matter as saying Tesla has discussed shipping cell-making equipment meant for use at its factory near the German capital to the United States.

Tesla had previously planned to build a battery factory in Germany, in addition to the existing car factory near Berlin, with the possibility of some of the batteries being sent to the United States.

The company led by billionaire Elon Musk is studying the implications of the new US law and is postponing its project in Germany until then, according to the Wall Street Journal sources.

Tesla did not immediately respond to a request for comment from AFP. The company is studying the possibility of building a lithium refinery in Texas and is seeking tax breaks from the state to complete the project. It sent an application to the Texas Comptroller at the end of August, a few days after the IRA was passed.

The finished product, battery-grade lithium hydroxide, would be shipped by road and rail to various Tesla battery plants throughout the United States, the application said. Tesla said it was "still evaluating the feasibility of this project" and is also studying the possibility of building a similar site in the state of Louisiana as an alternative. —AFP

Business

US rail companies, unions reach 'tentative' deal to avert strike

Agreement important win for our economy and American people: Biden

WASHINGTON: US rail companies and unions have reached a "tentative" deal to avert a major strike over the weekend, US President Joe Biden said in a statement on Thursday. "The tentative agreement reached tonight is an important win for our economy and the American people," the statement on the White House website said.

"These rail workers will get better pay, improved working conditions, and peace of mind around their health care costs: all hard-earned," it added.

The strike had threatened to disrupt travel and supply chains two months before crucial midterm elections. Pressure had been growing on both sides to reach a deal, with national rail operator Amtrak canceling passenger routes in anticipation of disruption as farmers and retailers warned of supply chain chaos.

The announcement came after freight railroad companies and two unions representing mainly train conductors had been called to a meeting at the Labor Department in Washington on Wednesday in an effort to avert a strike on Friday at midnight. "I thank the unions and rail companies for negotiating in good faith and reaching a tentative agreement that will keep our critical rail system working and avoid disruption of our economy," Biden said. Biden regularly expresses strong support for workers but is also struggling to avoid further economic damage ahead of midterm congressional elections in early November.

Voters already are worried about soaring prices in the post-pandemic economy, where supply chain issues have been a constant scourge and annual inflation has surged to a 40-year high. The Association of American Railroads had warned that a strike would bring 7,000 trains to a halt, costing \$2 billion a day.

'No real substitute'

"Moments ago, following more than 20 consecutive hours of negotiations at @USDOL, the rail companies and union negotiators came to a tentative agreement that balances the needs of workers, businesses, and our nation's economy," tweeted US Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh.

Biden in July appointed an arbitration panel to facilitate the discussions and head off a work stoppage. Farmers and retailers had warned that a strike would hit US supply chains already battered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"There is no real substitute for moving agricultural goods," American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall said Wednesday. The National Retail



WASHINGTON: Amtrak trains travel through Washington, DC, on September 15, 2022. US rail companies and unions have reached a "tentative" deal to avert a major strike over the weekend, US President Joe Biden said in a statement on September 15. — AFP

Federation called freight rail "critical to the retail supply chain." "The timing coincides directly with peak shipping season for the winter holidays, and a rail strike at this juncture would be just one more significant, inflationary shock to an economy that is already reeling," warned NRF CEO Matthew Shay ahead of Biden's announcement.

Any strike would be bad news for Biden, who regularly expresses strong support for workers but is also struggling to avoid further economic damage ahead of key midterm congressional elections in early November. Voters already are worried about soaring prices in the post-pandemic economy, where supply chain issues have been a constant scourge and annual inflation has surged to a 40-year high.

"The president and members of cabinet have been in touch with both unions and companies involved multiple times in order to try to avert a rail shutdown," White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre said in a briefing Wednesday.

"All parties need to stay at the table, bargain in good faith to resolve outstanding issues and come to an agreement," she said. "A shutdown of our freight system rail system is an unacceptable outcome for our economy of the American people, and all parties must work to avoid just that." — AFP

Fuel prices jump in Kenya after subsidies cut

NAIROBI: Fuel prices in Kenya surged to record highs on Thursday after the new government slashed subsidies, piling on misery for a population already facing deep economic hardship.

The price of petrol increased by 20 shillings to 179.30 (about \$1.50) per litre while diesel and kerosene prices are up by 20 and 25 shillings respectively, the Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority (EPRA) said. The new price regime that will remain in force until October 14 was announced shortly after Kenya's new President William Ruto took office on Tuesday vowing to scrap food and fuel subsidies.

"The interventions in place have not borne any fruit," Ruto said in his inauguration speech.

Kenya is reeling from the global surge in crude oil prices and last year introduced measures to cushion

consumers from the high retail prices. It has so far spent 144 billion shillings (\$1.2 billion) — about 86 percent of tourism earnings this year-to subsidize fuel, according to government figures.

Ruto lambasted the policies of his predecessor Uhuru Kenyatta, saying they gobbled up billions of shillings with no impact. "In addition to being very costly, consumption subsidy interventions are prone to abuse, they distort markets and create uncertainty, including artificial shortages of the very products being subsidized," he said. Under the new prices announced by EPRA, the subsidy for petrol has been removed while those for diesel and kerosene have been reduced. Kenya is the most dynamic economy in East Africa but many are suffering financial hardship with about a third of the population living in poverty.

Prices for basic goods skyrocketed in the wake of COVID pandemic and the war in Ukraine, and unemployment remains a major problem, particularly among the young. Inflation soared to a 65-month high of 8.5 percent in August, while the currency is at record lows at around 120 shillings to against the dollar.

There are fears the new fuel price increases could see public service providers hike fares and further add to cost of living pressures. — AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
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KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2022

(965) 22 675 140
Al-Safat Tower, Hawalli, Beirut St.
alsafatinvest.com
research@alsafatinvest.com
alsafatinvestment
al-safat-investment-company

No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance											Valuation Multiples *			
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	1,035	1,035	1,041	1,031	10	22,714,332	5	0.49%	9.00%	1,030	1,038	18.8	2.02	2.3%	0.99
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	340	338	341	332	9	15,518,269	0	0.00%	27.20%	330	338	19.1	1.58	2.0%	1.19
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	212	211	215	211	4	3,780,763	-2	-0.94%	0.66%	209	212	33.7	0.67	1.8%	1.18
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	240	241	243	238	5	8,544,225	1	0.42%	0.82%	238	242	20.5	0.89	2.0%	1.31
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	885	900	904	872	32	67,250,478	16	1.81%	18.99%	890	902	30.3	3.82	1.2%	1.18
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	811	820	823	803	20	4,606,791	12	1.49%	15.11%	813	822	54.2	3.32	0.5%	1.08
204	National Investments	Financial Services	282	290	295	281	14	4,350,908	9	3.20%	32.42%	289	296	11.0	1.16	15.4%	1.75
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	159	152	159	150	9	15,557,403	-5	-3.18%	7.04%	148	153	86.1	0.82	3.2%	0.96
252	Al Intiaz Investment	Financial Services	92	90.3	92	90.2	1.8	1,908,438	-1.4	-1.53%	-23.47%	90	95	-	0.53	9.9%	1.16
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	123	120	125	118	7	16,354,028	-1	-0.83%	-30.95%	119	124	15.0	0.90	2.4%	1.02
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	850	910	910	840	70	6,485,228	65	7.69%	21.64%	875	910	18.3	1.97	1.5%	1.13
501	National Industries	Financial Services	266	264	269	261	8	24,926,828	1	0.38%	9.56%	264	270	6.1	1.11	4.2%	1.44
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,392	1,345	1,407	1,331	76	283,882	-46	-3.31%	54.42%	1,319	1,350	12.8	1.28	4.3%	0.86
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	900	907	912	894	18	307,232	7	0.78%	6.46%	900	915	10.2	1.84	6.7%	0.93
526	Al Qurain	Basic Materials	316	310	317	310	7	1,483,725	-8	-2.52%	-10.66%	304	313	12.1	0.78	5.7%	1.01
603	Agility	Industrials	811	803	815	795	20	19,402,482	-4	-0.50%	1.97%	788	805	62.2	1.38	2.1%	1.45
605	Zain	Telecommunications	591	591	599	590	9	17,452,489	3	0.51%	-0.67%	589	585	14.2	2.18	5.5%	0.84
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,349	3,250	3,478	3,250	228	921,797	-67	-2.02%	0.81%	3,229	3,250	7.9	3.78	11.7%	0.69
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	192	191	192	189	3	396,408	1	0.53%	-12.39%	184	195	NULL	0.70	0.0%	1.14
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,910	1,792	1,955	1,750	205	4,758,203	-98	-5.19%	38.91%	1,780	1,820	14.8	13.24	2.5%	1.36
818	Ahli United Bank	Banking	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20.68%	-	-	17.9	2.04	2.8%	1.78
821	Warba Bank	Banking	245	244	249	244	5	15,992,747	-1	-0.41%	-10.95%	243	249	29.4	1.36	0.0%	1.07
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	417	409	419	408	11	3,639,947	-5	-1.21%	-29.17%	405	432	42.3	1.21	3.8%	0.45
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	407	390	409	381	28	1,691,576	-11	-2.74%	5.41%	380	390	30.4	1.64	2.5%	0.76
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	205	204	205	201	4	2,214,962	-1	-0.49%	-10.53%	201	205	15.5	2.28	8.9%	0.47
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,325	2,377	2,379	2,295	84	314,790	50	2.15%	17.67%	2,350	2,439	24.8	7.99	2.8%	0.76
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	832	812	836	810	26	1,544,712	-27	-3.22%	-	800	830	12.8	3.78	-	0.72

* As of end of week closing

Business

Al-Shall Weekly Economic Report

Another discount rate hike on cards in Kuwait: Analysts

Global inflation scenario could prompt Kuwait CB to go in for a 0.75% rate hike

KUWAIT: The decision to raise the basic interest rate on the US dollar took effect on September 21, 2022. Now the debate is not on the inevitable raise for the 5th time during the current year but on its rate itself, whether it will be 0.5 percent or 0.75 percent as in last July. Most analysts believe that the raise will be 0.75 percent due to the news and analyses about the high inflation rates prevalent in the US, the UK and the European Union.

The driving factor behind the rate policy in those countries is primarily the prevailing inflation scenario. The target underlying the interest rate hike is either increasing the demand cost on funds, which means reducing their availability for consumption and investment and their repercussions, or the opposite which is curbing their availability to operate the economy, ie the economic growth. Those countries experienced two-digit inflation and coexisted with deep economic stagnation in the 1980s, one of the worst eras for the global economy in its modern history.

A similar era will likely recur in the 2020s. If that happens, the obsession of the monetary and financial policy-makers will be the choice between the bad and the worse. What provides us with some hope is that the international monetary and financial administrations have experienced and

benefited from the 1980s experience: this will enable them to exit from the current crisis with the lowest costs similar to the post-2008 events versus 1929 (The Great Depression).

In fact it is the concern of the advanced economies but not the concern of Gulf countries though their choices to act in tandem with the interest rate on the US dollar are limited. In July 2022 increase, the five GCC states, whose currencies are pegged to the US dollar, raised their interest rate by 0.75 percent, similar to the US dollar, not out of fear of inflation or concern about development but to halt a likely exodus of depositors in their currencies to the US dollar as long as their currencies' exchange rates versus the dollar are fixed.

Kuwait has some flexibility in its monetary policy because it pegs the Kuwaiti dinar with a basket of hard currencies though the dollar's weight is dominant. Therefore, it raised the discount rate on the Kuwaiti dinar by half a point twice. The flexibility margin between the interest rate on the US dollar and that on the Kuwaiti dinar shrank to 0.25-0.50 in favor of the Kuwaiti dinar, making the CBK flexibility margin very meager. Accordingly, we believe that Kuwait will raise the interest rate equal to that of the US dollar unless the CBK has supporting tools and policies with unknown efficiency.



KUWAIT: According to monetary analysts, Kuwait Central Bank is expected to raise deposit rates in tune with the central banks around the world in view of the global inflation. —File photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Schiphol CEO quits over Amsterdam airport chaos

AMSTERDAM: Amsterdam's Schiphol airport chief executive Dick Benschop announced Thursday he was stepping down following months of continual chaos at one of Europe's largest transport hubs, plagued by long queues and baggage handling issues.

Benschop's announcement comes as the continent's second-largest airport again on Monday asked airlines to cancel flights and passengers had to stand in line for hours before catching flights.

"There is a lot of attention, and also criticism, for the way in which Schiphol is tackling the problems and for my responsibility as CEO," Benschop said in a statement. "I am making room on my own initiative to give Schiphol the space to make a new start," he said.

Benschop, a former top manager at Shell and deputy minister announced his resignation at a meeting of the airport's supervisory board on Wednesday night. "He will remain in his function until a successor has been appointed," Schiphol added in the statement. Benschop last month blamed the long queues over the summer, which saw numerous passengers miss flights despite arriving hours ahead of departure-on staff shortages as the airline industry struggles to recover in the aftermath of the COVID pandemic. Baggage handlers earlier this year walked off the job in a wildcat strike and lost and unclaimed luggage remains a problem. The airport reduced passenger numbers since July in an effort to bring down waiting times.

Schiphol also paid staff bonuses for the busy summer months, but those are set to finish at the end of September. "Improvements have been made over the summer, but these are not enough," said Jaap Winter, who chairs Schiphol's supervisory board. He warned further limitations on capacity may be necessary. "As a national and international airport, Schiphol must return to the level of quality that passengers and airlines are accustomed to," Winter said.

Passenger numbers at Schiphol plummeted from over 70 million in 2019 to 20.8 million in 2020, the first year of the pandemic and to 23 million last year. In August however 5.2 million passengers passed through Schiphol's gates, as opposed to 3.8 million last year and 1.8 million in 2020. —AFP

France's EDF faces \$29 billion hit from nuclear woes

PARIS: French state energy firm EDF said Thursday that lower electricity production due to stoppages of nuclear reactors would sap its operating profit by 29 billion euros (\$29 billion) in 2022, worse than previously forecast. Almost half of France's reactor fleet is offline for maintenance pushed back during the coronavirus crisis, or because of problems with corrosion uncovered in some emergency cooling systems.

The company now estimates it will produce "on the low end of a range between 280-300 terawatt-hours" of electricity from its nuclear plants this year, well short of the 360 TWh generated in 2021. The financial hit is five billion euros higher than the previous estimate of 24 billion euros.

While 26 of EDF's 56 reactors are currently offline, EDF executive director Cedric Lewandowski told lawmakers Wednesday that five should restart in September, five more in October and seven in November, with the rest online by February. But the firm still forecasts nuclear output below 2021 levels in 2023 and 2024. Fearing shortages in case of a cold winter ahead, Paris has struck a natural gas-for-electricity deal with Berlin, which is more dependent on the fossil fuel that traditional supplier Russia has cut following its invasion of Ukraine. —AFP

TikTok search results rife with misinformation

SAN FRANCISCO: TikTok is serving up misinformation to users searching for news about politics, climate change, COVID-19, the war in Ukraine and more, according to a report released Wednesday.

Toxicity and false claims are a "significant threat" at TikTok, which is becoming a go-to online venue for young people to search for information, according to a study by NewsGuard, a media watchdog.

NewsGuard describes itself as a "journalism and technology tool" that rates the credibility of websites and online information. "Even when TikTok's search results yielded little to no misinformation, the results were often more polarizing than Google's," NewsGuard said of its findings.

NewsGuard in September analyzed the top 20 results from 27 TikTok searches on news topics, finding that 19.5 percent of the videos suggested contained false or misleading claims, the report stated. Researchers said that they compared TikTok and Google results from searches for information about school shootings, abortion, COVID-19, US elections, Russia's war on the Ukraine and other news.

Shell CEO to step down, hand reins to renewables chief

LONDON: Shell on Thursday announced the exit of chief executive Ben van Beurden as the British oil and gas giant looks to reinvent itself under group renewables boss Wael Sawan.

Dutchman van Beurden, 64, will step down at the end of 2022 after nine years in charge of the energy major and nearly four decades as a Shell employee. Van Beurden has presided over rollercoaster oil prices fuelled by the COVID pandemic and Russian invasion of Ukraine, as well as overseeing a major corporate overhaul that saw it ditch "Royal Dutch" from its name.

The outgoing CEO "can look back with great pride on an extraordinary 39-year Shell career", chairman Andrew Mackenzie said in a statement. He said van Beurden had been "in the vanguard for the transition of Shell to a net zero emissions energy business by 2050", adding that he "leaves a financially strong and profitable company".

Oil and gas prices have rocketed this year, leaving Shell "with a robust balance sheet, very strong cash generation capability and a compelling set of options for growth", Mackenzie added.

Shell has faced strong criticism over its net-zero plans from the environmental lobby, which accuses it of "greenwashing", or marketing a company as overly

False or misleading claims in results included conspiracy theories promoted by QAnon and supposed home recipes for hydroxychloroquine, a prescription drug used to treat malaria and lupus, according to NewsGuard. TikTok says the methodology used in the analysis is flawed, and that it makes a priority of fighting misinformation. "Our Community Guidelines make clear that we do not allow harmful misinformation, including medical misinformation, and we will remove it from the platform," a TikTok spokesperson said in response to an AFP inquiry.

"We partner with credible voices to elevate authoritative content on topics related to public health, and partner with independent fact-checkers who help us to assess the accuracy of content."

While testifying Wednesday at a Senate hearing on social media's impact on national security, Twitter former senior vice president of engineering Alex Roetter said that the Chinese government is an investor in TikTok parent company ByteDance, and that it has incentives to maximize profit and user engagement. "The TikTok algorithm pushes educational science, engineering, and math content on Chinese youth while pushing a feed containing twerking videos, misinformation, and other destructive content to US children," Roetter told Senators.

Social media companies stand to benefit from attention-grabbing online content despite harmful effects it may have on society, Roetter said in

climate-friendly. Energy companies and businesses generally are seeking to slash carbon emissions in line with government targets on tackling climate change.

Strategy 'tweaks'

Shell hopes Beirut-born Sawan, 48, will boost the transition plans. "For a group whose renewable strategy has been somewhat vague, though grand sounding, this is a clear marker that Shell intends to change this," said Hargreaves Lansdown analyst Sophie Lund-Yates.

"Change won't happen overnight, but it's reasonable to think that at least tweaks to the existing renewable strategy could be on the cards," Mackenzie called Sawan "an exceptional leader, with all the qualities needed to drive Shell safely and profitably through its next phase of transition and growth".

The incoming boss had a "track record of commercial, operational and transformational success" and a deep understanding of Shell and the broader energy sector, the chairman added. A dual Lebanese-Canadian national, Sawan has worked at Shell for 25 years in various roles in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas. He is currently director of integrated gas, renewables and energy solutions. "I'm looking forward to... grasp the opportunities presented by the energy transition," Sawan said in a statement.

Oil price boom

Van Beurden's tenure included oil prices collapsing into negative territory in 2020, as COVID lockdowns ravaged demand. Shell dived into a net loss of \$21.7 billion in 2020 as factories shut and planes were

scale of the cost of living crisis that has materialised, with energy prices and inflation rising ahead of anyone's expectations," JLP chair Sharon White said in reaction to the latest losses.

"As a business, we have faced unprecedented cost inflation across grocery and general merchandise."

Despite this, the group on Thursday said it was handing each full-time worker a "cost-of-living" payment totaling £500 to boost wages eroded by decades-high inflation. It added that it was increasing the entry-level pay for partners by four percent, costing the group £10 million in the second half.

Prior to the inflation surge, JLP axed thousands of jobs and shut stores during the pandemic.

The group relies heavily on customers coming through its stores in the run-up to Christmas, which is traditionally preceded by JLP's popular festive television commercial. "A successful Christmas is key for the business given the first half," White said Thursday. "We will need a substantial strengthening of performance, beyond what we usually achieve in the second half, to generate sufficient profit to share a partnership bonus." JLP's is owned



WASHINGTON: (Left to right) Chief Product Officer of YouTube Neal Mohan, Chief Operating Officer of TikTok Vanessa Pappas, and General Manager of Bluebird of Twitter Jay Sullivan testify during a hearing before Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee September 14, 2022 in Washington, DC. —AFP

opening remarks.

"Our terms of service and community guidelines are built to help ensure our vision of a safe and authentic experience," TikTok chief operating officer Vanessa Pappas said at the hearing.

"Our policies have zero tolerance for disinformation, violent extremism and hateful behavior." —AFP



Ben van Beurden

grounded. That resulted in the group shedding thousands of jobs, mirroring the likes of British rival BP.

Oil prices have since rebounded sharply after economies reopened from pandemic lockdowns and following the attack on Ukraine by major crude producer Russia. Gas prices have also surged owing to the conflict, resulting in Shell's net profits rocketing more than five-fold to \$18 billion in the second quarter of this year.

This even as van Beurden carried out Shell's costly withdrawal from Russian gas and oil. Soaring profits for Shell and BP come as Britain's faces a cost-of-living crisis, igniting calls for the pair to be slapped with a far higher windfall tax than unveiled earlier this year by former finance minister Rishi Sunak. Last year, Van Beurden ushered in a simplification of Shell's complex structure, switching headquarters from the Netherlands to the UK and axing Royal Dutch from the front of its name. —AFP



LONDON: John Lewis Partnership on Thursday announced a near doubling of losses as the owner of UK department stores and high-end supermarkets blamed the nation's cost-of-living crisis.

by its near-80,000 staff who are partners in the firm and traditionally share an annual bonus pot. The first John Lewis store opened in 1864 on Oxford Street-London's main shopping thoroughfare-while Waitrose joined the JLP structure in 1937. —AFP



Nadim Cherfan (center) with the dance group Mayyas, winners of Season 17, pose on the red carpet for 'America's Got Talent' Season 17 Finale at Sheraton Pasadena Hotel in Pasadena, California. — AFP photos



Howie Mandel attends the red carpet for 'America's Got Talent' Season 17 Finale at Sheraton Pasadena Hotel.



Sofia Vergara attends the red carpet for 'America's Got Talent' Season 17 Finale.

LEBANESE REJOICE AFTER MAYYAS WIN 'AMERICA'S GOT TALENT'



(From left to right) Lauren Silverman, Eric Cowell and Simon Cowell attend the red carpet for 'America's Got Talent' Season 17 live show at the Sheraton Pasadena Hotel.

Lebanese celebrated the local dance troupe Mayyas on Thursday after it won the "America's Got Talent" TV contest, stoking joy and pride in a country battered by years of political and economic turmoil. Many fans, across age groups and religious lines in the crisis-tested country and its large diaspora, tearfully cheered the all-women group for what judges and viewers hailed as a hypnotic and mesmerizing performance. "Congratulations Mayyas, proud, proud, proud," tweeted Lebanese pop star Elissa, while caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati gushed that "Lebanese creativity shines" in the performance.

A Twitter user called Wael summed up the mood about the group that beat all the odds: "They come from a country ravaged by crisis and, despite the difficulties, they managed to be the best. Lebanese all around the world are proud of you." The troupe led by choreographer Nadim Cherfan scooped a \$1 million prize and the chance to headline a Las Vegas show



Heidi Klum attends the red carpet for 'America's Got Talent' Season 17 Finale.

for their extravagant performance featuring belly dancing, feather fans and white orbs of light.

"You gave us a glimpse of hope and showed the world what Lebanese women are capable of," tweeted another fan, DivaMaj, saluting the group that in 2019 won the Arabs Got Talent contest. Even the military joined in, declaring on Twitter, somewhat more stiffly, that "the army com-

mand congratulates the Mayyas group, its trainers and members, on winning America's Got Talent".

The Mayyas' win of the season finale brought rare respite and a moment of unity to the small country reeling from almost three years of deep economic hardship and political stalemate. Amid Lebanon's worst-ever economic crisis, the national currency has lost more than 90 percent of its value on the black market since 2019 while poverty and unemployment have soared. Beirut remains scarred by the huge portside blast of haphazardly stored ammonium nitrate in 2020, which killed more than 200 people, wounded thousands and decimated vast areas of the capital. In a reflection of the deep popular discontent, several people who have recently held up banks, using real or toy guns, to demand their frozen savings have been cheered as folk heroes by bystanders and on social media. — AFP

The tango shoes that give dancers 'license to fly'

Maria Teresa Schuster changes into a shiny, silver pair of high-heeled shoes and readies herself to climb onto the stage. These shoes are a veritable "license to fly," she says. There are many elements to a good tango: posture, balance, the male lead; but for many elite women dancers, it is the shoes that matter most. "The tango shoe is something very special. It has to shine, have a beautiful heel, make me feel stronger, more powerful," said Schuster, 72, a regular at the Parakultural Milonga (local tango hall) in Buenos Aires, where the world championships are currently taking place. The competition runs from September 6-18.

A cardiologist and pianist, Schuster has been dancing tango for 20 years. "When I put on the shoes, I feel like someone does when they put on gloves suggestively to prepare themselves for something intense," she said. "The shoes are like a license to fly on earth. They have to mold to the foot, and one feels that they caress and are caressed at the same time."

Groundbreaking designs

For Carla Marano, an internationally renowned professional dancer, "the shape of the leg becomes aesthetically different-better in my view-when you dance in heels. "And it's functional: dancing in high heels makes it easier to shift your balance forwards, onto the metatarsal and the toes, which is essential in the tango." During the pandemic, music therapist and tango teacher Marina Kenny asked a dozen great dancers to describe their relationship



Couples dance the tango during the Tango Festival and World Tango Championship, at the milonga Salon Canning in Buenos Aires. — AFP photos

with their shoes for an e-book.

One of the dancers, Mariela Sametband, wrote: "The shoes are to tango what a guitar is to a guitarist, a broom to a street sweeper or a knife to a chef." "It's the instrument through which we express ourselves. Of course it is our bodies that move... but the shoes are an essential vector, because they connect us to the ground." A specialist shop in the chic



Alicia Muniz, creator of the shoe brand "Comme il faut," holds one of her shoes to dance tango, in Buenos Aires.

Recoleta neighborhood of Buenos Aires sells the iconic "Comme il faut" brand, mostly to foreign customers.

The store was opened around 20 years ago by two fellow dancers capitalizing on a tango renaissance, after the dance had lost popularity following its golden age from 1940-1955. "I danced the tango but didn't like the shoes on the market, they were always black and old-fashioned," co-founder Alicia Muniz told AFP. "I decided to make my own shoes. I took two years perfecting the fit, the height, the comfort and then I took them to the milonga and they attracted attention." She started "incorporating lace, leopard print, materials that had never been used before," and alongside Raquel Coltrinari created the brand.

'A niche, a business'

Appearances are, of course, important. "When you dance, people look at your feet. (The shoes) are an attractive object," said Muniz. More than just aesthetics, the shoes serve a functional purpose, and their design must reflect that. An almost indestructible steel wire is inserted into the soles, up to the toes-which cannot be pointy-while the shoe is fastened with a strong strap. All these elements are essential for acrobatic tango moves. "The soul of the shoe is the arch," which must be carefully chosen to perfectly fit the arch of the foot, Muniz explained. As for the heel, "the highest are 9.5 to 10 centimeters (3.5 to four inches). Anything more and you would not be able to dance without twisting your ankle," said Muniz, who also makes shoes for men with a slight lift in the heel. According to tango instructor Moira Castellano, "the heels can be your greatest ally or your worst enemy." — AFP



A couple performs during the World Tango Championship in Buenos Aires.



A couple performs during the World Tango Championship in Buenos Aires.



Alicia Muniz, creator of the shoe brand "Comme il faut," holds one of her shoes to dance tango, in Buenos Aires.



Alicia Muniz, creator of the shoe brand "Comme il faut," displays shoes to dance tango, in Buenos Aires.



Luis Beron, shoemaker specialized in making shoes for dancing tango, works in his workshop at the "Comme il faut" store in Buenos Aires.

Lifestyle | Features

TV series 'The Crown' brings mourners closer to royals

As Liz Butler stood among the crowds of well-wishers outside Buckingham Palace, she couldn't help asking herself if she was living through a future episode of hit TV series "The Crown". Like many of those flocking to bid farewell to Queen Elizabeth II, Butler was a big fan of the Netflix show that has offered viewers a glimpse-albeit fictionalized-inside royal life. "I wonder, will they try to put all this in it?" said Butler, 68, as the new King Charles III and his Queen Consort Camilla swept by, waving from the royal car.

"The Crown"-one of the streaming giant's biggest successes-has been credited with helping to shape, and in many cases soften, perceptions of the royal family for new generations. First aired in 2016, it charts the queen's journey from nervous 25-year-old neophyte to national institution, as she guided the world's most famous monarchy through decades of scandals and upheaval.

In the days following her death after seven decades on the throne, there was reportedly a huge spike in the numbers clicking in to watch the series. In Britain, viewership shot up 800 percent on the week before, in France it tripled, and in the United States it quadrupled. The Guardian newspaper reported, citing figures from Whip Media. A fifth season charting the tumultuous period in the 1990s that saw the monarchy rocked by the split of the queen's son Charles, now king, from his wife Diana, is set to go out



this autumn. Filming is currently going on for a sixth season as well, although it was halted for a day after the queen died.

'Found out so much'

Virginie Verrez, who had decided to stop by Buckingham Palace on her work trip from France, said she loved the series-especially the first two seasons about the young queen assuming the role. "I found out so much about this family," the 33-year-old told AFP. "I didn't

know much, in fact, and now I've become quite interested in the members of the royal family." Verrez said she followed the drama as Prince Harry and his wife Meghan quit the fold and issued broadsides against the royals in interviews from the United States. "I understood better how the British monarchy works," she said.

"But I'm happy to live in a republic, as all this seems pretty archaic." Sanna Wintren, 34, who had come from

Sweden with some girlfriends for the weekend, laid a bunch of flowers in memory of the queen. "In Sweden we don't care as much about our royal family," she said. But Wintren became hooked on "The Crown" from the moment she saw it. "I got Diana-obsessed after," she said. "I've seen every documentary on her I could."

'Humanized'

The last season to air drew some criticism in the UK for taking too much artistic licence and allegedly portraying Charles excessively negatively over his treatment of his ex-wife. But Wintren insisted that for her, the show had "humanized" the new monarch. "I understand him better: he was not allowed to live his love story," she said.

German Andrea Geldmann, 66, brushed off accusations that the makers had strayed too far from the truth to lavish praise on the series. "I love 'The Crown'. It's really well done," she said. "I have more affection for the queen." Gai Reckless from Australia agreed that she now had "more sympathy" for Elizabeth. "I did not know before how much she had to leave in order to become queen." But now-as the final curtain falls on the life of Britain's longest-reigning monarch-there was a clear sense that a last chapter was being written. "We're witnessing the end of the series here," said Verrez. — AFP

Roman Polanski: One rape case and multiple assault claims

Veteran Franco-Polish filmmaker Roman Polanski, ordered to stand trial in France for defamation of a British actress who accused him of sexual abuse, has been on the run from US authorities for over four decades. Polanski fled the US in 1978 before being sentenced for the statutory rape of a 13-year-old girl. He settled in his native France, which has refused to extradite him back to the US. Attempts to get Switzerland and Poland to hand him over also failed.

In recent years the 89-year-old has been targeted by several other allegations of sexual abuse of minors, one as young as 10. Here is a summary of the cases taken, and claims made against the Oscar-winning director of "Chinatown", "Rosemary's Baby" and "The Pianist".



In this file photo in Paris, French Polish film director Roman Polanski looks on stage after the preview of his last movie "J'accuse" (An Officer and a Spy).—AFP

US rape case

On March 10, 1977, Polanski, then aged 43, invites 13-year-old Samantha Gailey (now Samantha Geimer) to take part in a fashion shoot at the Hollywood home of actor Jack Nicholson. The girl tells her mother that Polanski plied her with alcohol and drugs and raped her. Polanski is arrested and tried on charges including rape and sodomy. He initially pleads not guilty, but under a plea bargain agreement, admits to unlawful sex with a minor. Sentenced to 90 days in prison, he is released after 42 days for good behavior but the judge later changes his mind, saying he thinks the sentence was insufficient.

Fearing a hefty sentence, Polanski flees the US on the eve of the January 1978 hearing to approve the plea deal and settles in France, which refuses an extradition request. In 1994, he reaches an agreement to pay Geimer \$225,000 dollars in damages to settle a civil case. But California refuses an appeal by both the film-maker and his victim to lift the criminal charges.

In September 2009, he is arrested in the Swiss city of Zurich. He spends two months behind bars followed by eight months under house arrest in his ski chalet in the resort of Gstaad while Swiss authorities consider a US extradition request. They eventually decide against handing him over and Polanski is freed. In 2014, he is questioned by authorities in Poland, again at the request of the US, but Polish authorities decline to extradite him.—AFP



An aerial view shows the village of Valea Zalanului, where King Charles III stays when he visits the area, in Transylvania, central Romania.

Transylvanian village shines under new British king's patronage

The Romanian village of Viscri, in the picturesque region of Transylvania, won the heart of the then prince Charles when he first visited in 1998. Enchanted by its dirt streets, horse-drawn carriages and brightly colored houses nestled in green hills, the environmentalist and nature lover became a regular visitor. In 2006, he even bought his first house there: a bright blue building known to all the locals. What was initially an occasional princely residence has since been transformed into a museum dedicated to botany, another of the new king's passions.

"His Majesty the King has not stayed here for a few years, but he has left many traces," Caroline Fernolend, president of the Mihai Eminescu Trust, told AFP. Under Charles's sponsorship, the foundation has renovated several properties in Transylvania with traditional methods and materials to preserve the heritage. "He also financed an ecological wastewater treatment plant based on reeds and a new water drainage system for the village, without advertising it," she

said.

Every year, tens of thousands of tourists discover the timeless atmosphere of Viscri. Guest houses have sprouted up in response to its popularity in contrast to the abandonment that characterizes much of the Romanian countryside, one of the EU's poorest members. "Viscra was a forgotten village and now small houses are selling for over 40,000 euros (\$40,000)!", said retired sports teacher Ion Stoica, who cycles from his neighboring village to Viscra every evening. That sum is a small fortune in this region, he added.

Royal stamp

Not all residents of the hamlet, home to 400 people and dominated by a UNESCO-listed church, share Stoica's enthusiasm. Royal honors "did not bring prosperity" to Viscra's inhabitants, says another resident, seated on a bench in the village. Yet no one denies the restoration efforts undertaken under the leadership of Charles. Charles claims descent from a 15th-century prince known as Vlad the Impaler, the historical

inspiration for Bram Stoker's "Count Dracula". He has even said that Transylvania is "in my blood".

"It's such a beautiful region," said Ana Maria Plopeanu, 35, whose grandparents are from Transylvania and who visited Viscra with her partner. "Everything is so simple here, so calm... we understand why the prince fell in love" with the region. But rather than staying at Viscra, in recent years Charles has stayed in Valea Zalanului, some 100 kilometers (60 miles) west. There, his residence is hidden away at the end of an unpaved road, where a black veil is now affixed to the gate as a sign of mourning following the death last week of Charles's mother, Queen Elizabeth II.

A sign prohibits access to the curious-not enough, however, to deter two British royalists, a mother and daughter, who said they had made the trip from London to get to know the places dear to their new king. They will head back to London soon, just in time to attend the funeral of the late queen.—AFP



Two kids ride bikes on the main street of Viscra, where King Charles III's foundation owns a property, in Transylvania, central Romania.



Two kids cycle during sunset between cows in front of a house owned by King Charles III's foundation, on the main street of Viscra, in Transylvania.

R. Kelly convicted of child pornography charges

Disgraced R&B singer R. Kelly, who is serving a 30-year sentence for sex offenses, was found guilty of child pornography and other charges on Wednesday after a month-long trial in his hometown of Chicago. Kelly, whose full name is Robert Sylvester Kelly, was convicted of three counts of producing child pornography and three counts of enticement of a minor. The three-time Grammy Award-winner was acquitted by a federal jury of seven other counts, including charges that he obstructed justice in a previous trial.

Kelly and two ex-associates had been accused of rigging the singer's 2008 child pornography trial in which a jury delivered a verdict of not guilty. Kelly's former manager, Derrel McDavid, and an ex-employee, Milton "June" Brown, were tried alongside the singer in the latest trial and were also acquitted of obstruction charges. The 12-person jury took around 11 hours over two days to deliver the verdicts, which could add additional decades in prison to the 30 years Kelly is already serving.

A minor victim declined to testify in the 2008 trial because of alleged threats and bribes, but the now 37-year-old woman took the witness stand this time. "The guilty verdicts finally hold Robert Kelly accountable for the sexual abuse of a 14-year-old girl, and they help right the wrongs that occurred in a prior prosecution in Cook County," the US attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, John Lausch, said of the 2008 trial. "The damage Mr. Kelly inflicted on his victims is immeasurable. I want to thank the victims for their strength, perseverance and courage in coming forward to testify at trial," he added.

No sentencing date was immediately set. Kelly faces 10 to 90 years in prison for these new convictions, Lausch's office said in a statement. Excerpts from videos depicting sexual abuse by Kelly of girls as young as 14 were played for the jury during the trial. Kelly was convicted in New York in September last year of recruiting teenagers and women for sex. The "I Believe I Can Fly" artist was found guilty of eight charges of sex trafficking and one count of racketeering in the New York case.

Faces further charges

Kelly's conviction in New York was widely seen as a milestone for the #MeToo movement: it was the first major sex abuse trial where the majority of the accusers were Black women. It was also the first time Kelly faced criminal consequences for the abuse he was rumored for decades to have inflicted on women and children. Kelly also faces prosecution in two other state jurisdictions.



In this file photo singer R. Kelly leaves the Leighton Criminal Courts Building following a hearing on June 26, 2019 in Chicago, Illinois.—AFP

In the New York case, his accusers described events that often mirrored one another. Many of the alleged victims said they had met the singer at concerts or mall performances and were then handed slips of paper with Kelly's contact details by members of his entourage. Several said they were told he could bolster their music industry aspirations.

But prosecutors argued all were instead "indoctrinated" into Kelly's world-groomed for sex at his whim and kept in line by "coercive means of control," including isolation and cruel disciplinary measures. Core to the New York case was Kelly's relationship with the late singer Aaliyah. Kelly wrote and produced her first album—"Age Ain't Nothin' But A Number"—before illegally marrying her when she was just 15 because he feared he had impregnated her. His former manager admitted in court to bribing a worker to obtain fake identification allowing the union, which was later annulled.—AFP



Photos show the interior and exterior decorations of Burgo restaurant in Mahboula. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Burgo restaurant: Eat and dine stylishly

By Majd Othman

Great competition between restaurants pushes business owners to create new atmosphere in order to attract customers. Burgo is one of the restaurants that is keen to merge family fun and friendly dining atmosphere in unusual and fascinating manner. The restaurant invokes the 80s era and space-style in their designs. As you enter the restaurant, you will

packaged entertainment programs for kids and their families," he said.

He pointed out that although the restaurant was recently opened, the demands and patronage have been wonderful. "I think it is as a result of the style and the diversity. When you buy burger; you have access to games and other fun-packed activities the restaurant offers. We added another concept. We serve desserts as well. We also plan to open 'Sweet Tooth' that sells milkshakes,



be captivated with the designs. The music will make you to feel as if you are in the movie "back to the future" - where you experience the feeling of the past and future at the same time. In an exclusive interview, Mohammad Merza told Kuwait times that the restaurant provides delicious burgers for the kids, among other things. "As the first concept that targets the children in Kuwait, we offer a well-

donuts and ice-cream as well," Merza added.

"Because Burgo underlines the importance of reading and education, we distribute short story books to kids which are related to our space concept. We merged entertainment and learning through an interactive way - using stickers, coloring, and writing. What makes us different is that we upgrade our services as we focus



on the children's interests," he said. In Burgo, we have game collections from the 80s era. These are for adults. However, this collection of games changes every month, to give the adults a great time to enjoy with their kids. Also, there are valuable prizes such as money, free meals and cameras. "Meanwhile, we have decided to collaborate with Kuwaiti local businesses to sell some products to

our valuable customers such as trendy shirts and other accessories. This adds a new concept to the restaurants," Merza said.

On other hand, the Burgo menu is very unique. It adds the local taste, ingredients, sauces and wonderful spices. Meanwhile, the founders came-up with a nice idea - offering a secret menu that is only for the lucky ones who finds it by

chance. In the same style (like in the 80s), Burgo restaurant offers a car hub for their customers instead of the delivery service. This attracts customers to enjoy in a great atmosphere, as they invite people to come and try their fresh baked burgers.

'Majestic' Greek 'Zorba' star Irene Papas dies at 93

Greek-born actor Irene Papas, famous for her fiery appearances in the internationally acclaimed "The Guns of Navarone" and "Zorba the Greek", died Wednesday at the age of 93. Greece's Culture Minister Lina Mendoni in a statement said Papas was "majestic" and "the personification of Greek beauty on the cinema screen and theatre stage". Her cause of death was not immediately known, but the actor had Alzheimer's Disease and had been frail for some time.

One of Greece's most renowned actors, Papas appeared in over 60 films in a career spanning nearly six decades. On screen and stage she starred with A-list partners, including Richard Burton, Kirk Douglas and Jon Voight. "Ordinary



In this file photo taken on May 20, 1977 Greek-cypriot film director Michael Cacoyannis (left) poses with Greek actresses Irene Papas (center) and Tatiana Papamoschou during Cannes Film Festival in Cannes where they presented the film "Iphigenia".

actors have trouble sharing the screen with her," the late film critic Roger Ebert wrote in 1969.

Widely known as Pappas but personally preferring a single 'p' in her surname, the actor was born Irene Lelekou

in 1929 in the village of Chiliomodi near Corinth, into a family of schoolteachers. Gifted with a deep voice, piercing eyes and a chiselled face likened to the Caryatid statues of ancient Greece, Papas began performing at the age of 15 in local cultural events before studying drama in Athens. She made her cinema debut in the 1948 Greek drama "Fallen Angels", and later broke onto the international scene with "Dead City", the first Greek movie shown at the Cannes Film Festival in 1952.

'Not looking for a career'

"The Guns of Navarone" in 1961, in which she starred alongside Gregory Peck and Anthony Quinn, as a brooding Greek guerrilla fighter, was a landmark role in Papas's career. She would again partner up with Quinn in 1964's "Zorba the Greek", another timeless classic. "I left Greece to discover where the best acting was. I wanted to learn. I was not looking for a career," she told state TV ERT in 2002.

"If you do your job well, a career comes on its own." In 1969, she played the widow of a murdered lawmaker in

Costa-Gavras's Oscar-winning drama "Z". Papas won several awards, including best actress at the 1961 Berlin Film Festival and the 2009 Golden Lion for lifetime achievement award in Venice. Yet, she described herself as a "coward" who turned to theatre to overcome timidity and struggled to reconcile her fiery on-screen persona with her real self.

'Fame gave me nothing'

"Fame gave me nothing," Papas said in a 2003 interview with Greek daily Eleftherotypia. "In contrast, it destroyed my private life. Because the person who will approach me, has already fallen in love with my image." In 2004, she revealed a secret, long affair with Marlon Brando in the 1950s. "We had a love story," she told Italy's Corriere della Sera daily.

At the age of 18, Papas married her acting tutor Alkis Papas. They had no children and soon divorced, but she kept her husband's surname. In her final years, she lived near Athens' Acropolis, cared for by a niece as she battled Alzheimer's.—AFP



This file photo taken on May 19, 1952 in Paris shows Greek actress Irene Papas. —AFP photos



This file photo taken in 1952 shows Greek actress Irene Papas.



This file photo taken on May 19, 1952 in Paris shows Greek actress Irene Papas.

Sports

Spain defeat Serbia in Davis Cup opener; Alcaraz rested

Agut beats Kecmanovic, secures Group B tie

PARIS: Spain beat Serbia in their opening tie of the Davis Cup group stage on Wednesday as US Open champion Carlos Alcaraz watched from the sidelines, but Great Britain and Andy Murray lost to the United States. Alcaraz, who made his Davis Cup debut in a qualifying tie against Romania in March, arrived in Valencia only on Tuesday after becoming the youngest men's world number one in history with Sunday's triumph in New York. With Rafael Nadal also absent against a Serbia team, Novak Djokovic, Albert Ramos-Vinolas won the opening rubber against Laslo Djere 2-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-5.

Roberto Bautista Agut secured the Group B tie for Spain by defeating Miomir Kecmanovic 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/5) in the second singles. "The best experiences of my life playing tennis have been in this competition," said Bautista Agut. "Today I really enjoyed playing in front of the Spanish crowd in Valencia, next to my home town. I'm exhausted because it was a tough match and we have a lot of work (still) to do this week."

Marcel Granollers and Pedro Martinez sealed a 3-0 victory when they won the doubles against Nikola Cacic and Dusan Lajovic 6-7 (5/7), 6-2, 6-2. Jack Sock and Rajeev Ram of the United States sealed a 2-1 win against Great Britain in Group D in Glasgow, edging Murray and Joe Salisbury 5-7, 6-4, 7-5 in a thrilling doubles rubber that finished well after midnight. "We were playing against one of the biggest legends of the game, playing in his home country," said Sock of facing



VALENCIA: Spain's tennis player Carlos Alcaraz returns the ball during a training prior to the upcoming Spain's Davis Cup tie, at the Fuente San Luis sports hall in Valencia on September 15, 2022. —AFP photos



Roberto Bautista Agut of Spain

Murray. "It was an electric atmosphere. We stuck it out and got the win."

Ram said it had not been easy being on the other side of the net from his regular doubles partner, Salisbury. "It's tricky, we've been playing together for four years. But we go out and compete as best as we can," said Ram. "Playing for our country is huge for us." Earlier Cameron Norrie, the world number eight, overcame 12th-ranked Taylor Fritz 2-6, 7-6 (7/2), 7-5 to bring Britain level in the tie after Tommy Paul took down Dan Evans in three sets in the opening rubber.

'Guys gave everything'

The late finish meant the US players would have only a few hours rest until they were due back on court on Thursday to face Kazakhstan. "These guys gave everything, Team GB gave everything," said stand-in American captain Bob Bryan. "It's 0100 on a Thursday. We've got to go again in 13 hours. Kazakhstan won't be any easier." Lorenzo Musetti and Matteo Berrettini gave Italy the perfect start to their campaign with victory over Croatia in Bologna.

The 20-year-old Musetti saw off

Borna Gojo 6-4, 6-2 in the Group A tie. Former Wimbledon runner-up Berrettini had to fight back from a set down against Cincinnati Masters champion Borna Coric, but won 6-7 (4/7), 6-2, 6-1. Simone Bolelli and Fabio Fognini edged a final-set tie-break against Nikola Mektic and Mate Pavic to complete a 3-0 sweep. Italy have high hopes of claiming only a second Davis Cup title and first since 1976. Their top-ranked player Jannik Sinner could yet be ready to play against Argentina on Friday.

Germany began Group C with a first

Davis Cup win over France since 1938 after Tim Puetz and Kevin Krawietz defeated Nicolas Mahut and Arthur Rinderknech in the doubles in Hamburg. "Making positive history is always great," said Germany captain Michael Kohlmann, whose country had lost the previous eight meetings with the French. "Today was like a roller coaster, but in the end it's a big win. It is huge for us." Jan-Lennard Struff beat Benjamin Bonzi 6-4, 2-6, 7-5 to give the home team the lead, before Adrian Mannarino levelled with a 6-4, 6-3 win over Oscar Otte. —AFP

Afghanistan ring changes for Twenty20 World Cup

KABUL: Afghanistan's selectors dropped five players who featured in their failed Asia Cup campaign when naming a 15-man squad on Thursday for next month's Twenty20 World Cup. The team lost all three matches at the Super Four Stage of the Asia Cup, played in the United Arab Emirates earlier this month. "The Asia Cup was a very good opportunity for the team to build up things nicely," chief selector Noor Malikzai said in a statement. It said Samiullah Shinwari, Hashmatullah Shahidi, Afsar Zazai, Karim Janat and Noor Ahmad would all miss out from the Asia Cup squad.

Middle-order batter Darwish Rasooli, leg-spinning allrounder Qais Ahmad and the right-arm quick Salim Safi made the 15-member cut after good domestic-level performances. Afghanistan are in Group 1 of the Super 12 stage of the World Cup to be held in Australia from October 16 to November 13. They are placed alongside hosts and defending champions Australia, England, New Zealand and two qualifier teams who will come from the first round.

Group 2 comprises India, Pakistan, South Africa, Bangladesh and two qualifiers. Malikzai said the squad is balanced and will do well in Australia. "Since the Australian conditions are fast-bowling friendly, we have added Safi, the tall right-arm quick



Afghanistan's Samiullah Shinwari

to add further impetus to our bowling department." Allrounder Mohammad Nabi will continue to lead the side, while Afsar Zazai, Sharafuddin Ashraf, Rahmat Shah and Gulbadin Naib have been added as reserves.

Afghanistan Squad for T20 World Cup:-

Mohammad Nabi (captain), Najibullah Zadran, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Azmatullah Omarzai, Darwish Rasooli, Farid Ahmad Malik, Fazal Haq Farooqi, Hazratullah Zazai, Ibrahim Zadran, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Naveen ul Haq, Qais Ahmad, Rashid Khan, Salim Safi, Usman Ghani. —AFP

NBA boss Silver says Sarver punishment was severe and fair

NEW YORK: NBA commissioner Adam Silver said Wednesday the punishment to Phoenix Suns owner Robert Sarver for racist and misogynist remarks was severe even though it didn't force him to sell the team. Sarver was fined \$10 million and suspended for one year by the NBA on Tuesday following a 10-month investigation into Sarver's actions over 18 years.

"I was in disbelief to a certain extent about what I learned," Silver said. "I was saddened by it, disheartened... The conduct is indefensible but I feel we dealt with it in a fair manner." In 2014, Silver forced former Los Angeles Clippers owner Donald Sterling to sell that club after private recordings of him making racist comments were made public.

Silver said the situations were "dramatically different" and there was "no discussion" about the process of removing Sarver as owner but admitted, "There's no neat answer here." "I don't have the right to take away his team," Silver said. "I don't want to rest on that legal point because of course there could be a process to take away someone's team in this league. It's very involved, and I ultimately made the decision that it didn't rise to that level." Silver said many who came forward with evidence were promised confidentiality.

"I have access to information that the public doesn't," Silver said. "I'm able to look at the totality of the circumstances around those events in a way that we're not able to completely bring to life. I think that puts me in a different position ultimately as the person who has to render the ultimate judgment about what is a fair outcome here." Silver saw Sterling and Sarver differently. "I think what we saw in the case of Donald Sterling was blatant racist conduct directed at a select group of people," Silver said.

Regarding Sarver, Silver said, "It's beyond the pale in every possible way to use language and behave that way, but... it was wholly of a different kind than what we saw in that earlier case." Silver also pointed to the findings by investigators regarding Sarver. "If they had made findings that, in fact, his conduct was motivated by racial animus, absolutely that would have had an impact on the ultimate outcome here," Silver said. "But that's not what they found."

Hasn't turned a corner

Silver said he feels there has been improvement over the years in the NBA workplace environment, but says the league is no different than any other business in needing to remain vigilant. "I believe we've seen significant improvement over the years," he said. "But ultimately, I think some of the issues we experience here in the NBA are not all that different than what you see, unfortunately, in other workplaces."

"I'd love to say we've turned the corner. We clearly haven't. I can't express it in strong enough terms how disheartening it is to be the commissioner of a league in which this kind of conduct has transpired during my tenure." Regarding other matters discussed at a meeting of team owners, Silver said an in-season tournament remains a possibility as soon as next season.

"It's something I remain excited about," Silver said. "It continues to be an opportunity within the current footprint of our season to create some more meaningful games, games of consequence, during an otherwise long regular season." Silver said the idea has "great feedback" from the players' union, which must approve it, but the plan is "not quite ready for primetime yet." —AFP

Stars to meet more often as new PGA campaign tees off

SAN FRANCISCO: In response to the challenge of the Saudi-backed LIV Golf Series, top golfers will play more often for richer purses in the 2022-23 US PGA Tour campaign that begins Thursday. The PGA's final wrap-around season before returning to a calendar-year format in 2024 opens with American Max Homa defending his crown at the Fortinet Championship at Napa, California.

The upstart LIV Series has caused turmoil in the golf world since its June debut, with record purses and financial guarantees luring several top PGA players. The PGA responded last month by announcing top players would play against each other more often and in more events each season starting in 2022-23. "We've all made a commitment to get together more often to make the product more compelling," said Rory McIlroy, who last month captured his third FedEx Cup playoff title.

"LIV are going to do what they're going to do. The PGA Tour are just trying to control what they can control and put forward the best product possible. "Having the top players in the world competing against each other more often is what everyone wants. And I think once we solve for that, a lot of the rest of the stuff sort of takes care of itself." An expanded bonus program for players based on exposure and minimum payouts of \$500,000 for every fully-exempt player were other changes aimed at slowing the tide of defections to LIV Golf. "Every single member of the PGA Tour is going to benefit from the changes we're going to be making," PGA Tour commissioner Jay Monahan said. —AFP

LIV Golf's Norman has 'no interest' in talking to PGA Tour

MELBOURNE: LIV Golf kingpin Greg Norman Thursday said he was no longer prepared to negotiate with US PGA Tour chiefs while denying the Saudi-funded circuit was a "breakaway" league. In an interview with The Australian newspaper, Norman said he had offered to meet with PGA Tour officials but they had repeatedly declined, instead focusing on reforming their tour to hang on to leading players. "That's why we are where we are today," Norman claimed. "We tried awfully hard, I know I did personally for the past year... when we knew we were never going to hear from them, we just decided to go."

"We have no interest in sitting down with them, to be honest with you, because our product is working." The launch of LIV this year plunged golf into crisis, with the rebel circuit sparking a bitter split that threatens to tear the sport apart. With LIV offering \$25 million purses in no-cut 54-hole tournaments, a host of high-profile golfers have signed up, including Cameron Smith, the British Open champion who was world number two when he switched sides this month.

He joined other major winners such as Dustin Johnson, Phil Mickelson, Brooks Koepka and Bryson DeChambeau with the PGA Tour adopting a zero-tolerance stance, suspending those who defected. Despite the unprecedented turmoil, Norman rejected LIV as being a "breakaway" league, telling the newspaper its "business model from day one was always built around being inclusive".

'Trying to destroy us'

"It was always an additive to all tours," he said. "This notion we're trying to destroy tours is not true. The PGA Tour is trying to destroy us, it's as simple as that. "But the PGA Tour has not sat down and had



NORTH PLAINS: LIV Golf commissioner Greg Norman signs hats from the deck of a pavilion on the 18th green during the final round of the LIV Golf Invitational - Portland at Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club in Oregon. —AFP

a conversation with myself or any of my investors." The new circuit has been accused of "sportswashing" Saudi Arabia's human rights record, backed by the almost unlimited resources of the kingdom's sovereign wealth Public Investment Fund.

Asked about the criticism and the presence of demonstrators at LIV's last tournament in Boston, Norman said: "I don't even pay attention to that, to be honest with you. "All I can tell you is I'm here for the game of golf. I focus on building the best league we can." In a separate interview with The Age newspaper in Melbourne on Wednesday, Norman warned that the world rankings risked becoming a "laughing stock" if they refuse to award points to LIV players. The issue of LIV events being recognized by the Official World Golf Ranking (OWGR) system could be pivotal to its future. If players can earn rankings points, it becomes easier to qualify for the sport's four majors. The league plans to have 12 four-player teams in 2023 for its tournaments which are played over three days, with a 14-event global tour, including one stop expected in Norman's home country, Australia. —AFP

Sports

Valverde's thrust earns Real narrow win over RB Leipzig

Haaland winner reminds Guardiola of Cruyff as City see off Dortmund

MADRID: Late strikes from Fede Valverde and Marco Asensio maintained Real Madrid's 100 per cent start to the season with a 2-0 Champions League home win over RB Leipzig on Wednesday. It threatened to be a frustrating night for the 14-time winners and European holders until Valverde finally provided the breakthrough in the 80th minute. It continued the Uruguayan midfielder's recent fine form and he celebrated emphatically in front of a relieved Santiago Bernabeu.

Substitute Asensio then slammed home the second in stoppage time after Toni Kroos pulled a short free-kick back to the edge of the box. Victory kept Madrid top of Group F on six points, ahead of Shakhtar Donetsk on four, and they have won all eight games they have played this season in all competitions. "With the shot that he has I told him if he's not capable of scoring 10 goals a season then I'd snap my coaching licence. His foot is a rock!" joked Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti of Valverde.

"He's not just dynamic and energetic, but he reads situations well and is intelligent." Leipzig tested Thibaut Courtois early on when Christopher Nkunku broke down the right flank and squeezed off a shot from a tight angle. At the other end, Rodrygo dragged a strike wide of the near post. The Brazilian forward, playing as a false nine in the absence of injured talisman Karim Benzema, was chosen over Eden Hazard and Asensio after impressing against Real Mallorca last weekend.

There were half-chances at both ends - Timo Werner for the visitors and Eduardo Camavinga for the hosts - before the best opportunity of the first half fell to Madrid defender Antonio Rudiger, who steered a header well wide. Luka Modric tumbled under heavy pressure in the area shortly before the break but his appeals were waved away, to the chagrin of Madrid's increasingly frustrated fans.

Ancelotti switch pays off

After netting 16 goals in their last five games, home supporters expected more creativity and Ancelotti took action by sending on Asensio for midfielder Camavinga. The forward was whistled by sections of the Bernabeu after he had



MADRID: Leipzig's French midfielder Christopher Nkunku (center) fights for the ball with Real Madrid's Belgian goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois (left) and Real Madrid's French defender Aurelien Tchouameni during the UEFA Champions League, Group F, first leg football match between Real Madrid and RB Leipzig on September 14, 2022.

shown his frustration at not being given more game time this season on the side of the pitch during the win over Mallorca.

The hosts' angst grew when Vinicius, the scorer of last season's Champions League final winning goal against Liverpool, was denied by Peter Gulacsi from close range after Valverde had barrelled into the area in typically intense fashion. Madrid finally broke the deadlock when Valverde, deployed on the right of the attack to great effect, cut inside and curled home with his weaker left foot.

It was his third goal in six games, following strikes against Celta Vigo and Mallorca, with the 24-year-old continuing to show why he is preferred in the position. Spain winger Asensio also staked his claim with his late contribution to offer Ancelotti and his detractors in the stands food for thought. "I congratulated him, he performed," said Ancelotti. "He did not play for most of the game but he was important in earning the win. His reaction after his outburst has been very good, he's trained well, he had a good game."

Acrobatic finish

Erling Haaland's stunning acrobatic finish to beat his old club Borussia Dortmund 2-1 sparked comparisons from

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola with his mentor Johan Cruyff. The Norwegian had been kept remarkably quiet, but only needed the slightest glimpse of goal to extend his scoring streak to six games as his telescopic left leg prodded home the winner six minutes from time.

Haaland has now scored 13 goals in nine games for City since they met his bargain 60 million euro (\$60m, £52m) buyout clause from the German giants. "Everyone knows how important a person Johan Cruyff was in my life. As a person, educator, mentor, everything," said Guardiola. "He scored in Camp Nou an incredible goal against Atletico Madrid (in 1973) that was quite similar. The moment he (Haaland) scored, I thought of Cruyff."

Haaland's incredible flexibility despite his giant frame also drew comparisons from Guardiola to another former Barcelona striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic. Ibrahimovic endured one unhappy season under Guardiola at the Camp Nou, but has used an upbringing in martial arts to devastating effect during his long and storied career. "I remember my dear friend Ibrahimovic had this ability to put his leg on the roof," added Guardiola.



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Norwegian striker Erling Haaland (center) shoots to score his team's second goal during the UEFA Champions League group G football match between England's Manchester City and Germany's Borussia Dortmund on September 14, 2022. —AFP photos

"Erling is quite similar. He's elastic, flexible and after has the ability to put it in the net. He's so big, but has this natural flexibility." Jude Bellingham had given Dortmund the lead 11 minutes into the second half. But a triple substitution awoke City from their slumber and two goals in four minutes turned the game around. John Stones' piledriver from outside the box levelled with the aid of some poor goalkeeping from Alexander Meyer.

Haaland then took centre stage by somehow stretching to meet Joao Cancelo's cross and beat Meyer at his near post. "In the end we showed what we are. This is how we have to play. I'm proud of the last 20, 25 minutes," said Haaland. "Two wonderful goals today - mine was a bit better, honestly! It was a nice cross from Cancelo and in the end a really important win." Victory sees City open up a three-point lead at the top of Group G, with Dortmund still in second after FC Copenhagen and Sevilla played out a 0-0 draw in the Danish capital.

Bellingham shines

Bellingham admitted on the eve of the game he had no idea how Haaland can be stopped. But the Germans did a good job of suffocating the service to their former

star striker as the first 45 minutes passed with barely any goalmouth action to note. "I think we were brilliant for the majority of the game," said Bellingham. "We gave them little to work with."

"Great teams, you give them a yard and they can deliver like that, they can hurt you and that's what they did tonight." Bellingham has been strongly linked with a move back to the Premier League with City, Manchester United and Liverpool reportedly interested. The England international was quick to shut down speculation over his future on Tuesday and may have added a few more millions to his price tag as he timed his run perfectly to head in Reus' cross.

Guardiola responded immediately with a triple substitution as Bernardo Silva, Phil Foden and Julian Alvarez were called upon to add more guile in the final third. When City's equaliser did arrive, it came from an unlikely source as Stones blasted home his first Champions League goal since 2017 from outside the box. Haaland was not to be denied the headlines, though, as Cancelo's inventive cross with the outside of his right foot was pounced on by City's giant number nine who raised his foot to head height to flick the ball home. —AFP

Celtic star Hatate in Japan's squad for friendlies

TOKYO: Midfielder Reo Hatate earned a recall to Japan's squad on Thursday for pre-World Cup friendlies on the back of impressive performances for Celtic in the Champions League. The 24-year-old is in line for just his second cap when Japan play the United States on September 23 and Ecuador four days later, both in Dusseldorf, Germany.

Hatate joins fellow Celtic players Daizen Maeda and Kyogo Furuhashi in a 30-man squad, along with winger Takefusa Kubo of Real Sociedad, Maya Yoshida of Schalke and Arsenal defender Takehiro Tomiyasu. "I've worked with him ever since he was a student," Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu said of Hatate, who scored with a deflected effort in Celtic's draw with Shakhtar Donetsk in the Champions League on Wednesday.

"He has always shown ability to grow. He has been performing very well at Celtic. He was very strong in the recent match against Real Madrid (in the Champions League)," he added. Hatate's display against Shakhtar "confirmed his strength", the coach added. Hatate's only previous appearance for his country came in a World Cup qualifier against Vietnam in March. Moriyasu will be without Vissel Kobe midfielder Yuya Osako and striker Takuma

Asano of Bochum, both out with injury.

But Moriyasu said they and Germany-based defender Kou Itakura "will be well enough to be part of those under consideration for the (World Cup) squad". "I don't want them to be anxious, they should focus on getting healthy and performing well at their teams before the World Cup," he said. Japan are in a tough Group E in Qatar with Spain, Germany and Costa Rica. The World Cup starts on November 20.

Japan squad: Goalkeepers: Eiji Kawashima (Strasbourg/FRA), Shuichi Gonda (Shimizu S-Pulse), Daniel Schmidt (Sint-Truiden/BEL), Kosei Tani (Shonan Bellmare). - Defenders: Yuto Nagatomo (FC Tokyo), Maya Yoshida (Schalke/GER), Hiroki Sakai (Urawa Reds), Shogo Taniguchi (Kawasaki Frontale), Miki Yamane (Kawasaki Frontale), Yuta Nakayama (Huddersfield Town/ENG), Takehiro Tomiyasu (Arsenal/ENG), Hiroki Ito (VfB Stuttgart/GER), Ayumu Seko (Grasshoppers/SUI)

Midfielders/Forwards: Genki Haraguchi (Union Berlin/GER), Gaku Shibasaki (Leganes/ESP), Wataru Endo (Stuttgart/GER), Junya Ito (Stade de Reims/FRA), Takumi Minamino (Monaco/FRA), Kyogo Furuhashi (Celtic/SCO), Hidemasa Morita (Sporting Lisbon/POR), Daichi Kamada (Eintracht Frankfurt/GER), Yuki Soma (Nagoya Grampus), Kaoru Mitoma (Brighton/ENG), Daizen Maeda (Celtic/SCO), Reo Hatate (Celtic/SCO), Ritsu Doan (FC Freiburg/GER), Ayase Ueda (Cercle Brugge/BEL), Ao Tanaka (Fortuna Dusseldorf/GER), Shuto Machino (Shonan Bellmare), Takefusa Kubo (Real Sociedad/ESP). —AFP



Japan's midfielder Reo Hatate

Norwich beat Bristol City to extend streak

LONDON: Promotion-chasing Norwich sealed a sixth successive Championship win as Bristol City were beaten 3-2 at Carrow Road on Wednesday. Relegated from the Premier League last season, Norwich are expected to mount a strong challenge for a return to the top flight.

Dean Smith's side sit in second place, one point behind Sheffield United, after maintaining their hot streak. Teemu Pukki's double and Josh Sargent's sixth goal this season saw off City, who replied with strikes from Tommy Conway and Antoine Semenyo. Scott Hogan's hat-trick clinched a 3-2 victory for Birmingham over West Brom at the Hawthorns. Hogan put Birmingham ahead early in each half sandwiching Jed Wallace's equaliser before completing his treble.

Brandon Thomas-Asante's late penalty was no consolation for West Brom. Fourth-placed Reading lost their 100 per cent home record as Sunderland eased to a 3-0 victory. Sunderland's Patrick Roberts struck with two goals in as many minutes just before the interval. —AFP

French star Pogba's brother detained in extortion case

PARIS: French authorities have detained the elder brother of Paul Pogba, Mathias, and four others in an investigation into the extortion alleged by the France and Juventus football star, sources close to the case said Wednesday. Mathias Pogba presented himself "early afternoon to investigators and was placed in police custody", said one of the legal sources who asked not to be named. Among the five suspects detained in total in the probe, one was taken into custody on Tuesday and four on Wednesday, a judicial source added.

Mathias Pogba's lawyer said on Friday he denies any involvement in extortion reported by his World Cup-winning brother Paul and which is the subject of an investigation. That denial in a statement issued by his lawyer, Richard Arbib, came after he published a bizarre video online on August 27 - in French, Italian, English and Spanish - promising "great revelations" about the Juventus star. Paul Pogba says



TOURS: This file photo shows France national team player Paul Pogba (right) and his brother Mathias Pogba walking on the pitch prior to a football match between All Star France and Guinea at the Vallee du Cher Stadium in Tours, central France. —AFP

he is the victim of a multi-million-euro blackmail plot by gangsters involving his brother.

According to two sources close to the Pogba family contacted by AFP, large sums of money are being demanded from Paul Pogba if he wants to avoid the dissemination of allegedly compromising videos. "Taking into account how the affair has

evolved and the huge media attention surrounding it, Mathias Pogba strongly insists he knows nothing about any extortion attempt against his brother, Paul Pogba," read the lawyer's statement. "It is clear that the difficulties the Pogba family are experiencing are the result of outside threats which the justice authorities, who are already involved, will evaluate. —AFP

Spanish women's league strike deal with referees

MADRID: Matches in the Spanish women's football league will be played this weekend after a referees' strike forced the first round of fixtures to be postponed. Rebranded as Liga F, the Professional Women's Football League (LPFF) was professionalised but the disagreement with the officials, who work for the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF), derailed its opening weekend. An agreement was announced late Wednesday by the LPFF after a meeting held by the Spanish Sports Council (CSD) between the league and the RFEF.

"Liga F informs that the refereeing collective have finally accepted the proposal put forward by this league, so the professional women's football competition will resume next weekend after the shameful episode on matchday one, which should never have been allowed to happen," said the LPFF. The league

has agreed to raise the pay for referees from 300 euros (\$300) to 1,666 euros per match, while assistant referees will be paid 1,066 per game, compared to 166 previously.

The RFEF had initially proposed a match fee of 21,000 euros per game for referees, which the LPFF noted would cost 5 million euros a season. "That is 70 per cent of the audio-visual incomes generated by the competition," added the LPFF. "Faced with this position, far removed from the reality of women's football and the socioeconomic context the country is going through, Liga F has always been firm in its defence of a project that is sustainable."

"The union and solidity of the clubs, players, coaches, fans and public opinion has led the refereeing collective to come to its senses. Thank you." The RFEF said in a statement that the CSD would contribute 350,000 euros a year to a retirement fund the referees could access at the end of their professional career, which they would match, for the next three years. The new opening match of the season sees reigning champions Barcelona face Tenerife on Saturday August 17. —AFP



WIMBLEDON: This file combination of photos shows Switzerland's Roger Federer holding up the Wimbledon Championships trophy after winning each of his eight men's singles titles at The All England Tennis Club in Wimbledon. Swiss tennis legend Roger Federer is to retire after next week's Laver Cup, he said on September 15, 2022. —AFP

Legend Federer hails an 'incredible adventure', announces retirement

Swiss tennis legend battles with a knee problem

GENEVA: Swiss tennis legend Roger Federer is to retire after next week's Laver Cup after admitting on Thursday his battles with a knee problem had forced him to call time on his historic career. "The Laver Cup next week in London will be my final ATP event," he said in a statement posted on social media. The 41-year-old winner of 20 Grand Slam titles has been out of action since a quarter-final loss at Wimbledon in 2021, after which he underwent his third knee surgery in 18 months.

"The last 24 years on tour have been an incredible adventure," he wrote. "While it sometimes feels like it went by in 24 hours it has also been so deep and magical that it seems as if I have already lived a lifetime." Federer has struggled with the knee problem for the past three years that has restricted him to only three of the 11 Grand Slams staged since the start of 2020.

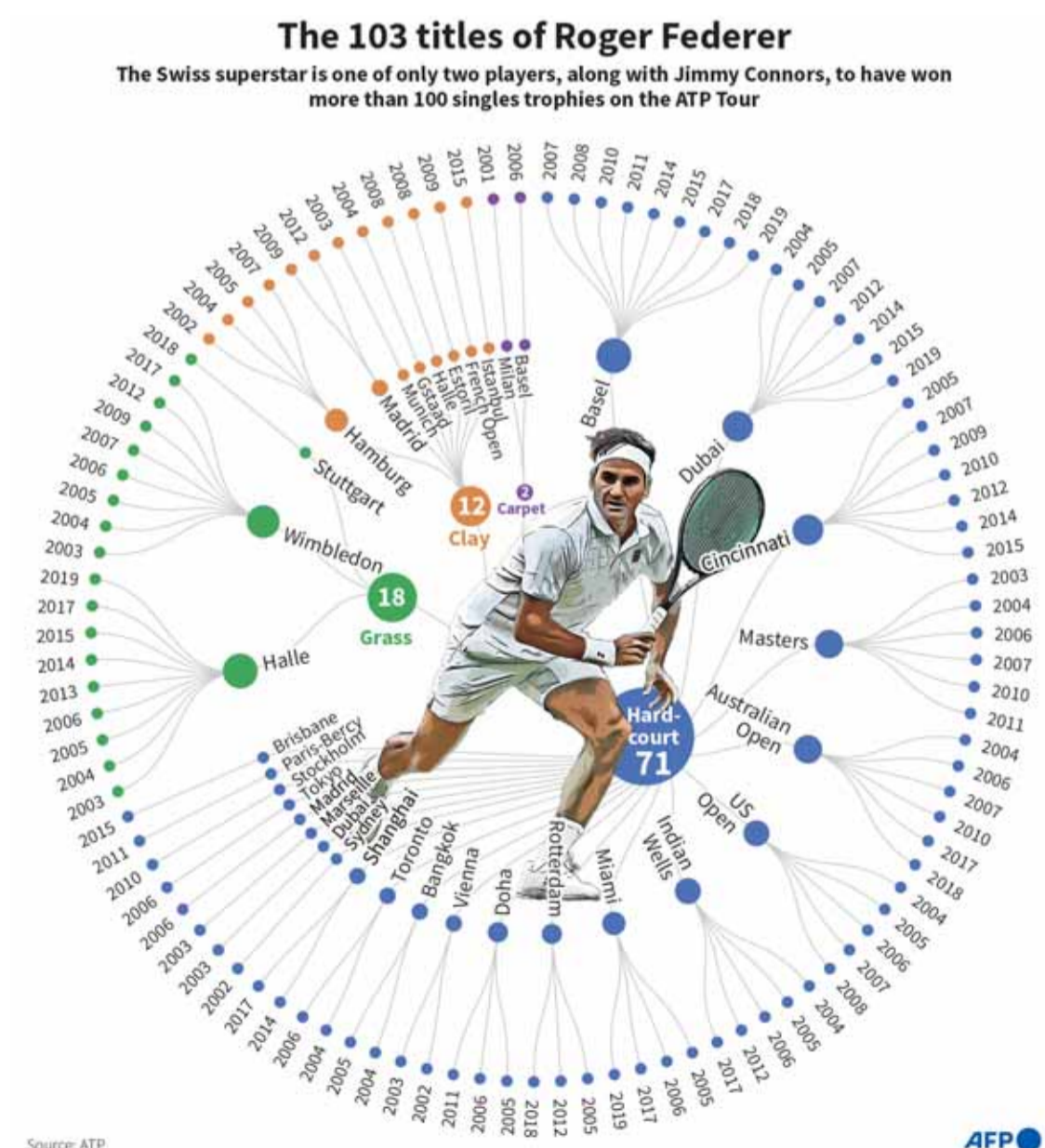
His fellow tennis legend Serena Williams is all but certain not to play again after bowing out of the US Open in the third round this month. Federer said that his body had effectively told him it was time to bring the curtain down. "I've worked hard to return to full competitive form," he wrote. "But I also know my body's capacities and limits, and its message to me lately has been clear. "I am 41 years old. I have played more than 1500 matches over 24 years. "Tennis has treated me more generously than I ever would have dreamt, and now I must recognize when it is time to end my competitive career."

'Most fortunate people'

Wimbledon paid him a handsome tribute in keeping with him being a record eight-time champion in the only Slam played on grass. "Roger, Where do we begin?" tweeted Wimbledon. "It's been a privilege to witness your journey and see you become a champion in every sense of the word.

"We will so miss the sight of you gracing our courts, but all we can say for now is thank you, for the memories and joy you have given to so many." Teenager Carlos Alcaraz, the coming man in tennis having won the US Open last Sunday to become the youngest ever world number one, paid tribute to him as well with a broken heart emoji on Twitter. "Thank you for everything you have done for our sport," Alcaraz said. The Laver Cup team event in London will also give him a final chance to play competitively as part of the "Big Four", who dominated tennis over the past two decades.

Rafael Nadal, who holds the record for Grand Slam titles with 22; Novak Djokovic, who has won



21 Grand Slam crowns; and two-time Wimbledon champion Andy Murray will all play together as part of Team Europe. Federer paid tribute to them too. "I was lucky enough to play so many epic matches that I will never forget," he said. "We battled fairly, with passion and intensity, and I always tried my best to respect the history of the game. "I feel

extremely grateful. We pushed each other, and together we took tennis to new levels." Federer had said back in July he hoped to play one more Wimbledon. He departs with regrets but added that he had lived a life that many would envy. "This is a bittersweet decision because I will miss everything the tour has given me," added Federer. —AFP

Saudi launches gaming, esports strategy

JEDDAH: Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud unveiled Thursday the National Gaming and Esports Strategy that marks the beginning of a new era toward leading the gaming sector and making Saudi Arabia the global hub for this sector by 2030, which contributes in achieving Vision 2030 objectives to diversify the economy, create new jobs in various sectors, and provide world-class entertainment for citizens, residents and visitors alike.

Prince Mohammed, who is also the Chairman of the Council for Economic and Development Affairs, highlighted: "The National Gaming and Esports Strategy is driven by the creativity and energy of our citizens and gamers, who are at the heart of the strategy. We are delivering on the ambitions of the gaming community in Saudi Arabia and around the world, with an exciting new career, and unique entertainment opportunities: aiming to make Saudi Arabia the ultimate global hub for this sector by 2030."

The strategy includes three main objectives that have a direct impact on citizens, the private sector, fans and professionals of games and esports around the world, which is to raise the quality of life by improving the players' experience, providing new entertainment opportunities, and achieving an economic impact by contributing to the gross domestic product by about 50 billion riyals directly and indirectly.

It will also create 39,000 new direct and indirect job opportunities by 2030, providing the foundational environment for developing competencies, and aiming to reach global leadership and enhance the Kingdom's position on the international arena, through the production of more than 30 competitive games Globally in the Kingdom's studios, and reaching the top three countries in the number of professional esports players. —SPA