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Fossil fuels make up 90 % of air pollution in Mideast

15.9% of deaths in Kuwait attributable to air pollution

PARIS: More than 90 percent of harmful air pollution in the Middle East and parts of North Africa comes from fossil fuels, according to research Thursday that showed the region "permanently exceeded" dangerous air quality levels. The World Health Organization this year said the MENA region had some of the poorest air quality on Earth.

The long-standing assumption was that the smog choking most of the region's cities was primarily composed of desert sand, given their location on the world's "dust belt" where there are frequently more than 20 major sand storms each year. In 2017, an international team of researchers set off on an epic voyage across the eastern Mediterranean, through the Suez Canal and around the Gulf, using specialized equipment to analyze

air quality and particulate matter on shore.

They found that the vast majority of small particles - which can penetrate deep into the lungs, resulting in greater health risk - were manmade, mainly from the production and use of fossil fuels. Writing in the journal Communications Earth & Environment, they showed how the region is blanketed in particularly harmful compounds such as sulfur dioxide, which is a direct result of oil extraction.

Emissions from container vessels in one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world also contributed to the smog. "We have refineries such as those in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates that are a big source of air pollution as well as ships on the Red Sea, and in the Suez Canal region," said Jos Lelieveld,

lead study author from Germany's Max Planck Institute for Chemistry. "So the combination of all of these means that the air is much more polluted than what most people hope it to be."

The team used health and mortality metrics to calculate the number of excess deaths caused by air pollution in the MENA region annually. The percentage of fossil-fuel driven mortality varied between nations, with 5.9 percent of deaths in Cyprus attributable to air pollution versus 15.9 in Kuwait. This is a far higher mortality rate than in other industrialized regions. The US and Germany, for example, have 3 percent and 3.7 percent mortality due to air pollution, respectively.

Region-wide, the team calculated that air pollution

from fossil fuel use caused one in eight deaths, noting that air quality there "permanently exceeded" WHO guidelines. "It is very comparable with things that are really of great concern, for example, tobacco smoking and high cholesterol, which are major health risks in the region," Lelieveld told AFP. "And the realization of this in the region is practically zero."

He said that while governments in the region counted on fossil fuel production for the majority of their income, the time would come when the health costs due to pollution compounded growing pressure to decarbonize their economies. "They're not stupid, they know that fossil fuels will end at some point," said Lelieveld. "I'm hoping this is an additional incentive." — AFP

News in brief



Shark spotted in Kuwait waters

KUWAIT: The interior ministry warned of a 'large shark' spotted in the waters off Sabah Al-Ahmad Sea City, urging seagoers to remain extra cautious. Coordination is ongoing with relevant authorities to take necessary action, it added in a post on Twitter.

CBK raises discount rate to 3 %

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait said on Wednesday it will increase its discount rate by 25 basis points to 3 percent as of Thursday, after the US Federal Reserve's three quarters of a percentage point rate hike. The Kuwaiti dinar is pegged against a basket of currencies that includes the dollar, which gives it more flexibility to stray from Fed policy than other Gulf Arab countries, which have their currencies tied to the dollar. (See Page 8)

Iran unveils new missile

TEHRAN: Iran unveiled a new medium-range ballistic missile on Thursday during a military parade commemorating the Iran-Iraq war, state television said. "The liquid-fueled Rezvan ballistic missile has an operational range of 1,400 km," said the station, which aired images of the missile mounted on a military vehicle. The Rezvan missile was presented in Tehran during an annual parade of the armed forces to commemorate the start of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war. — AFP

Jolie visits Pakistan flood victims

ISLAMABAD: Hollywood star and humanitarian Angelina Jolie has said the flood disaster in Pakistan should be a "wake-up call" for the world regarding climate change, calling for more international aid after meeting with victims. "I've never seen anything like this," said Jolie, who previously visited Pakistan to meet the victims of the devastating 2010 floods and a deadly 2005 earthquake, in footage released on Thursday. "Climate change is not only real and it's not only coming, it's very much here." — AFP

313 remain in poll race; MoI busts vote-buying op

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: As many as 313 candidates will run in the Sept 29 snap National Assembly polls after 65 candidates pulled out of the race at the close of withdrawals on Thursday. The candidates include 291 males and 22 females, according to the election department of the interior ministry. The figure however could change depending on the verdicts of the

country's top courts, which will decide the fate of around 10 candidates who have been barred by an interior ministry commission because they were convicted over criminal and political offenses.

The country is divided into five electoral districts, with each electing 10 MPs for the 50-seat National Assembly. There are some 796,000 voters, of whom women voters are slightly more than their male counterparts. The constitutional court, whose rulings are final and which looks into constitutional matters, yesterday set Sunday as the date to issue its verdict on whether a highly-controversial law is in line with the constitution.

Continued on Page 6

Deaths mount in Iran protests as Internet cut

PARIS: At least 17 people have been killed as popular unrest has flared across Iran over the death in custody of Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini, while a rights group said Thursday the death toll was almost twice as high. Amini, 22, died last week after her arrest by the Islamic republic's feared morality police for allegedly wearing a hijab headscarf in an "improper" way, and news of her death sparked widespread outrage.

"Death to the dictator" and "Woman, life, freedom", protesters have been heard shouting in video footage shared widely online during the biggest wave of protests to rock the country in almost three years. The US Treasury placed the morality police on its sanctions blacklist on Thursday, holding it responsible for Amini's death and citing the "abuse and violence against Iranian women and the violation of the rights of peaceful Iranian protesters".

Some Iranian women have burnt their scarves and symbolically cut their hair in protest at the strict dress code, in defiant actions echoed in solidarity protests from New York to Istanbul.

Continued on Page 6

Erdogan arises a key mediator in Ukraine war

ISTANBUL: A mysterious reference on US television to an imminent Russia-Ukraine prisoner swap highlights Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's unique role as mediator and friend of both sides in time of war. Erdogan flew to New York from a meeting in Uzbekistan with Russian President Vladimir Putin - his third in three months - to tell US viewers on Monday that the Kremlin "is willing to end this (war) as soon as possible".

"Two hundred hostages will be exchanged upon agreement between the parties," Erdogan said in the inter-

view without giving away further details. Putin's decision to partially call up reservists and raise the threat of nuclear warfare less than two days later appeared to lay Erdogan's best intentions to waste. But an announcement late Wednesday that Russia and Ukraine were exchanging some 200 prisoners helped to validate Erdogan's efforts to walk a fine line and stay "neutral" in Europe's bloodiest conflict since World War II.

The prisoner swap adds to a growing list of diplomatic successes Erdogan is using to brandish his image as a global statesman nine months before an election that polls show he might conceivably lose. "Turkish diplomacy has been faultless since the start of the war," France's former US and UN ambassador Gerard Araud remarked.

Continued on Page 6



KUWAIT: Money, electronic equipment and copies of the Holy Quran were seized during a raid to bust a vote-buying operation.



TEHRAN: Iranian demonstrators burn a rubbish bin in the capital on Sept 21, 2022 during a protest for Mahsa Amini, days after she died in police custody. — AFP



RIYADH: Prisoners of war arrive from Russia at Riyadh airport on Sept 21, 2022. — AFP

Local

Kuwaiti students value their training experiences in Spain

Kuwait Airways launches direct flights to Madrid

MADRID: Kuwaiti students cherished their experiences in Spain on Thursday with the positive atmosphere and welcome they received during their academic and training experiences, underlining that Spain is a friendly country that offers wide options for growth and development in various fields. This was on the sidelines of their attendance at the Kuwait Airways celebration of launching permanent direct flights to Madrid on Wednesday at the Kuwaiti Embassy in the Spanish capital, on the invitation of Kuwait's Ambassador to Spain Khalifa Al-Kharafi.

In an interview with KUNA, Naira Ramadan, a citizen who studies civil aviation in the Andalusia region of Malaga, said she chose Spain thanks to its suitable climate to learn and master aviation, in addition to Spain's friendly and helpful people. She is about to finish her studies, which lasted around two years, she added, expressing happiness about the new direct flight, pointing out that the strategic partnership with Air Europa is a very crucial step.

Direct flights will make it easier for students, residents and tourists to travel, as Spain is one of the most vital touristic destinations with great demand from Kuwait, she underscored. She encouraged those who wish to learn to fly to come to Spain, while underlining the importance of having some knowledge of the Spanish language to ease communication with its people.

Abdullah Al-Mutairi, an officer on scholarship from the National Guard, said he traveled to Spain to obtain a bachelor's degree in Spanish translation at the Andalusia University of Granada. He told KUNA that he studied Spanish for a year at an academy in Madrid before going to university, say-



MADRID: Kuwait's Ambassador to Spain Khalifa Al-Kharafi with Kuwaiti students studying in Spain. — KUNA photos

ing he was sent on scholarship with four other officers to study translation. Mutairi is ambitious to continue his academic studies and obtain a master's degree in translation, then a doctorate to serve the Kuwait National Guard, Kuwait and its people, appreciating the welcome he received in the cities of Madrid and Granada.

Speaking to KUNA, Fawzia Al-Awadhi, a Kuwaiti chemical engineering trainee, said she was sent with several colleagues through a training program for newly graduated engineers to train at international companies. After the first phase of the training program, which included 15 courses in Kuwait, she was sent to Spain to train at the Tecnicas Reunidas company in Madrid, where there are several courses that

can be taken. She arrived in Spain at the start of September, she said, adding that training in international companies for six months is the second phase of the training program, which ends with the third phase of working in the private sector in Kuwait.

She appreciated the welcome she received in Spain with a positive atmosphere, considering that vocational training is a great opportunity to enhance skills, while encouraging more graduates and scholars to come to Spain. The Kuwaiti students thanked Kuwait's embassy for all the facilities provided to them so that they can take on new academic experiences in Spain.

Kuwait Airways Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Maen Razouqi on Wednesday announced launching



Kuwait Airways Chief Executive Officer Maen Razouqi addresses the gathering.

a new direct flight to Madrid due to high demand for this destination. On the sidelines of the celebration at the Kuwaiti Embassy, Razouqi told KUNA that Madrid is considered to be the capital of Europe and a main tourist destination for most Kuwaiti travelers. He added the partnership with Air Europa will help serve new destinations to Kuwaiti and European passengers, as the number of Kuwaiti tourists is steadily growing.

Kuwait's Ambassador to Spain Khalifa Al-Kharafi said Spain is the number one destination for Kuwaitis. He estimated the number of Kuwaitis who visited Spain this year at over 65,000. He added this move will enhance bilateral relations under the wise leaderships of both nations. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti ministers and senior officials participate in the Saudi Embassy's celebration of National Day. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait shares National Day joy with Saudi Arabia

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil Mohammad Al-Fares said that Kuwaiti people are delighted to share with the Saudi people their joy on the kingdom's National

Day. In statements to reporters during his participation in the Saudi Embassy's celebration of the 92nd National Day of the Saudi Arabia, Fares said this is an occasion dear to all Kuwaitis.

Fares, also Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, wished the kingdom further progress and prosperity. He extended his warmest congratulations to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz, Saudi Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Mohammad bin Salman and the Saudi people on the National Day. — KUNA

UN official affirms Kuwait's role in bolstering peace

KUWAIT: United Nations' Secretary General Representative to Kuwait Tariq Al-Sheikh said on Wednesday that Kuwait's history is teeming with humanitarian values, adding that it sets an example in spreading the culture of peace. This came in press statement during opening ceremony of World Peace Day held at UN House in Kuwait, where he added that Kuwait's continuous efforts in local and international policies counter challenges around the globe and in the region specifically.

Sheikh clarified that UN General Assembly declared

September 21 as World Peace Day by observing 24 hours of non-violence and ceasefire. Achieving peace requires building communities able to boost security and prosperity away from conflicts and according to values of equality, Sheikh said. He added that some of these conflicts coincided with natural disasters of climate change and health crises, which further aggravated the suffering of people and required international intervention to alleviate their burdens.

Kuwait Development Fund official Abdullah Al-Musaibeeh spoke of the fund's role in easing the suffering of people by offering aid through direct grants or collaborating with UN organizations. Chief of UN's International Organization for Migration Mazen Abul-Hassan added that celebrating World Peace Day reinforces the concept of coexistence and rejects racism. He added that Kuwait is an essential partner in peace bolstering operations through its active participation and collaboration on several joint projects. — KUNA

Info minister: Setting plans to meet media challenges 'important'

CAIRO: It is important to exert great effort in setting clear and objective plans to meet future media challenges, a Kuwaiti minister said on Thursday. Speaking at the 52nd session of the Arab Information Ministers Council, Kuwait's Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi said preparing and training Arab media cadres was essential for development. He stressed that youth are an essential part of the media equation, indicating that this sector of society should be provided with adequate

opportunities to create within the media realm.

Traditional and digital media have played an integral role in dealing with current crises affecting the world, noted the minister, saying that individuals and society as a whole are tasked with addressing problems positively and coming up with solutions, whether in the media or elsewhere. Regarding Kuwait's media efforts, Mutairi revealed that his country was up-to-date with technology used in media, indicating that Kuwaitis have included this sector in their plans for development.

Mutairi noted that the messages broadcast by Kuwait maintained the state's stances on several issues including the just Palestinian cause. The minister renewed his condemnation of all acts perpetrated by the Zionist occupiers against Palestinians, saying that Kuwait denounced such heinous crimes against not only Palestine, but also human rights. — KUNA

Govt readies financial reform laws, higher fees for expatriates

KUWAIT: The government has prepared a set of laws that it will approve and send to the new National Assembly as a priority. "The laws will include changes to laws concerning foreign investors, public debt, increasing revenue through amending taxes on companies, increasing rental rates and reducing non-investment expenditures, such as salaries and subsidies, which will be replaced with a law that provides equal salaries to Kuwaitis with the same specialty, as well as employment laws that will force private companies to hire citizens at a specific percentage and increase yearly fines on companies that hire expatriates," sources told Kuwait Times

"One of the most important laws after which the

government will adopt after the economic reforms supporting investment projects such as the northern economic zone, development of islands and Silk City, new regulations for rectifying the demographic imbalance and approving a new iqama law, as expatriates will pay double the fees that citizens pay," sources added.

"Iqama fees will increase along with fees for visit and family reunion visas. Moreover, treatment charges at the health ministry will increase in some sectors, and the government is about to impose private health insurance on all expatriates and transfer private sector employees to private hospitals," the sources said.

The government will temporarily receive expatriate patients working in the public sector initially, but they too will be subsequently transferred to private hospitals within less than a year. Moreover, electricity tariffs are also going to be increased for expat residents, and for those Kuwaitis who own more than one house. "The new iqama law will be approved early in the next Assembly as it is one of the laws that are ready and have been previously approved by most candidates," the sources concluded.

Kuwait pavilion in Ramallah witnessing great attendance

RAMALLAH: Kuwait's pavilion at the Palestine International Book Fair, which is being held on the grounds of the National Library in the city of Ramallah, is witnessing a great turnout by visitors of all ages. The Kuwaiti pavilion includes tens of books on the history of Kuwait and various editions of Al-Arabi Magazine published by the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters as part of its participation, along with the That Al-Salasil bookstore. Kuwait was the guest of honor at the exhibition's 10th edition in 2016, and was also the guest of honor at the Amman International Book Fair a few weeks ago. — KUNA



RAMALLAH: Kuwait's pavilion at the Palestine International Book Fair. — KUNA



Local

Amir's representative meets Iraqi PM to cement relations

PM meets CEOs of US companies, US Chamber of Commerce members



NEW YORK: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi on Wednesday. — KUNA photos



HH Sheikh Ahmad meets CEOs of American companies.



HH Sheikh Ahmad meets Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdullatif Al-Zayani.



HH Sheikh Ahmad meets members of the US Chamber of Commerce.

NEW YORK: Representative of HH the Amir, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, received Wednesday at his residence in New York City Prime Minister of Iraq Mustafa Al-Kadhemi. The meeting, held on the sidelines of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly, was also attended by Kuwait Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah, Undersecretary of HH the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Khaled Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Director of the Office of HH the Prime Minister Hamad Bader Al-Amer and Kuwait Ambassador to the United States Jassem Albudaiwi.

HH Sheikh Ahmad and Kadhemi discussed means to upgrade bilateral relations to serve the interests of the two brotherly peoples as well as issues of common interest on the agenda of the

77th session of the United Nations General Assembly. HH Sheikh Ahmad also received Wednesday Foreign Minister of Bahrain Abdullatif Al-Zayani. They discussed means to bolster bilateral relations to serve the interests of the two brotherly peoples as well as issues of common interest on the agenda of the UNGA session.

HH Sheikh Ahmad also met on Wednesday CEOs of several American companies. The meeting focused on the economic and investment developments in Kuwait and the global economic situation, as well as government measures and programs to encourage international companies and economic institutions to invest in Kuwait to help materialize its plans to diversify income sources, increase the private sector's contributions to the national economy, create new job

opportunities and boost Kuwaiti workers' productivity.

HH the Prime Minister pointed out that his meetings with representatives of American companies came in implementation of HH the Amir's and HH the Crown Prince's directives to open prospects for constructive cooperation with American economic institutions and benefit from their experiences in various fields. He also affirmed Kuwait's readiness to provide all means of support and facilitation for investors and create a solid and developed investment environment.

For his part, KDIPA Director-General Sheikh Mishal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah described HH the Prime Minister's meetings with representatives of American companies as positive and fruitful. He expected that these meetings will help attract new

direct investment flows into Kuwait to achieve the objectives of the New Kuwait vision 2035. He hailed the continuous cooperation between the KDIPA and other relevant government bodies to improve the business environment in order to attract international companies with real added value and create direct job openings for national cadres in all fields and at all administrative levels.

HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad also met Wednesday at his residence in New York City members of the US Chamber of Commerce. The meeting tackled measures taken by Kuwait over commercial and credit facilities to create an attractive commercial and investment environment. They also discussed the laws necessary to improve the business environment and enhance competitiveness and investment opportunities. — KUNA



NEW YORK: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah participates in the meeting of the 20th anniversary of the Arab Peace Initiative. — KUNA

FM denounces continued Zionist aggression

NEW YORK: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah on Wednesday denounced the continued Zionist aggression against the Palestinian people and

their continued expansion and settlement activities. This came during Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nasser's participation in the meeting of the 20th anniversary of the Arab Peace Initiative, which was called by the Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud and the Arab League Secretary-General Ahmad Abul Gheit, and hosted by the EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy Josep Borrell with the participation of the US. Sheikh Ahmad reiterated Kuwait's firm and supportive stance for the just Palestinian cause. — KUNA



KUWAIT: KUNA honors students who participated in the 7th edition of its training program. — KUNA

KUNA concludes training program for 2022-2023

KUWAIT: Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) concluded the seventh edition of its training program on Thursday. The program was launched on Aug 22 with the participation of 19 Kuwait University students. KUNA's Deputy General Director for the editorial sector, Esam Al-Ghanem, commented in a press statement that the program was aimed at

university students as they are the future of journalistic work. The program was carefully curated to keep up with the rapidly evolving developments in the fields of journalism and media, and underscored ways of managing social media platforms, Ghanem added.

Ghanem also mentioned that the program handled the craft of journalistic writing, polishing the skill it requires, and highlighted the importance of seeking accuracy when conveying and spreading news items. Deputy Editorial Chief for international affairs Oqab Al-Qobaa said the students were exposed to principles of writing a news item in all its forms and sources, taking into consideration Arabic language standards. — KUNA

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72.5% of MoE faculty members Kuwaitis, 27.5% non-Kuwaitis

KUWAIT: New hirings in Kuwait by the ministry of education will increase the number of its faculty members from around 88,000 (63,900 Kuwaitis and 24,300 non-Kuwaitis) to around 90,000, mostly in teaching or managerial positions, maintaining the percentage of employees as determined by the Civil Service Bureau at 27.5 percent for non-Kuwaitis and 72.5 percent for Kuwaitis.

Local hirings of faculty members exceeded 167 teachers until last week, which is less than the 1,000 teachers stipulated to be recruited. Foreign contracts are expected to decrease due to prospective employees declining appointments, with the ministry hiring 80 to 90 Jordanian teachers. All new hirings have been done for specific specializations which the ministry lacks.

The administrative sector at the ministry has completed its duties over the preparation for the new academic year. To make up the shortfall in employees, it plans to hire around 790 local and foreign teachers according to the needs of public education. Out of 170 teachers who were interviewed, contracts have been signed with 129 teachers, who will gradually join from October.

An administrative team has been formed to complete procedures regarding new teachers at the health and interior ministries in coordination with Kuwait airport to receive them as soon as approval from the Civil Service Commission is received. The committee appointed to hire teachers from Palestine has contracted around 500 teachers specializing in Physics and Mathematics to make up for the shortage of contracts with Jordanian teachers, which was supposed to reach 280 teachers, as previously the ministry had planned to only contract 365 Palestinian teachers.

Undersecretary resigns

Meanwhile, Education Minister Ali Al-Mudhaf has accepted the resignation of his undersecretary for private education Abdulmehsen Al-Huwaila, effective from Sept 28. Meanwhile, the head of the public service department at the ministry Feras Kurtch, said the department has reinforced some educational areas with more than 940 assistants, as procedures with five cleaning contracts have been completed and five other contracts for security have been finalized. Some will start their services in October and others in January. Kurtch appreciated the efforts of all workers in the ministry, and wished them the best for the upcoming school year.

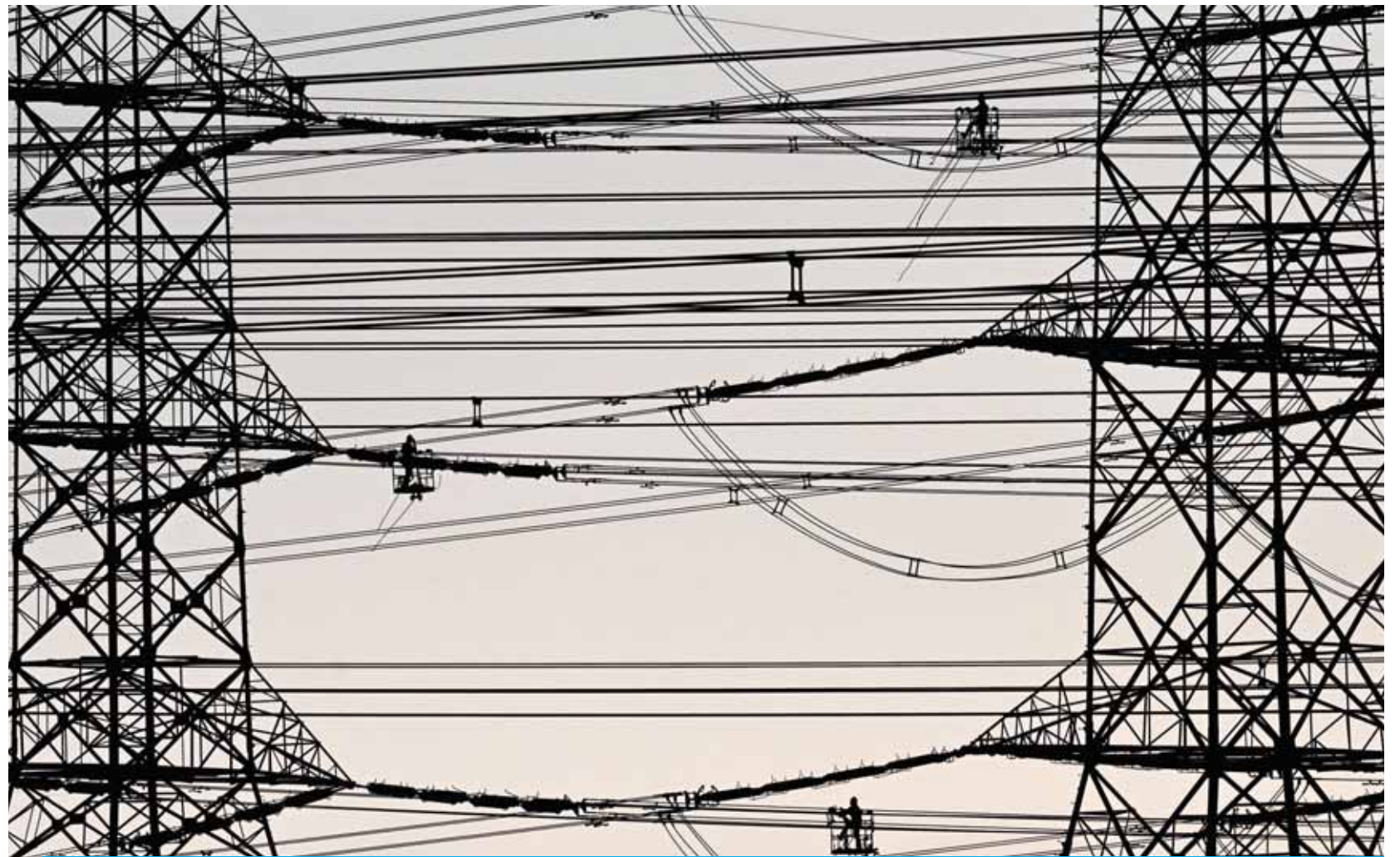
MoI to receive 60 schools for upcoming polls

KUWAIT: The Cabinet will hold a meeting on Monday to review government preparations for the National Assembly elections on Thursday, which will be a national holiday to facilitate the polling process. "The meeting will look at the education ministry's preparation of 60 schools across all governorates for the interior ministry next week, and the Municipality will take over the handing over process, which will ensure their cleanliness before and after the elections. After ensuring the security of election panels, the judicial authority will begin its management of the election with more than a 1,000 judges and prosecutors who will be heading election panels and supervising the election," government sources told Kuwait Times.

The interior ministry has provided service-men to secure election locations and organize movement in nearby streets. "The meeting will ensure the transparency of the election process. The international media will be covering the election at the invitation of the information ministry, who provided them with an information center that is planned to open next week, which will include all communication devices that will facilitate their media mission. Also in attendance will be organizations that will ensure transparent elections to empower democracies around the world," the sources said.

"The Cabinet will meet after the elections for constitutional procedures to officially resign, after which His Highness the Amir will form a new government, which is expected to be led by Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf or someone else after the first meeting of the new Assembly," the sources added.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Workers maintain power lines in Jahra governorate. — Xinhua

Spotlight on Kuwaiti movie 'Bas Ya Bahr' at UAE forum



SHARJAH: Actors of the Kuwaiti movie "Bas Ya Bahr" at the Sharjah Narrator Forum. — KUNA

SHARJAH: Eminent Kuwaiti artists have shed light on the Kuwaiti movie "Bas Ya Bahr" during their participation in the 22nd edition of the Sharjah International Narrator's Forum. During a seminar on "sea stories", veteran Kuwaiti actor Saad Al-Faraj spoke about the epic Kuwaiti cinematic film "Bas Ya Bahr", revealing that this movie that had won international awards paved his path to becoming a professional actor.

Faraj also recalled when he used to weep

when his father would go on a diving journey at sea, revealing that the emotions expressed in the film were sincere and mirrored his bitter personal childhood experience. His peer, the equally renowned Hayat Al-Fahad, said she was elated with the honoring of the film's actors, noting that it is also an honoring of the ancestors who earned their bread from venturing into the sea in the olden times.

Actor Mohammad Al-Mansour recalled his late



Sharjah Institute for Heritage honors the actors of "Bas Ya Bahr".

fellow Khaled Al-Sideeq, who played a major role in "Bas Ya Bahr", describing it as a major documentary for Kuwait and the Gulf for shedding light on the perils the ancestors had to endure while seeking to make a living. In another seminar held within the framework of the forum, Kuwaiti writer Talal Al-Rumaidhi addressed attendees with a document on diving heritage in Kuwait, namely diving for pearls. Most natives of the Gulf, in the olden times, used to live by pearl diving, he affirmed. — KUNA

Royal Enfield One Ride 2022: More exciting and engaging

KUWAIT: Kuwait Automotive Imports Co (Al Shaya & Al Sagar), the official Dealers for Royal Enfield, organized the 11th edition of the One Ride event for Royal Enfield enthusiasts in Kuwait. In April 2011, 11 years ago, the first One Ride kick-started, which has now transformed into one of the largest, calendared, annual celebratory ride of Royal Enfield enthusiasts.

With a specific route and destination in mind, some on their own, others with friends - ride freely - purely for the pleasure of motorcycling on their Royal Enfields, a world greatly changed, a world that needs each one of us to be more mindful. We are shifting gears from a ride of just pure pleasure to riding for awareness around responsible travel. A change that will enable us to continue discovering the spaces in which we find energy, beauty, solace, and ourselves. This One ride, the community of Royal Enfield riders, can mobilize their strength to lead this change towards responsible travel by doing their little bit to #LeaveEveryPlaceBetter.

Ashish Tandon, General Manager of KAICO Al Shaya & Al Sagar, said: "We are glad to be associated with a premium brand like Royal Enfield. Through this event, we express the unity that brings together all Royal Enfield riders and encourage the rider community." He announced a special offer of a two-year free service package for new Royal Enfield owners. Vinu Kumar, Sr Divisional Manager (Fleet & Leasing) at KAICO Al Shaya & Al Sagar, a passionate rider himself, said: "It's a great initiative taken to interact with the rider community and address their issues and challenges, providing an amicable solution."



Issa Abdallah, Marketing Manager of KAICO Al Shaya & Al Sagar added: "It was a pleasure to host Royal Enfield enthusiasts in Kuwait. Getting in touch with the riders again on the occasion of One Ride 2022 was a timely opportunity to encourage them to become change agents while they are sensitized about the local ecosystem, community and challenges to ensure that they do their bit".

KAICO team's Shaik Badiur Rahman and Mohamed Ali Koudhai were also present at the event to socialize and communicate with the riders, welcoming them for a check-up of their motorcycles at the dealership. The global adventure touring has successfully established itself as a genuinely worldwide motorcycle and has been among the most sought-after bike for Royal Enfield across several geographies.

The Himalayan 410cc, the event's star, is available at an exceptional price. Developed in 2016,

Himalayan was a category first and a very versatile and accessible motorcycle. Over the years, together with feedback from our riding community, we have consistently evolved the Himalayan design and functionality and improved the overall ride experience. This has resonated very well with millions of adventure enthusiasts worldwide, who now have new variants to choose from. The new Royal Enfield Himalayan will be available in three new colourways - the new Granite Grey, Mirage Silver, and Pine Green.

Inspired by the newly launched motorcycle, Royal Enfield has also bought a new range of apparel. The collection also has a lifestyle apparel range, consisting of a lightweight jersey with armor pockets on shoulders and elbows and a curated range of t-shirts, sweatshirts, and headgear. These will be available across the Royal Enfield dealerships in Kuwait.

China’s former justice minister faces life in prison for bribery



MOSCOW: Police officers detain a man following calls to protest against partial mobilization announced by Russian President, in Moscow, on September 21, 2022. —AFP

Russian invasion has cost Ukraine \$1tn

‘I don’t want to die’: Russians flee abroad after Putin’s call-up

FRANKFURT/KYIV: Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has caused almost \$1 trillion of damage, a Kyiv government official said Thursday, as the war batters the country’s economy.

In terms of “direct and indirect costs” Ukraine had suffered “somewhere close to \$1 trillion” in damages, said Oleg Ustenko, economic advisor to President Volodymyr Zelensky. The figure was equivalent to five times Ukraine’s annual GDP before the invasion in February, Ustenko said at an event hosted by the German Council on Foreign Relations in Berlin.

The official previously estimated the damage caused by invading Russian forces in the first two weeks of the war totaled around \$100 billion. The destruction and displacement as a result of the conflict was a “significant problem for public financing”, Ustenko said.

Many businesses that had not been destroyed were “not working at full capacity or they are working just several hours a day”, he said. “It means that the budget is going to receive much less compared with what was expected initially.” Despite drastic cuts to government spending, the Ukrainian government was running a deficit of five billion euros (\$4.9 billion) per month since the invasion, Ustenko said.

In 2023, Kyiv expected the gap to narrow to around 3.5 billion euros, he added. Allies have rushed to pump Ukraine with aid to fill the gap, with the World Bank, European Union and G7 countries pledging billions in cash. The Ukrainian government expected the economy to shrink by 35 to 40 per cent this year, Ustenko said.

The drop was the “deepest decline in our GDP that we have experienced since 1991” and the founding of the modern Ukrainian state, he added.

Kremlin proxies in Ukraine double down ahead of votes

KYIV: Kremlin-installed officials in Ukrainian regions controlled by Moscow’s forces vowed on Thursday to press ahead with polls this week on annexation by Russia, after world leaders condemned the votes and said the results would be void. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov was expected to defend what Ukraine’s allies are calling an unlawful land grab, during a UN Security Council meeting called by France over rights abuses in Ukraine.

Four Russian-occupied regions of Ukraine—Donetsk and Lugansk in the east and Kherson and Zaporizhzhia in the south—announced that they would hold the votes over five days, beginning on Friday. Vladimir Saldo, the Moscow-installed head of Kherson, which fell early into the Russian invasion, said the referendum would go ahead in his region regardless of the criticism. “The date has been set. We have the green light. Voting begins tomorrow and nothing can prevent this,” he told Russian state-run media.

“People have been waiting and they’re demanding that this vote is held soon,” he added. Western leaders convening in New York this week unanimously condemned the ballots. Speaking at the United Nations, US President Joe Biden accused Russian

US sanctions Iran morality police after woman’s death

WASHINGTON: The United States placed Iran’s morality police on its sanctions blacklist Thursday following the death in custody of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old arrested for allegedly wearing her hijab headscarf improperly. The US Treasury said the morality police were “responsible” for Amini’s death, which has sparked an outpouring of popular anger, as it announced the sanctions “for abuse and violence against Iranian women and the violation of the rights of peaceful Iranian protesters.”

The sanctions move was taken as violent protests erupt-

Russians flee

Dmitri flew to Armenia with just one small bag, leaving behind his wife and children, adding to the thousands fleeing Russia to avoid serving in the war against Ukraine.

“I don’t want to go to the war,” he told AFP. “I don’t want to die in this senseless war. This is a fratricidal war.” Russian President Vladimir Putin’s decision this week to mobilize several hundred thousand reservists has spurred a fresh exodus over the country’s borders. “The situation in Russia would make anyone want to leave,” said another new arrival, 44-year-old Sergei, who arrived with his teenage son.

Looking lost and exhausted in an Armenian airport, he confirmed that they had fled “because of the mobilization”, but refused to give his full name. “We choose not to wait to be called up,” said his 17-year-old son Nikolai. “I am not panicking, but I feel this uncertainty,” he added. It was a sentiment shared by other Russians arriving off the same flight to Yerevan. “It’s wrong to go to war in the 21st century—to put it mildly,” Alexei, 39, told AFP. He was not sure if he would ever be able to return to Russia, he added. “It all depends on the situation.”

‘False information’

Military-aged men made up the majority of those arriving

President Vladimir Putin of “shamelessly” violating the UN Charter with a war aimed at “extinguishing Ukraine’s right to exist as a state”.

The integration of the war-scarred regions into Russia would represent a major escalation of the conflict, as Moscow could then try to say it was defending its own territory from Ukrainian forces. After the votes were announced by his proxy officials in Ukraine, Putin announced that Russia would call up some 300,000 reservists to bolster the war effort and cautioned that Moscow would use “all means” to protect its territory. Former Russian leader Dmitry Medvedev said in a statement on social media that those means included “strategic nuclear weapons”. He predicted the voting regions “will integrate into Russia”.

For most observers, the results of the concurrent votes are already a foregone conclusion and were rushed because Ukrainian forces were making sweeping gains in a counter-offensive to recapture the east. The referendums are reminiscent of a similar ballot in 2014 that saw the Crimean Peninsula in Ukraine annexed by Russia. Western capitals said the vote was fraudulent and hit Moscow with sanctions in response. Election officials in the Donetsk region, which has been partially controlled since 2014 by Moscow-backed separatists, said that voting would take place door-to-door for the first days. But it would only be possible in polling stations on the final day, Tuesday.

Putin’s move this week to call up reservists for Ukraine sparked small protests across Russia, resulting in more than 1,300 people being detained.

ed across Iran following the death last week of Iranian-Kurdish Amini, who had been arrested by the public morality unit of the national police.

“Mahsa Amini was a courageous woman whose death in morality police custody was yet another act of brutality by the Iranian regime’s security forces against its own people,” said Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen. “We condemn this unconscionable act in the strongest terms and call on the Iranian government to end its violence against women and its ongoing violent crackdown on free expression and assembly,” Yellen said in a statement.

According to an official count, at least 17 people have died in unrest following Amini’s death as women burned their headscarves and protesters denounced the government leadership and restrictions on women. The Oslo-based non-government group Iran Human Rights said at least 31 civilians had been killed in six nights of violence.

The Treasury also placed sanctions on Mohammad

off the latest flight from Moscow. Many were reluctant to speak. Yerevan has become a major destination for Russians fleeing since war began on February 24. Since then, Armenia says at least 40,000 Russians have arrived in the small Caucasus country, once a part of the Soviet Union.

Nearly 50,000 Russians have fled to neighboring Georgia, national statistics from June showed.

The Kremlin on Thursday dismissed as “fake” reports that Russians eligible for mobilization were rushing for the exit. “A great deal of false information has emerged about this,” said spokesman Dmitry Peskov. But flights out of Russia were nearly fully booked for the week ahead to cities in the nearby former Soviet countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. And Putin’s call-up order did not just provoke a dash for the exit—there were protests too.

Police arrested more than 1,300 people Wednesday at demonstrations against mobilization across Russia, according to one group monitoring protests, OVD-Info. On social networks, there were fears Russia would seal its borders.

But Germany’s Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said Thursday Russian deserters could “obtain international protection” in her country.

UN chief urges probe into Ukraine war ‘catalog of cruelty’



NEW YORK: Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, with French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna, speaks to the press outside the UN Security Council at the UN Headquarters on September 22, 2022 in New York. —AFP

Flights out of Russia to neighboring countries, mainly former Soviet republics that allow Russians visa-free entry, are nearly entirely booked and prices have skyrocketed, pointing to an exodus of Russian wanting to avoid going to war. Looking lost and exhausted in the arrivals hall of the airport in the capital of Armenia, 44-year-old Sergei said he had fled Russia to escape being called up. “The situation in Russia would make anyone want to leave,” he told AFP on condition of anonymity. Dmitry, 45, said he flew to Armenia from one of Russia’s eastern regions with one small bag, leaving behind his wife and two children and with “no clue what I’ll be doing here”. —AFP

Rostami Cheshmeh Gachi, the head of the morality police, Haj Ahmad Mirzaei, the head of the morality police’s Tehran division, and five other senior security officials involved in the repressions of protesters.

It said Rostami had announced earlier this year that women would be punished for refusing to wear a hijab. “The Iranian government needs to end its systemic persecution of women and allow peaceful protest,” said US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

“The United States will continue to voice our support for human rights in Iran and hold those who violate them to account,” he said in a statement.

Treasury sanctions aim to freeze any assets those designated might have under US jurisdiction and forbid any American individuals or companies—including international banks with US operations—from doing business with them, effectively limiting their access to global financial networks. —AFP

‘Drink it anyway’: Syria water woes peak in cholera outbreak

Hamas warns over Jewish visits to Al-Aqsa mosque

GAZA CITY: Hamas threatened “repercussions” over Jewish visits to Jerusalem’s super-sensitive Al-Aqsa mosque compound, in a warning issued Thursday, days before the start of the Jewish high holidays when visitor numbers increase. The mosque compound in the Old City of Zionist-annexed east Jerusalem has been the focus of tensions for years, but Palestinians have voiced increasing anger at the rising number of visits by Jews, who revere the compound as their holiest site, the Temple Mount.

Mahmud Zahar, a senior member of the Islamist group which rules Gaza, warned “the continuation of the Zionist aggression and their brutality against Jerusalem and the holy shrines will be the cause of a major battle.”

Speaking in a rare press conference in Gaza’s Omari mosque, Zahar alluded to Palestinian concerns that a longstanding convention by which Jews may visit but not pray in the compound was being covertly flouted. He said Zionist entity would be held “fully responsible for the repercussions of these violations.” Beyadenu, a group that encourages Jews to visit the Al-Aqsa compound, said it was committed to increasing such visits. “We broke the 50,000 visitor barrier on the Temple Mount” this past year, Beyadenu said ahead of the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashana.

Tom Nissani, the group’s chief executive said: “the goal is 100,000 visitors next (Jewish) year”, which begins on Sunday night. Zionist far-right lawmaker Itamar Ben-Gvir, who has led multiple actions in Jerusalem in the past designed to provoke Palestinians, tweeted Thursday that he “went up to the Temple Mount this morning to pray and exercise sovereignty in the holiest place for the people of Zionist entity.”

Thousands of Jews-Zionists and tourists—are expected to visit Jerusalem’s Old City during the high holidays, which run into mid-October. Zionist entity captured the Old City, along with rest of east Jerusalem, in the Six-Day War of 1967. —AFP

International

‘Drink it anyway’: Syria water woes peak in cholera outbreak

Al-Kasrah hospital uses contaminated water from Euphrates River

AL-KASRAH, Syria: In a Syria hospital crowded with women and wailing children, Ahmad Al-Mohammad writhed in pain beside his wife after they contracted cholera, which is resurging for the first time in years. During his six days in treatment, Mohammad has watched patients stream into the Al-Kasrah hospital in the eastern province of Deir Ezzor, where the highly-polluted Euphrates River is a major source of contaminated water used for both drinking and irrigation.

“We have suffered from diarrhea, vomiting and pain... because we drink directly from the Euphrates River,” the 45-year-old told AFP from the hospital, barely able to speak. “The waters of the Euphrates are polluted but we have no other choice.” Cholera is generally contracted from contaminated food or water and spreads in residential areas that lack proper sewerage networks or mains drinking water.

The disease is making its first major comeback since 2009 in Syria, where nearly two-thirds of water treatment plants, half of pumping stations and one-third of water towers have been damaged by more than a decade of war, according to the United Nations.

The Syrian government has announced 23 deaths and more than 250 cholera cases across six of the country’s 14 provinces since the start of the outbreak in September, with most cases concentrated in the northern province of Aleppo. The semi-autonomous Kurdish administration that runs north-east Syria and parts of Deir Ezzor has recorded 16 deaths and 78 cases in areas under its control, including 43 cases in western Deir Ezzor, health official Juan Mustafa told reporters Wednesday.

He said water testing of the Euphrates proved the presence of bacteria responsible for cholera-a spread he said was caused by reduced water flow.

River pollution

Said to have once flowed through the biblical Garden of Eden, the Euphrates runs for almost 2,800 kilometers (1,700 miles) across Turkey, Syria and Iraq. In times of rain, it has offered abundant supplies, gushing into northern Syria through the Turkish border and flowing diagonally across the war-torn country towards Iraq.

But drought and rising temperatures linked to climate change have severely diminished water levels, with the Euphrates experiencing historic lows. Syria’s Kurds have also accused Turkey of holding back more water than necessary in its dams. The reduced water flow has compounded the problem of river pollution, largely from sewage, but also from oil in hydrocarbon-rich regions, including Deir Ezzor.

Despite the contamination, over five million of Syria’s about 18 million people rely on the Euphrates for their drinking water, according to the UN.

The cost of this reliance was visible in Al-Kasrah hospital, where a man softly cradled his infant, an intravenous tube piercing the child’s tiny hand. Hospital director Tarek Alaeddine said the facility admits dozens of suspected cholera cases every day and has tallied hundreds of cases over the past three weeks. “The patients were all drinking water delivered by trucks that extract it directly from the Euphrates River, without filtering or sterilization,” Alaeddine said.

“We appeal to all international organizations working on health and the environment to act quickly and urgently,” he said.

‘We must live’

The Britain-based war monitor Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said early this month that the disease had spread in western parts of Deir Ezzor after local authorities stopped distributing chlorine to



AL-KASRAH, Syria: A child suffering from cholera receives treatment at the Al-Kasrah hospital in Syria’s eastern province of Deir Ezzor, on September 17, 2022, affected by the usage of contaminated water from the Euphrates River, a major source for both drinking and irrigation. —AFP

water pumping stations. The Kurdish administration, which controls parts of Deir Ezzor including Al-Kasrah, said they have resumed distribution following the outbreak.

They also announced assistance to Al-Kasrah and other medical facilities in the region to help contain the number of cases. But the main source of the problem remains largely unresolved.

Iran protests pose new test for clerical leadership

TEHRAN: Women setting their headscarves ablaze and chanting anti-regime slogans. Pictures of the leadership defaced and burned. Vehicles belonging to the security forces set on fire.

The images of the protests in Iran are indicative of the taboo-breaking nature of a movement that erupted after the death of Mahsa Amini, 22, following her arrest by the notorious morality police.

A country where street dissent is tightly controlled, Iran has seen bursts of protest in recent years, notably the 2009 “Green Movement” that followed disputed elections, protests in November 2019 over fuel price rises, and rallies this year over the cost of living. But analysts say that these protests present a new challenge to the Islamic system under supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 83, as they are now taking place nationwide, have support across social classes and ethnic groups and were instigated by women.

Amini, also known by her Kurdish first name of Jhina, was visiting Tehran with her family last week when she was arrested for purportedly violating Iran’s strict dress code rules for women, in place since shortly after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. She fell into a coma hours after her arrest and died in hospital on September 16.

Farmer Ahmad Suleiman al-Rashid, 55, said he irrigated his fields of cotton, okra, spinach and sesame using water from the Euphrates, which caused contamination of crops.

“There are no water filtering stations... we drink unsterilized and unchlorinated water and rely on God for protection,” he said “What else can we do? The authorities are to blame.” —AFP

Activists contend she was ill-treated in detention and could have suffered a blow to the head. While this is not confirmed by the authorities, the anger fuelled the protests that started from her funeral last Saturday. “These are the biggest protests since November 2019,” said Ali Fathollah-Nejad, Iran expert at the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut.

“While the last two nationwide uprisings were led by the lower classes and were triggered by socio-economic degradation, this time the trigger was socio-cultural and political, comparable to the 2009 Green Movement,” he told AFP.

The 2009 movement had been driven by demands by the middle class for fair elections and the 2019 protests by the anger of the lower classes, he said. “Current conditions in Iran suggest that there may be a tendency toward unifying both groups. The outrage over Amini’s death is shared by both the middle and lower classes,” said Fathollah-Nejad. The protests also come at a particularly sensitive time for the leadership, when the Iranian economy remains mired in a crisis largely caused by international sanctions over its nuclear program.

Despite repeated warnings from Europe that time is running out, there is also no indication that the sides are on the verge of agreeing a deal to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear accord (JCPOA) that would see sanctions eased. The protests have featured chants of “death to the dictator” as well as other anti-regime slogans and the emergence of a new rallying cry, “Zan, zendegi, azadi” (“Woman, life, freedom”). — AFP

Iran demonstrations hit home for diaspora women

PARIS: As Iranian women bare their heads and burn Islamic veils in demonstrations that have met nationwide repression, hopes and emotions are also running high among those living abroad.

Several people have died in protests that broke out after Iranian authorities announced the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini on September 16. Amini, who was from the northeastern province of Kurdistan, was arrested by the Islamic republic’s feared morality police, enforcers of the strict dress code for women.

Activists say she died after a fatal blow to the head, an account denied by authorities, who have promised an investigation. “(She) went to Tehran to visit her family. I told my mum that could easily have been me, or my sister, or my cousins,” said Sara, a 48-year-old teacher living in France, who like several others interviewed asked for her last name not to be published. “That girl wasn’t even an activist, just a normal girl like me... That’s what’s different about this time. It’s what’s affected and shocked people,” she added.

Sara nervously recalls how she herself was arrested by the morality police on a trip to Iran when she was in her 30s. She was held in the same Iran detention centre where Amini was kept and was “very afraid”.



NAJAF, Iraq: A woman wears a necklace bearing pictures of slain Iranian and Iraqi commanders, respectively Qasem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis, as pilgrims march towards Iraq’s holy city of Karbala. —AFP

‘Women leading the charge’

Iranians, women among them, have staged highly visible demonstrations against the regime before, most memorably in 2009. But “what’s unprecedented about these protests is that women are leading the charge”, said Azadeh Kian, a sociology professor specializing in Iran at Paris Cite University.

“The economic crisis, unemployment and political immobility” have been the main focus of demonstrations over the past five years, Kian said. “But this time, we’re hearing protests not just against the general situation in the country, but also for women’s rights. That’s an important change.” — AFP

313 remain in poll race; MoI busts...

Continued from Page 1

The law, passed by the 2013 Assembly and amended by the 2016 parliament, bars for life from running for public office all those convicted of insulting the Almighty, prophets and HH the Amir. The law also applies to older offenses. At the same time, the court of cassation was due to con-

Erdogan arises a key mediator...

Continued from Page 1

“It has evaluated its interests, found a balance between the warring parties and used firmness when necessary while taking advantage of the circumstance.”

Erdogan can now take credit for playing a direct role in orchestrating the only two tangible agreements between Moscow and Kyiv in the seven-month war. A UN-backed deal signed in Istanbul in July resumed Ukrainian grain deliveries across the Black Sea for the first time since Russia’s Feb 24 invasion. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the shipments “a beacon of hope” for famine-ravaged parts of the world.

The prisoner swap features an arrangement to keep five Ukrainian commanders - including those defending the Azovstal steel plant from a Russian onslaught against Mariupol - stowed away in a secret location in Istanbul. Erdogan is also offering to help mediate in the ominous military standoff around Ukraine’s Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. And he still hopes to bring Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky together for truce talks that neither side particularly

vene on Thursday evening to discuss petitions filed by the government against the 10 candidates, demanding that they should be barred from running in the election. The court’s verdicts are final.

Meanwhile, the interior ministry announced on Thursday that it had stormed a house and arrested an unspecified number of people who were preparing to buy votes. This is the second alleged vote-buying case to be busted by the interior ministry. The first case, announced a few days ago, had been referred to the public prosecution for investigation. The ministry statement made no details about the case and did not provide the name of the candidate involved in the vote buying operation.

wants - but which Turkish officials insist are both essential and realistic. “Of all states, Turkey is best placed to broker a deal between the two sides,” said London-based political risk consultant Anthony Skinner.

Erdogan has followed a deceptively simple approach to the war: he has supplied Ukraine with weapons while using Moscow’s diplomatic isolation to his advantage by dramatically cranking up trade with Russia. Turkish combat drones have gained legendary status in Ukraine because they helped destroy the main Russian armored columns that tried to seize Kyiv in the first weeks of the war. And Russian trade and tourists have helped to keep Turkey’s teetering economy from completely collapsing in the run-up to presidential and parliament polls in June.

“Putin and Erdogan have dealt with each other for a long time and have, on balance, been able to manage their differences on a range of issues,” Skinner said. “Ukraine is no different. Kyiv has been frustrated by the Turkish government’s failure to turn the screws on Moscow, but Ukraine also benefits immensely from Turkey’s ongoing support in the conflict.”

Turkey’s approach Soner Cagaptay describes Erdogan’s approach as “pro-Ukrainian neutrality”. “Erdogan has tried to balance between being pro-Ukraine and avoiding an overtly anti-Russia stance,” Cagaptay wrote in a report for the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. But there are signs that Erdogan’s policy has its limits. — AFP

Deaths mount in Iran protests...

Continued from Page 1

The Oslo-based non-government group Iran Human Rights said at least 31 civilians had been killed in Iran’s crackdown during six nights of violence against protesters in over 30 towns and cities.

Iranians have rallied “to achieve their fundamental rights and human dignity... and the government is responding to their peaceful protest with bullets,” charged the group’s director Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam. Security forces have fired at crowds with birdshot and metal pellets, and also deployed tear gas and water cannon, said Amnesty International and other human rights groups.

Demonstrators have hurled stones at them, set fire to police cars and chanted anti-government slogans, the official IRNA news agency said. On Thursday, Iranian media said three militiamen “mobilized to deal with rioters” had been stabbed or shot dead, in northwestern Tabriz, central Qazvin and northeastern Mashhad. Unprecedented images have shown protesters defacing or burning images of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and late Revolutionary Guards commander Qasem Soleimani.

There were fears violence could escalate further after Iran restricted Internet access and blocked messaging apps including WhatsApp and Instagram, as they have done during past crackdowns. The two apps were the most widely used in Iran after the blocking of other platforms in recent years, including Facebook, Twitter, Telegram, YouTube and TikTok. “People in Iran are being cut off from online apps and services,” Instagram chief Adam Mosseri tweeted, adding that “we hope their right to be online will be reinstated quickly”.

Activists have said that Amini, whose Kurdish first name is Jhina, suffered a fatal blow to the head

after her arrest in Tehran - a claim denied by officials, who have announced an investigation. Iranian women on the streets of Tehran told AFP they were now more careful about their dress to avoid run-ins with the morality police. “I’m frightened,” said Nazanin, a 23-year-old nurse who asked to be identified by her first name only for safety reasons, adding she believed the morality police “shouldn’t confront people at all”.

US President Joe Biden in an address to the UN General Assembly on Wednesday said that “we stand with the brave citizens and the brave women of Iran who right now are demonstrating to secure their basic rights”. Iran’s ultraconservative President Ebrahim Raisi, also speaking at the UN, complained of a “double standard” and pointed to Zionist actions in the Palestinian territories and the deaths of indigenous women in Canada. The protests are among the most serious in Iran since Nov 2019 unrest sparked by a sharp rise in petrol prices. The crackdown then killed hundreds, according to Amnesty. The unrest comes at a particularly sensitive time for the leadership, as the Iranian economy remains mired in a crisis largely caused by sanctions over its nuclear program.

Iran’s powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps labelled the protests a “conspiracy of the enemy” and “a vain attempt doomed to failure”, while praising the “efforts and sacrifices of the police”. It also denounced what it called “the psychological operation and the excessive media war” during the protests which it said had been started “under the pretext of the death of one of the compatriots”.

A rally in support of the hijab and a conservative dress code for women was announced for Friday by Iran’s Islamic Development Coordination Council, IRNA reported. Demonstrations would be held across Iran, the news agency said, “to condemn the indecent actions” of those who had insulted Islam and the nation, destroyed public property, undermined public security and “desecrated the women’s hijab”. — AFP

International

China's former justice minister faces life in prison for bribery

High-profile sentencing part of a sweeping anti-graft campaign

BEIJING: China's former justice minister faces life in prison after a court handed him a suspended death sentence on Thursday for taking bribes and "bending the law". Fu Zhenghua's death sentence will be commuted to life imprisonment after a two-year reprieve, the Intermediate People's Court in the city of Changchun said in a statement.

The high-profile sentencing-part of a sweeping anti-graft campaign-comes just three weeks before a key political meeting where President Xi Jinping is expected to secure an unprecedented third term.

The court said former politician Fu had abused his power while in a range of senior positions from 2005 to 2021. "(He is) deprived of political rights for life and all personal property should be confiscated," it added.

Fu, 67, had accepted bribes worth over 117 million yuan (\$16.5 million), the court said.

Between 2014 and 2015, when Fu was head of the Beijing Public Security Bureau, the court said he hid evidence of suspected crimes committed by his brother, Fu Weihua, and failed to handle the case in accordance with the law.

Anti-corruption drive

During his tenure as Beijing's top cop, Fu is thought to have led the corruption investigation into Zhou Yongkang, the former security chief who was jailed in 2015 in one of the anti-graft campaign's most high-profile cases. Fu was a member of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission and the minister of justice before entering semi-retirement in May 2020.

He was serving as the deputy director of the social and legal affairs committee on the standing committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) — a largely ceremonial advisory body-when anti-graft authorities launched an investigation into his dealings last October.

More than a million officials have been punished under the anti-corruption campaign, which critics say has also served as a means to remove Xi's political enemies since he came to power in 2013.

The Chinese leader has accelerated the pace of the anti-graft campaign in the run-up to the party congress in mid-October. Separately on Thursday,

the former head of Jiangsu province's Political and Legal Committee was handed a suspended death sentence for taking bribes worth more than 440 million yuan (\$62 million), CCTV reported.

The court also convicted Wang Like of bribing disgraced former vice-minister of public security Sun Lijun, who pleaded guilty to accepting more than 646 million yuan (\$91.2 million) in bribes in July. Sun has yet to be sentenced. Three former police chiefs were given harsh sentences for corruption on Wednesday, accused of being part of Sun Lijun's "political clique".

Gong Daoan, former police chief of Shanghai; Deng Huilin, former police chief of Chongqing; and Liu Xinyun, former police chief of coal-rich Shanxi province, were sentenced in separate courts in Hebei province. Gong, former deputy mayor and director of the Shanghai Public Security Bureau, was given a life sentence for accepting bribes worth 73.43 million yuan (\$10.4 million), state broadcaster CCTV reported.

Deng, the former director of the Chongqing Public Security Bureau, was jailed for 15 years for



Former Chinese Justice Minister Fu Zhenghua

taking 42.67 million yuan (\$6 million) in bribes, CCTV said. Liu, the former top cop in Shanxi, was imprisoned for 14 years for taking bribes worth 13.33 million (\$1.9 million), CCTV reported. —AFP

HK arrests doctors, patients for vaccine exemption 'fraud'

HONG KONG: Several Hong Kong doctors and more than 20 patients have been arrested over allegedly fraudulent vaccine exemption certificates, police announced Thursday. Coronavirus vaccines are not mandatory in Hong Kong but the Chinese city uses a QR healthcode system that denies unvaccinated people access to most public premises. Only those with an exemption certificate issued by a doctor can still access such venues.

Police announced that five doctors, three assistants and 22 patients were arrested this month on charges of "conspiracy to defraud" after tip-offs. The offence carries up to 14 years in jail.

The five doctors are accused of having issued nearly 24,000 exemptions, with prices ranging from HK\$350 to over HK\$5,000 (\$44-\$640). Police said the doctors had issued a suspiciously large number of certificates and allegedly ignored guidelines for who could be exempted.

"Citizens who avoid vaccination by making false statements are endangering public security and public health," acting senior superintendent Cheung Man-Chun told reporters. Hong Kong has pursued a version of China's zero-Covid model throughout the pandemic with strict social distancing curbs and mandatory quarantine, even as rivals reopen. The fully vaccinated rate is around 90 percent but the government has had less success persuading the elderly-the most at-risk demographic-to inoculate themselves.

The coronavirus curbs have been accompanied by an expansion of digital surveillance technology, similar to that used on the authoritarian mainland.

They also come as authorities crack down on dissent following huge democracy protests three years ago. Peter, a father of two, said his family decided not to get vaccinated after they were all infected with the coronavirus earlier this year, and because of underlying health conditions.

They managed to obtain exemptions but only after going to multiple doctors.

"We have been wearing masks all the time for three summers here, scrubbing our hands and being denied dining-in experience for a long time," he told AFP, asking to use a pseudonym.

"If one is still reluctant to get vaccinated after all



HONG KONG: The five doctors are accused of having issued nearly 24,000 exemptions, with prices ranging from HK\$350 to over HK\$5,000 (\$44-\$640).

this, there must be some reason," he added.

But superintendent Cheung said police had to investigate those exemptions granted without proper medical reasons. "They would increase the risk of infection in our community and undermine the effect of the fight against the coronavirus," he told reporters. —AFP

Former Pakistan PM Khan apologizes to avert court case

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan has apologized for criticizing a magistrate, his lawyer said Thursday, likely averting a court case that could have seen him barred from standing for election.

Khan, an international cricket star turned politician, was ousted through a no-confidence vote in April but has been plotting his return, harrying the fragile new coalition government with vastly popular protests calling for early elections.

He became embroiled in a contempt of court case after criticizing a magistrate over the detention of a close aide, and on Thursday risked being indicted. But on appearing in court Khan apologized and the case is now "most likely to be dropped", his lawyer Faisal Chaudhry told AFP.

"Everybody should respect the court and that's what he's shown today," Chaudhry said. "If he has crossed some red line, he apologizes for that." Pakistan's courts are often used to tie up lawmakers in tedious and long-winding proceedings that rights monitors have criticized for stifling political opposition.

Khan's lawyers said the case still remained technically active and that he would submit a formal "affidavit of apology". If he were convicted of contempt of court, Pakistan's constitution could dis-



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan (right) arrives to appear before the High Court in Islamabad on September 22, 2022. — AFP

qualify Khan from holding office for the next five years-with general elections due by the end of 2023. The byzantine case against the former leader stems from his remarks over the police detention of aide Shahbaz Gill, who himself was arrested over comments about the army.

Khan had also faced prosecution in an anti-terror court over the same remarks, but the case was dropped earlier this month. Khan was kicked out of

power as the economy crumbled and he lost the support of Pakistan's powerful military leaders, regarded as behind-the-scenes kingmakers in the country's chaotic politics.

Pakistan has been hit by devastating floods this monsoon season, with a third of country affected and the government's flood relief centre estimating the provisional cost of the catastrophe could reach \$30 billion. —AFP

Khmer Rouge court upholds conviction in final ruling

PHNOM PENH: Cambodia's UN-backed Khmer Rouge war crimes court gave its final verdict Thursday, upholding the genocide conviction and life sentence imposed on the regime's last surviving leader. The tribunal was ruling on an appeal by Khieu Samphan, head of state for the murderous communist regime which wiped out a quarter of the Cambodian population in less than four years in the 1970s.

Survivors welcomed the verdict, the last that will be issued by the tribunal, which has cost more than \$330 million and prosecuted only five Khmer Rouge leaders, two of whom died during proceedings. "The Supreme Court chamber finds no merit in Khieu Samphan's arguments regarding genocide and rejects them," Chief Judge Kong Srir said in the lengthy ruling.

The court also upheld the 2018 convictions against the 91-year-old for multiple crimes against humanity-including murder, torture and enslavement — on the basis of a "joint criminal enterprise", even if he did not personally take part in all crimes. It backed the earlier ruling that Khieu Samphan had "direct contemporaneous knowledge

of the commission of crimes and shared the intent for their commission".

But it reversed convictions on murder and persecution charges relating to two specific locations. Around 500 people packed into the courtroom to hear the verdict, including Buddhist monks, diplomats, government officials and Khmer Rouge survivors. Chum Mey, 91, one of only a handful of people to survive the S-21 torture prison, where around 18,000 were butchered, welcomed the verdict. "I am happy, the sentence is reasonable, it gives me justice," he said. Lim Ching, who lost more than 20 relatives, including her mother, told AFP that "the sentence is the right one-the Pol Pot regime did bad things and killed people."

'Heinous' crimes

The hybrid court, with both Cambodian and international judges, was set up to try the senior leaders of the genocidal regime, which wiped out about two million people through starvation, torture, forced labor and mass executions during its 1975-79 rule. Regime chief Pol Pot, known as "Brother Number One", never faced justice, dying in 1998 before the court was set up. The genocide conviction relates to the persecution of ethnic-minority Vietnamese, seen by the Khmer Rouge as treacherous enemies within.

Judge Kong Srir said the charges related to "some of the most heinous events" during the Khmer Rouge's blood-soaked rule. The frail Khieu Samphan



Ex-Khmer Rouge head of state Khieu Samphan

sat hunched in a wheelchair in the dock, listening intently to the lengthy ruling through headphones. His argument that the Khmer Rouge was simply a political movement, aimed at improving the lives of Cambodians, was rejected by the court. "By no stretch of the imagination could it be seriously stated that the CPK revolution was implemented in a benevolent or altruistic manner," the ruling said, using an abbreviation for the Communist Party of Kampuchea, the Khmer Rouge's official name. —AFP

Man found in 'miracle' rescue 17 days after China quake

BEIJING: A Chinese worker who tended to his injured colleagues following a deadly earthquake and then got lost in the mountains has been rescued 17 days later. The 6.6-magnitude quake struck southwestern Sichuan province earlier this month, killing at least 93 people and forcing thousands to be resettled into temporary camps.

Gan Yu, an employee at Sichuan's Wandong hydropower plant, was found alive but injured on Wednesday by a local villager, state-owned China National Radio (CNR) said, calling the rescue a "miracle of life". Gan was on duty with his co-worker Luo Yong on September 5 when the quake hit, and the pair stayed behind to give first aid to injured colleagues and prevent flooding by releasing water from the dam.

They attempted to leave the remote power station, walking for around 20 kilometers (12 miles).

But Gan-who is severely short-sighted-had lost his glasses during the quake and struggled to navigate the mountainous terrain, CNR said. The two men tried desperately to signal distant rescuers for help. "We took our clothes off, strung them on tree branches and waved them around," Luo told CNR.

They eventually decided that Gan should stay put while Luo went looking for assistance.

Luo helped make Gan a bed of moss and bamboo leaves and left him some wild fruit and bamboo shoots to eat before the two men separated. Luo was found by rescuers on September 8 after using a fire to attract a helicopter's attention, but by the time Gan's temporary shelter was discovered on September 11, he had disappeared. Finding only discarded clothing and footprints, the rescuers feared Gan had succumbed to hypothermia. —AFP

Strong quake shakes Mexico, leaving two dead

MEXICO CITY: A strong earthquake jolted Mexico on Thursday, leaving at least two people dead as residents rushed into the streets of the capital in the middle of the night days after another powerful tremor. A woman died in Mexico City after falling down some stairs and hitting her head when the quake triggered early warning alarms, while a second victim in the capital suffered a heart attack, authorities said.

The epicenter of the 6.9-magnitude earthquake was near the Pacific coast, 84 kilometers (52 miles) south of Coalcoman in the western state of Michoacan, the national seismological agency reported.

The US Geological Survey (USGS) estimated the magnitude at 6.8. It was the strongest of more than 1,200 aftershocks from a magnitude 7.7 quake that struck the same area on Monday, the national seismological agency said. That tremor left two people dead in western Mexico, damaged several thousand buildings and sparked panic more than 400 kilometers away in Mexico City.

The latest quake again triggered alarms in the capital shortly after 1:00 am (0600 GMT) and caused buildings to shake and sway. Many people quickly evacuated their homes when the alarms sounded, some still dressed in pajamas and carrying their pet dogs.

"We had a 6.9 magnitude aftershock with an epicenter in Coalcoman," President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said on Twitter. "Unfortunately, two people lost their lives in Mexico City," he said, adding that there were no reports of victims in the western states of Michoacan, Colima and Jalisco.

Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum said official helicopters had flown over the capital and that there were no initial reports of destruction. "So far there is no damage in the city after the earthquake," she tweeted. —AFP

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2022

Business

Chinese car brands have become major players in Kuwait auto sector: Envoy

China exported 295,000 NEVs in 2022, 46.6% of our total car exports: Ambassador

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Chinese car brands in Kuwait have overtaken German and Korean brands to become one of the major brands being sold in the country, said Zhang Jianwei, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Kuwait. Speaking to Kuwait Times on the sidelines of a workshop on Thursday titled "The Future of the Development of Chinese Cars in Kuwait", the ambassador said that there are around 78 international car brands in Kuwait, of which 22 are Chinese brands. "According to the statistics of the General Administration of Chinese Customs in 2021, China exported 17,859 cars to Kuwait, an annual increase of 81 percent, while the cash value amounted to \$134.5 million, an increase of 99.4 percent year-on-year," he said.

"This indicates the great technology of Chinese cars. About 10 years ago, Chinese car industry witnessed great development following the opening up of China to the world, including Kuwait, especially with the establishment of strategic relations between China and Kuwait in all fields, be it politics, economy, culture or humanitarian issues. This is the case in the field of automobile marketing as well. We expect promising prospects of exchanges between the two countries in all fields," Zhang added.

The ambassador said during his speech at the workshop that Chinese vehicles have achieved outstanding performances and won a great reputation in the Kuwaiti market. He outlined the reasons that led to an increase in the demand for Chinese cars. "Currently, new technologies are being widely used and designs and functions are constantly being upgraded. The continuous improvement of user experience according to the demands of the domestic market is a major feature of Chinese cars," he said.

New energy vehicles

"Since January to July 2022, China exported 295,000 new energy vehicles (NEVs), 46.6 percent of total exported cars. From opening up to other markets, introduction of joint ventures, independent production to exports abroad, the Chinese automobile industry has learned a lot and achieved significant growth in foreign exchange and continuous



KUWAIT: Ambassador of People's Republic of China to Kuwait, Zhang Jianwei, poses for a photo with participants of the workshop. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

cooperation. The policy of sharing the benefits with other markets was a basic principle for us, while it is impossible for the Chinese car market abroad to grow unless everyone shares our success with them. Without China's appropriate preventive and control measures and close coordination in all aspects during the pandemic, China's auto industry would not have been able to resume work and production in time, as well as achieve a collective leap of growth," Zhang elaborated.

Vice President of Kuwait Union of Car Agencies Mohammad Al-Duwaihees told Kuwait Times that the role of the union is to facilitate and pave the way for both government and private parties to develop the automobile market, especially Chinese cars, because of their great demand in the region, espe-

cially in Kuwait. "Today we have a large number of Chinese brands in Kuwait. So we hope that this cooperation will be in place in the coming days, and we look forward to more cooperation with relevant government authorities," he said.

"The huge presence of Chinese cars in Kuwait is primarily due to our special nature, being a country with a long tradition of using cars, since the thirties. This makes Kuwaiti consumers experts in the automobile field. Since young people constitute the largest proportion of our society, technology has become a prerequisite in any industry. Since the Chinese automobile industry has become very developed and it possesses the most advanced technology, it is able to attract a large number of consumers, particularly the youth," Duwaihees pointed out.

Ambassador
Zhang JianweiMohammad
Al-Duwaihees

Fed hikes rates again, warns inflation fight can't be 'painless'

WASHINGTON: The Federal Reserve rolled out another steep increase in the key US interest rate Wednesday and said more hikes are coming as part of the battle to rein in soaring prices-an aggressive stance that has raised fears of a recession.

And Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell warned that the process of conquering the highest inflation in 40 years will involve some pain.

It was the third consecutive increase of 0.75 percentage point by the Fed's policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC), continuing the forceful action that has included five hikes this year.

The increase takes the policy rate to 3.0-3.25 percent, and the FOMC said it anticipates that "ongoing increases... will be appropriate." Soaring prices are putting the squeeze on American families and businesses, and have become a political liability for President Joe Biden as he faces midterm congressional elections in early November. But a contraction of the world's largest economy would be a more damaging blow to Biden, and the world at large. Powell has made it clear officials will continue to act aggressively to cool the economy and avoid a repeat of the 1970s and early 1980s, the last time US inflation got out of control.

It took tough action-and a recession-to finally bring prices down in the 1980s, and the Fed is unwilling to give up its hard-won, inflation-fighting credibility.

Amid criticism the Fed waited too long to move, Powell said the US central bank is committed to raising interest rates and keeping them high until inflation comes down, and he warned against reversing course too soon. "The historical record



WASHINGTON: US Federal Reserve Board Chairman Jerome Powell speaks during a news conference in Washington, DC, on September 21, 2022. — AFP

cautions strongly against prematurely loosening policy," Powell told reporters. He said there is no room for complacency and the Fed will "keep at it until the job is done," although at some point it will be appropriate to slow the pace of rate increases, depending on the data.

Pain

He acknowledged that bringing inflation down will require a period of slower growth and higher unemployment, noting that the job market is out of sync, with far more openings than workers. "We have got to get inflation behind us. I wish there were a painless way to do that. There isn't." But he said continued high inflation would be even more painful, especially on those least able to withstand it.

Economist Diane Swonk of KPMG said Powell "has stopped sugar-coating" what the battle to tame inflation will entail: "Growth will weaken and the unemployment rate will move up." The Fed's

European markets were down in afternoon trades, with London's FTSE 100 shedding 0.5 percent after the Bank of England raised its rate again to combat inflation and signaled that the UK entered recession in the current quarter. The BoE's 0.5-percentage-point hike was smaller than the US Federal Reserve's third consecutive 0.75-point increase.

The world's major central banks are rushing to ramp up rates to dampen red-hot global consumer prices, but traders fear rising borrowing costs will herald recession. While the Fed's 0.75-percentage-point rise was widely expected, there was some surprise at the central bank's forecast that borrowing costs would likely be held above four percent throughout next year.

quarterly forecasts released with the rate decision Wednesday show FOMC members expect US GDP growth to virtually flatline this year, rising just 0.2 percent. But they see a return to expansion in 2023, with annual growth of 1.2 percent. They project further rate hikes this year-totaling 1.25 percentage points-and more in 2023, with no cuts until 2024.

While the FOMC noted continued "robust" job gains in recent months and low unemployment, the forecasts project the jobless rate will rise to 4.4 percent next year and hold around that level through 2025 from 3.7 percent in August.

Inflation is a global phenomenon amid the Russian war in Ukraine on top of global supply chain snarls and COVID lockdowns in China, and other major central banks are taking action as well. Despite a welcome drop in gasoline prices at the pump in recent weeks, the disappointing consumer price report for August showed widespread increases. — AFP

Powell reiterated his determination to focus on bringing down inflation-which is at a four-decade high-and accepted that the campaign would hit Americans hard. "What hit home for market participants yesterday is that the Fed, steered by Fed Chair (Jerome) Powell, really means business now in restoring price stability, and if that means a hard landing for the economy, so be it," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare.

Switzerland and Norway also sprang hefty interest rate hikes on Thursday, two days after a super-sized. Oil prices extended recent gains after Russian President Vladimir Putin's announced a partial mobilization of the Russian army and made a veiled threat to use nuclear weapons against the West. — AFP

CBK raises discount rate by a quarter percentage point

KUWAIT: The Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK), Basel A Al-Haroon, stated that the CBK decided to raise the discount rate by 0.25 percent from 2.75 percent to 3.00 percent effective September 22, 2022. The CBK also decided to change the rates of monetary policy instruments by varying percentages for the entire interest rate yield curve, including repurchases (Repo), CBK bonds and Tawarruq, term deposits, direct intervention instruments, as well as public debt instruments.

The Governor pointed out that the CBK monitors the dynamic movements of the economic indicators at both local and international levels in line with a deliberate approach to assess the foreseen impacts thereof. This contributes to the prudent management of the monetary policy that aims to reinforce the financial and monetary stability of the CBK-regulated entities, and helps affirm the attractiveness of the national currency as a lucrative and reliable store for domestic savings, on one hand, and foster an environment conducive to economic growth, on the other hand, taking into consideration the open nature of the Kuwaiti economy.

The Governor concluded that the CBK closely monitors the domestic and international economic and monetary developments, and takes any additional measures to safeguard the local monetary stability.



Markets drop as central banks hike rates

NEW YORK: Stock markets retreated on Thursday as the US Federal Reserve and European central banks unleashed more hefty interest rate hikes that aim to stomp inflation but raise fears of recession. On Wall Street, the Dow Jones Industrial Average opened higher but later followed the tech-heavy Nasdaq and broader S&P 500 into negative territory.

Business

Europe throws billions at energy crisis

EU countries have put up 314 billion euros so far since September 2021

BRUSSELS: Almost every week now, European governments are announcing emergency measures to protect households and businesses from the energy crisis stemming from Russia's war in Ukraine.

Hundreds of billions of euros-and counting-have been shelled out so far since Russia invaded its pro-Western neighbor in late February. Governments have gone all out: from capping gas and electricity prices to rescuing struggling energy companies and providing direct aid to household to fill up their cars.

The public spending has continued even though European Union countries already accumulated mountains of new debt to save their economies from the fallout of the COVID pandemic in 2020.

But some leaders have taken pride at their use of the public purse to battle this new crisis, which has sent inflation soaring, raised the cost of living and sparked fears of recession. After announcing 14 billion euros (\$13.9 billion) in new measures last week, Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi boasted that this put Italy "among the countries that have spent the most in Europe".

The Bruegel institute, a Brussels-based think tank tracking energy crisis spending by EU government, ranks Italy as the second-biggest spender in Europe after Germany. Rome has allocated 59.2 billion euros since September 2021 to shield households and businesses from the rising energy prices, accounting for 3.3 percent of its gross domestic product.

Germany tops the list with 100.2 billion euros, or 2.8 of its GDP, as the country was hit hard by its heavy reliance on Russian gas supplies, which have dwindled in suspected retaliation over Western sanctions against Moscow for the war. On Wednesday, Germany announced the nationalization of troubled gas giant Uniper. France, which shielded consumers from gas and electricity price rises as early as November, ranks third with 53.6 billion euros allocated so far, representing 2.2 percent of GDP.

Spending to rise

EU countries have now put up 314 billion euros so far since September 2021, according to Bruegel.

"This number is set to increase as energy prices remain elevated," Simone Tagliapietra, a senior fellow at Bruegel, told AFP. The energy bills of a typical European family could reach 500 euros per month early next year, compared to 160 euros in 2021, according to US investment bank Goldman Sachs.

The measures to help consumers have ranged from a special tax on excess profits in Italy to the energy price freeze in France and subsidies public transport in Germany.

But the spending follows a pandemic response that increased public debt, which in the first quarter accounted for 189 percent of Greece's GDP, 153 percent in Italy, 127 percent in Portugal, 118 percent in



Spain and 114 percent in France. "Initially designed as a temporary response to what was supposed to be a temporary problem, these measures have ballooned and become structural," Tagliapietra said.

"This is clearly not sustainable from a public finance perspective. It is important that governments make an effort to focus this action on the most vulnerable households and businesses as much as possible," he said.

Budget reform

The higher spending comes as borrowing costs are rising. The European Central Bank hiked its rate for the first time in more than a decade in July to combat run-away inflation, which has been fuelled by soaring energy prices. The yield on 10-year French sovereign bonds reached an eight-year high of 2.5 percent on Tuesday, while Germany now pays 1.8 percent interest after boasting a negative rate at the start of the year. The rate charged to Italy has quadrupled from one percent earlier this year to four percent now, reviving the specter of the debt crisis that threatened the euro-zone a decade ago.

"It is critical to avoid debt crises that could have large destabilizing effects and put the EU itself at risk," the International Monetary Fund warned in a recent blog calling for reforms to budget rules.

The EU has suspended until 2023 rules that limit the public deficit of countries to three percent of GDP and debt to 60 percent. The European Commission plans to present next month proposals to reform the 27-nation bloc's budget rules, which have been shattered by the crises. — AFP

Pressure grows after WB chief dodges climate questions

WASHINGTON: Climate groups called Wednesday for the World Bank's president to be removed after he refused multiple times to say if he believed man-made emissions contributed to global warming. Activists have previously called for David Malpass to resign or be removed for what they say is an inadequate approach to the climate crisis. The head of the World Bank is traditionally an American while the other big international lender in Washington, the IMF, tends to be European. Malpass is a veteran of Republican administrations in the United States and was appointed in 2019 while Donald Trump, who famously and repeatedly denied the science behind climate change, was president.

The chorus against Malpass grew louder after his appearance Tuesday at a New York Times conference on climate finance. Asked by a journalist to respond to former US vice president Al Gore's claim that he was a climate denier, Malpass said that some of his critics "may not know what the World Bank is doing." He boasted that its climate funding is "by far the biggest" among international financial institu-

tions. After another attempt failed to get a straight answer, the journalist, David Gelles, said: "Let me just be as clear as I can: Do you accept the scientific consensus that the man made burning of fossil fuels is rapidly and dangerously warming the planet?"

Malpass again pointed to the World Bank's work on the issue, at which point multiple people in the audience shouted: "Answer the question!" "I don't even know. I'm not a scientist," responded a clearly frustrated Malpass.

The Big Shift, a consortium of climate groups, called Wednesday for the World Bank's board to remove Malpass over the comments. "For the World Bank to maintain any shred of decency Malpass cannot remain as President," said Tasneem Essop, executive director of the Climate Action Network, a Big Shift member group. A separate group of activist organizations said they would on Thursday unveil a banner at the World Bank's headquarters in Washington that reads: "The World Bank Group is Run by a Climate Denier." Malpass's term ends in 2024 and he can only be removed by a vote of the World Bank's board.

Climate groups have called on President Joe Biden to up the outside pressure. Biden's climate change envoy, former US secretary of state John Kerry, declined during an appearance at the same Times event to comment on Malpass's future, saying "that's the president's decision." The World Bank declined to comment on the situation when reached by AFP. — AFP



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KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 22 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	1,023	1,040	1,021	19	15,792,384	-12	-1.16%	7.74%	1,012	1,024	18.6	1.99	2.4%	0.99
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	337	320	339	319	20	12,751,870	-18	-5.33%	20.43%	316	321	18.6	1.53	2.0%	1.20
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	213	206	213	205	8	5,542,567	-5	-2.37%	-1.72%	206	209	33.1	0.66	1.8%	1.19
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	239	240	244	237	7	10,868,244	-1	-0.41%	0.40%	238	242	20.3	0.88	2.0%	1.31
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	900	897	904	888	16	70,900,483	-3	-0.33%	18.59%	890	902	30.5	3.85	1.2%	1.18
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	814	806	850	805	45	5,267,790	-14	-1.71%	13.15%	803	813	53.3	3.26	0.6%	1.08
204	National Investments	Financial Services	290	260	290	256	34	6,918,023	-30	-10.34%	18.72%	257	267	9.9	1.06	16.9%	1.77
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	152	145	152	142	10	10,415,074	-7	-4.61%	2.11%	143	153	376.9	0.78	3.4%	0.97
252	Al Imtiaz Investment	Financial Services	90	85.0	91	84.0	7.2	1,681,538	-5.3	-5.87%	-27.97%	84	90	-	0.51	10.2%	1.17
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	121	112	121	110	11	29,389,517	-8	-6.67%	-35.55%	110	119	14.0	0.84	2.5%	1.04
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	908	887	909	880	29	4,105,561	-23	-2.53%	18.56%	882	898	19.0	2.04	1.5%	1.12
501	National Industries	Financial Services	264	253	265	253	12	25,597,872	-11	-4.17%	5.00%	253	259	5.9	1.08	4.3%	1.44
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,390	1,241	1,390	1,231	159	1,451,347	-104	-7.73%	42.48%	1,226	1,260	11.9	1.19	4.7%	0.88
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	907	882	909	881	28	901,546	-25	-2.76%	3.52%	880	900	10.1	1.82	6.7%	0.93
526	Al Qurain	Basic Materials	316	300	316	296	20	1,235,532	-10	-3.23%	-13.54%	296	304	11.6	0.75	5.9%	1.02
603	Agility	Industrials	800	749	801	749	52	39,819,081	-54	-6.72%	-4.89%	739	749	58.8	1.31	2.2%	1.46
605	Zain	Telecommunications	593	580	593	578	15	16,871,722	-11	-1.86%	-2.52%	580	589	13.8	2.12	5.7%	0.84
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,349	3,281	3,398	3,250	148	437,363	31	0.95%	1.77%	3,250	3,286	7.6	3.66	12.1%	0.69
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	191	174	192	170	22	6,977,962	-17	-8.90%	-20.18%	170	184	-	0.69	0.0%	1.14
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,860	1,730	1,860	1,676	184	436,104	-62	-3.46%	34.11%	1,700	1,780	14.4	12.85	2.6%	1.37
818	Ahli United Bank	Banking	-	305	-	-	-	-	-	-	20.68%	-	-	-	-	-	-
821	Warba Bank	Banking	244	236	245	235	10	19,059,824	-8	-3.28%	-13.87%	229	240	28.4	1.31	0.0%	1.08
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	409	401	410	390	20	4,878,465	-8	-1.96%	-30.56%	390	405	41.0	1.17	3.9%	0.46
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	385	382	389	371	18	2,626,620	-8	-2.05%	3.24%	380	390	29.4	1.59	2.6%	0.76
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	204	200	204	199	5	3,225,689	-4	-1.96%	-12.28%	196	201	15.4	2.26	9.0%	0.47
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,375	2,280	2,380	2,252	128	490,643	-97	-4.08%	12.87%	2,233	2,287	25.0	8.04	2.8%	0.66
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	815	798	830	793	37	5,579,766	-14	-1.72%	-	793	830	12.6	3.71	-	0.69

* As of end of week closing

Business

Bank of England hikes rate again as UK enters recession

BoE moves in tune with CBs worldwide in efforts to combat inflation

LONDON: The Bank of England hiked its interest rate again on Thursday to combat soaring inflation as it warned that the UK's economy had already slipped into recession. The BoE's decision caps a busy week for central banks as its peers in the United States and elsewhere in Europe further tightened their own monetary policies in global efforts to tame runaway inflation.

The British central bank's decision had been postponed from last week following the death of Queen Elizabeth II. The BoE met most market expectations as it lifted its key rate by 0.5 percentage points to 2.25 percent, repeating its August increase that had been the biggest rise since 1995.

Some commentators had speculated that the BoE could mirror the European Central Bank and the US Federal Reserve and spring a jumbo hike of 0.75 percentage points—which would have been the BoE's largest in three decades. Across the world, consumer prices have galloped to their highest levels in decades on rampant energy and food prices in the wake of Russia's war on Ukraine.

Central banks have responded by increasing their rates, fanning recession fears because they push up loan repayments for consumers and companies alike, thereby exacerbating the UK's cost-of-living crisis. The BoE said the UK had already entered recession.

The Fed on Wednesday unveiled a 0.75-percentage-point increase, its third straight jumbo hike, one day after Sweden's Riksbank shocked markets with a jump of a full percentage point.

On Thursday, the Swiss National Bank unleashed a 0.75-percentage-point hike that lifted its policy rate out of negative territory for the first time since 2015, meaning depositors no longer have to pay to park their money at the bank. On Thursday, the Norwegian central bank raised its rate by 0.5 percentage points, taking it to its highest level in more than a decade.

The BoE earlier this month defended itself against accusations of being too slow to tackle sky-high inflation, after new Prime Minister Liz Truss proposed to review its operational independence.

Tax cuts

UK inflation eased to 9.9 percent in August but remains near a 40-year high. Truss on Wednesday launched a six-month plan, starting in October, to pay about half of energy bills for businesses, charities, hospitals and schools, as she sought to soften the economic blow of sky-high prices.

The premier had already announced plans for a two-year energy price freeze for cash-strapped households. Finance minister Kwasi Kwarteng will unveil Friday a mini-budget of tax cuts designed to boost economic activity, and will also outline the vast cost of the energy assistance.

Yet the package threatens to ultimately push inflation higher as a result of strengthening demand, according to US bank Citi.

"While the capping of energy prices is disinflationary in the first instance, we continue to see many of these measures as boosting demand and



increasing the risk of more embedded inflation," wrote Citi analysts in a research note. Commentators also warn the measures will ravage public finances that are already reeling from huge

spending during the deadly COVID pandemic.

Barclays bank analysts estimate that the government's total cost-of-living expenditure could reach a colossal £235 billion (\$267 billion). —AFP

Norway, Swiss CBs hike rates to tame inflation

OSLO: The Swiss and Norwegian central banks announced hefty interest rate hikes on Thursday as global monetary policymakers ramp up the battle against runaway inflation. The moves follow big rate rises in Sweden and the United States this week and come ahead of another increase expected to be announced by the Bank of England on Thursday.

Norway's central bank raised its rate to its highest level since 2011 while the Swiss National Bank ended its negative-rate era. The Swiss central bank raised its policy rate by 0.75 percentage points to 0.5 percent.

The SNB, which first pushed its rates down into negative territory in January 2015, said the move was needed to counter "the renewed rise in inflationary pressure and the spread of inflation to goods and services that have so far been less affected". It said the change would take effect on Friday, adding, "It cannot be ruled out that further increases in the SNB policy rate will be necessary to ensure price stability over the medium term."

The central bank also said it was "willing to be active in the foreign exchange market as necessary... to provide appropriate monetary conditions". The negative rate meant that depositors had to pay to park their money at the bank. The SNB, which in June hiked its interest rate for the first time in 15 years, has joined a global tightening of monetary policy to tame soaring prices.

Inflation began to rise worldwide as economies emerged from COVID lockdowns, and it worsened as energy and food prices skyrocketed after Russia invaded Ukraine in late February.

Inflation in Switzerland rose 3.5 percent in August and is "likely to remain at an elevated level for the time being", it said. "The latest rise in inflation is principally due to higher prices for goods, especially energy and food," it added.

Given the new rate hike, which should rein in price hikes, the bank said it now forecasts that inflation should gradually decline to three percent for the full year 2022, 2.4 percent for 2023 and 1.7 percent for 2024. "Without today's SNB policy rate increase, the inflation forecast would be significantly higher," it said. The tightening of monetary policy worldwide has caused stock markets to drop as investors fear that the rising rates could spark a recession.

More hikes elsewhere

Norway's central bank lifted its policy rate by 0.5 percentage points to 2.25 percent and warned that it would "most likely" be raised further in November. "Inflation has risen rapidly over the past months and has been far higher than projected," Norges Bank said in a statement.

"The labour market is tight but there are now clear signs of a cooling economy," it said. Inflation reached 6.5 percent in August, more than triple the central bank's two-percent target.

"There are prospects that inflation will remain high for longer than projected earlier," said Norges Bank governor Ida Wolden Bache. The Swedish central bank surprised markets on Tuesday with a supersized 1.0-percentage-point hike. The US Federal Reserve rolled out a third consecutive 0.75-percentage-point increase on Thursday, with chairman Jerome Powell saying there was no "painless" way to bring down inflation. —AFP

AG Cafe launches Tim Hortons in Kuwait

KUWAIT: AG Cafe, the master franchisee of Tim Hortons brand in the Middle East, opened five new Cafe & Bake Shops in Kuwait. AG Cafe, a joint venture entity owned by Apparel Group, a global fashion and lifestyle retail conglomerate, and Gateway Partners, an emerging markets alternative investment firm, have collaborated to offer an innovative and unique experience for coffee lovers in Kuwait.

The opening event was attended by Aliya Mawani, Ambassador of Canada to the State of Kuwait, executives from Tim Hortons and AG Cafe, partners from the private and government sectors, and the media. The new Tim Hortons Cafe & Bake Shop introduced distinctive and comfortable interiors and a welcoming environment inspired by the brand's Canadian origins specifically tailored to serve all coffee lovers in Kuwait. In terms of products, the coffee shop offers its iconic beverages such as the smooth and creamy 'French Vanilla' and its creamy blended frozen coffee, the 'Iced Capp' along with made-to-order food and freshly baked pastries like the delicious bite-sized morsels of traditional donuts, the 'Timbits'.

AG Cafe has recognized Kuwait as a dynamic and essential market to introduce the Tim Hortons experience which has captured the hearts and taste buds of guests worldwide with its more than 55 years of coffee experience. The company aims to quickly expand and open several additional restaurants across the country. Additionally, AG Cafe is looking to build a great team of ambitious, warm & welcoming individuals looking to be a part of this iconic story and are excited to create dozens of career opportunities across the country.

Kuwait is considered one of the fastest-growing coffee markets in the region, and coffee for Kuwaitis is perceived as an artisanal product rather than just an energy boost. For that, local guests seek freshly brewed and high-quality coffee and food to kickstart their day, and this experience is what Tim Hortons offers to its guests every day.

Aliya Mawani, Ambassador of Canada to the State of Kuwait, stated: "I am very excited that Tim Hortons is opening in Kuwait. Tim's - as it's affectionately known in Canada - is an iconic Canadian coffee brand that our friends in Kuwait will now be able to taste and enjoy here at home. I'm pleased to be able to support Tim Hortons in their launch and future expansion, as this is yet another example of the strong and deepening ties between Canada and Kuwait."

Thiago Santelmo, EMEA President at RBL, said: "We are thrilled to be bringing Tim Hortons to Kuwait, a country known for taking its coffee and beverages very seriously. The team here has gone to great lengths to ensure our offerings always meet our local guests' expectations."

Jazeera Airways adds second route to Uzbekistan

KUWAIT: A year after launching the first direct route between Kuwait and the Uzbek capital, Jazeera Airways on Thursday announced a new route to Uzbekistan's third largest city, Namangan, located in the eastern area of the country. The airline will be operating the new route with three flights per week, leaving Kuwait on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, with a flight timing change on October 13.

Jazeera Airways Chief Executive Officer, Rohit Ramachandran, said: "This is the first direct route to be launched from the Middle East to Namangan, giving access to growing trade relations and more tourist options in this part of eastern Uzbekistan.



KUWAIT: Grand opening of Tim Hortons Cafe & Bake Shop in Kuwait, in the presence of Aliya Mawani, Ambassador of Canada to the State of Kuwait, Khaled A Al-Zaabi, Counselor of Americas Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kuwait, and Hesham Al-Mekawie - CEO of AG Cafe, the master franchisee of Tim Hortons brand in the Middle East.



Hesham Al-Mekawie, CEO of AG Cafe, stated that: "The Kuwaiti people share a lavish taste when it comes to food & beverages. We are delighted to be bringing the authentic Tim Hortons experience to this unique market." Al-Mekawie added: "As the master franchisee, we seek to quickly expand throughout Kuwait to serve guests who are looking for a comfortable and quiet place to relax and meet with others, while enjoying high-quality coffee, beverages and food."

Tim Hortons is Canada's largest coffee chain, and started its international expansion in 2011

with the UAE's first Cafe & Bake Shop opening in Dubai by the iconic retail group Apparel. Since then, global expansion has become an increasing priority for the brand across many countries. Over recent years the brand has introduced its well-loved offerings to guests beyond Canada and the United States. Currently Tim Hortons has over 5,100 restaurants across 14 countries and regions, including the Middle East, China, the UK, Mexico, Spain, Thailand and the Philippines. Today, under AG Cafe, the brand has expanded in the GCC and reached currently 235 locations, and recently opened its first restaurant in India.

Flight schedule between Kuwait (KWI) and Namangan (NMA):

Flight Number	Period	Frequency	From	To	Departure (Local Time)	Arrival (Local Time)
J9-645	Sep 26 to Oct 10	Monday, Wednesday and Friday	Kuwait	Namangan	23:30	05:05 am
J9-646	Sep 27 to Oct 11	Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday	Namangan	Kuwait	06:25 am	08:20 am
J9-645	Oct 13	Thursday	Kuwait	Namangan	01:45 am	07:20 am
J9-646	Oct 13	Thursday	Namangan	Kuwait	08:40 am	10:35 am
J9-645	From Oct 14	Monday, Wednesday and Friday	Kuwait	Namangan	23:30	05:05 am
J9-646	From Oct 14	Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday	Namangan	Kuwait	06:25 am	08:20 am

Namangan is known for being a center for light industry, especially in food, in addition to its historical landmarks and cultural experiences that distinguishes Uzbekistan."

Jazeera Airways operates commercial and cargo

flights out of its Jazeera Terminal T5 at Kuwait International Airport. The airline flies to 53 popular destinations across the Middle East, Central and South Asia, Africa and Europe comprising high-demand business, leisure and weekend destinations.



(From left to right) Daniel Craig, Barbara Broccoli, Michael G. Wilson and Michelle Yeoh pose onstage during Will Rogers Motion Picture Pioneers Foundation's 2022 Pioneer Dinner honoring Barbara Broccoli and Michael G Wilson at The Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP photos



Daniel Craig speaks on stage at Will Rogers Motion Picture Pioneers Foundation's 2022 Pioneer Dinner.



Sam Smith performs onstage at Will Rogers Motion Picture Pioneers Foundation's 2022 Pioneer Dinner.

New 007 to 'serve King and country' as producers vow to keep Bond 'fresh'

The next James Bond will serve King and country-but discussions with new 007 studio owner Amazon over the spy film franchise's future direction haven't really started, long-standing producer Barbara Broccoli said Wednesday. Broccoli and her half-brother Michael G. Wilson sat down with AFP to speak about the future of the 25-movie franchise, moments after having their handprints immortalized in cement at Hollywood's famous TCL Chinese Theatre.

The last Bond outing, 2021's "No Time To Die," was the final installment to star Daniel Craig, and Amazon has since bought 007 studio MGM. This means speculation is rife about what changes could lie in store for the world's most

famous fictional spy. "We're just beginning our relationship with Amazon. We haven't really started to get involved in the next Bond film yet," said Broccoli. As custodians of the franchise her father Albert "Cubby" Broccoli founded 60 years ago, "we're not always just going to rest on our laurels and keep to a formula," she added.

At the center of the rumors and guesswork swirling around the next 007 outing is the matter of who will play the suave superspy with a license to kill. Craig was initially a controversial choice, particularly for his blond hair and rugged looks, but his five 007 films broke box office records, with 2012's "Skyfall" surpassing \$1 billion worldwide. Fans have suggested the next Bond may be the first non-white actor in

the role, while Broccoli has scotched claims that Bond in future could be female. She told AFP that "there are certain formulaic things" that will always remain. "The central character of James Bond is the most important element of these movies, and we believe he's incorruptible, he works for Queen and now King and country," she said. "He's not in it for his own personal gain. He's in it for trying to keep the world a safer place. So I think that is something we definitely wouldn't change."

'Surprised'

But Broccoli said their father "always tried to give us the confidence to take risks so that Bond can change over the years."

She added: "We like to change it up, and sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't-but it keeps it fresh." The Broccoli family's company Eon has immense creative control over the Bond film franchise, originally based on Ian Fleming's novels. Barbara and her half-brother Michael have presided over the films since "GoldenEye," released in 1995, a year before the death of her father.

Under a complex deal, Eon split profits with historic studio MGM, which had the right to finance and distribute the 007 movies. But the studio was bought by Amazon for \$8.5 billion under a deal closed in March, and it emerged weeks later that MGM's film leadership would be leaving. In another sign of changing times,

Amazon's Prime Video will release an eight-part Bond-themed reality-TV competition series called "007's Road to a Million." Wilson told AFP it was important for Bond films to keep pace with the ever-changing challenges facing the world. "What's the world going to worry about two or three years from now? How do we stay topical?" he said.

"But so far it's worked pretty well. You can't be afraid of change... you have to embrace it, and you can't do the same thing over and over again. You have to change it a bit. "The audiences have a certain expectation. But they also want to be surprised. So that's all part of the effort." — AFP



Milan Fashion Week



Harris Reed

Harry Styles stylist Harris Reed takes over at Nina Ricci

Harris Reed, just 26 and known for gender-fluid collaborations with pop stars Harry Styles, Adele and Lil Nas X, was named Wednesday as the new artistic director of French fashion house Nina Ricci. "I am truly excited to challenge the landscape of what femininity means... in such an iconic house," said a statement for Reed, who takes charge of haute couture and fragrances for the 90-year-old label. He has been described as "Harry Styles's Secret Fashion Weapon" by Vogue, having designed outfits for the singer since 2017, and becoming central to his gender-fluid image.

This included a suit and satin ball skirt combination for Styles's Vogue cover story in 2020. "I fight for the beauty of fluidity. I fight for a more opulent and accepting world. That is really important to me," Reed told the magazine at the time.

A graduate of the Central Saint Martins college in London, Reed presented at London Fashion Week in 2021 — the first to officially remove distinctions between menswear and womenswear-and already has work in an exhibition at London's V&A museum. He becomes the youngest appointment at Nina Ricci since its founding in 1932, replacing Dutch duo Rushemy Botter and Lisi Herrebrugh. A first collection for the label is due from Reed in early 2023. — AFP



Harry Styles attends the "Don't Worry Darling" photo call at AMC Lincoln Square Theater in New York City. — AFP



Rescuers release a stranded pilot whale back in the ocean at Macquarie Heads, on the west coast of Tasmania.



This handout photo shows the carcass of one of 14 sperm whales beached on King Island, off Tasmania's north coast.



A rescuer prepares to release a stranded pilot whale back in the ocean at Macquarie Heads, on the west coast of Tasmania.

ALMOST 200 PILOT WHALES PERISH ON AUSTRALIAN BEACH

Almost 200 whales have perished at an exposed, surf-swept beach on the rugged west coast of Tasmania, where Australian rescuers were only able to save a few dozen survivors Thursday. After an arduous, day-long effort in difficult conditions, state wildlife services said just 32 of the 226 beached long-finned pilot whales were strong enough to be rescued. "We've been refloating those whales that have been deemed suitable for release back to sea," Sam Thalmann, a marine biologist, told AFP.

"Every whale that has been released has been tagged," he said. "There may be a few that restrand unfortunately, but we expect that by far the majority will head out to sea." Locals had covered some of the mammals with blankets and doused them with buckets of seawater to keep them alive until more help arrived. But many of the whales were too far gone. By nightfall, scores of the glossy black whales were strewn along Ocean Beach, their carcasses pock-marking the waterline where the frigid southern ocean meets the sand.

"Unfortunately we do have a high mortality rate on this particular stranding," said state wildlife operations manager Brendon Clark. "The environmental conditions, the surf out there on the exposed west coast, Ocean Beach, is certainly taking its toll on the animals." Efforts will now turn to the considerable task of disposing of the whale bodies safely. If left in shallow waters or on the beach, they could attract sharks and can carry disease.

"There is a lot more work to be done with the carcass disposal," said Thalmann, who added that "valuable biological samples" would need to be collected from the animals. Those could help

scientists understand how and why "the animals strand at this location". "There (are) certainly some local characteristics that lead to this spot being repeatedly a site for mass whale stranding."

Two years ago, Macquarie Harbour

Distress signals

Scientists still do not fully understand why mass strandings occur. Some have suggested pods go off track after feeding too close to shore. Pilot whales—which can grow to more than six metres (20

dozen young male sperm whales were reported dead in a separate mass stranding on King Island—between Tasmania and the Australian mainland. State officials said that incident may have been a case of "misadventure". Strandings are



File photo shows the carcasses pilot whales beached on Macquarie Harbour, in Tasmania.—AFP photos

was the scene of the country's largest-ever mass stranding, involving almost 500 pilot whales. More than 300 pilot whales died during that event, despite the efforts of dozens of volunteers who toiled for days in Tasmania's freezing waters to free them. Clark said the conditions of the latest stranding were tougher for the whales than two years ago, when the animals were in "much more sheltered waters".

feet) long—are also highly sociable, so they may follow pod-mates who stray into danger. That sometimes occurs when old, sick or injured animals swim ashore and other pod members follow, trying to respond to the trapped whale's distress signals. Others believe gently sloping beaches like those found in Tasmania confuse the whales' sonar, making them think they are in open waters.

The latest stranding came days after a

also common in nearby New Zealand. There, around 300 animals beach themselves annually, according to official figures, and it is not unusual for groups of between 20 and 50 pilot whales to run aground. But numbers can run into the hundreds when a "super pod" is involved—in 2017, there was a mass stranding of almost 700 pilot whales. — AFP

Whale strandings: Five questions answered

The death of about 200 pilot whales at a Tasmanian beach has renewed questions about what causes such mass strandings and whether they can be prevented. With the help of Karen Stockin, a whale stranding expert at New Zealand's Massey University, here are the answers to five key questions:

What causes mass strandings?

Scientists are still trying to work that out. They do know that there are multiple types of stranding events, with several explanations that can overlap. The causes can be natural, based on bathymetry—the shape of the ocean floor—or they can be species-specific. Pilot whales and several smaller dolphin species are known to regularly mass strand, especially in the southern hemisphere, according to Stockin. In some instances, a sick whale headed towards shore and a full group unwittingly followed them.

Does it happen in certain areas?

There are a few global hotspots. In the southern hemisphere, Tasmania and New Zealand's Golden Bay have seen several instances, and in the northern hemisphere, the United States bay of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, is another hotspot. In those areas, there are similarities between the topography of the beaches and environmental conditions. For example, Cape Cod and Golden Bay share a prominent narrow coastal land feature and shallow water with large tidal variations. Some people call such areas "whale traps" because of the speed at which the tide can recede.

Are strandings becoming more common?

Possibly. Strandings are natural phenomena and have been documented since the days of Aristotle. The health of the oceans has, however, deteriorated in recent decades. Strandings could become more common as human use of the seas, shipping traffic and chemical pollution all increase. Epizootic diseases—outbreaks of sickness that affect a specific animal species—could also lead to more. But there is still much to understand about the phenomenon, Stockin said.

Is climate change a factor?

Research on how climate change is affecting marine mammals is still in its infancy. Experts know that climate change can give rise to changes in prey and predator distribution. For some species, this may result in whales coming closer to shore. For example, recent research based on current climate prediction models suggests that by the year 2050, the distribution of sperm whales and blue whales in New Zealand could vary considerably.

Can strandings be prevented?

Not really. As strandings occur for a multitude of reasons, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. But Stockin said that by better understanding whether and how human-induced changes are causing more mass strandings, solutions could be found. —AFP

Rediscover Thailand with amazing new chapters of luxury

By Faten Omar

Thailand's Embassy in Kuwait, in cooperation with the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Dubai & Middle East Office, organized an event on Tuesday titled "Rediscover Thailand with Amazing New Chapters of Luxury" at Four Seasons Hotel in Kuwait City. The event was held to boost tourism from the Middle East to Thailand, especially from Kuwait, which is among the top three from the region, as well as promote the new campaign "Amazing New Chapters".

Ambassador of Thailand to Kuwait Rooge Thammongkol said: "We are celebrating 59 years of diplomatic relationship between Thailand and Kuwait this year. Our ties are close and cordial. It is a friendship, partnership, and cooperation based on mutual interests, providing a basis for us to work together in many areas such as trade, energy, investment, education, sports and tourism."

The ambassador revealed that three years ago, around 70,000 Kuwaitis traveled to Thailand for medical treatment



Group photo shows (center) Chaiwat Tamthai, Director of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Dubai & Middle East Office. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

and tourism. It all went awry with the arrival of COVID-19, explaining that the pandemic hurt Thailand's tourism, but TAT officers have worked around the clock for the country to get back on track.

"The Royal Thai Embassy in Kuwait has carried out many promotional projects, such as supplements about Thailand

in English and Arabic newspapers, medical seminars, showcasing famous Thai hospitals, Thai food, mango-sticky rice and Thai silk, and this Saturday, a Muay Thai tournament will be held at Sabah Al-Salem Stadium," he added.

Rooge added that Thailand is positioned to offer the ideal destination for

vacation and workation, where last year it ranked first among 150 workation destinations around the world. In addition, the country is considered the leader in wellness economy, inspiring people to live a longer and better life. Chaiwat Tamthai, Director of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Dubai & Middle East Office, said Thailand welcomes 39 million visitors, and the number of tourists from the Middle East is increasing annually. The number of Kuwaiti tourists was the largest, as 78,199 Kuwaitis visited Thailand, expecting this number to increase. He added Thailand is the most popular destination for tourists, noting that from May to August 2022, 25,000 Kuwaitis traveled to the country that is considered to be an affordable, luxury and trendy destination. The Thai Embassy in Kuwait had announced that from May 1, 2022, Thailand fully reopened, and RT-PCR tests and quarantine for fully vaccinated travelers to the country are no longer required.



Lifestyle | Feature



This aerial picture shows a view of the Tigris river, in the village of Bajid Kandala, some 50km west of the northern Iraqi city of Dohuk. —AFP photos



This aerial picture shows a view of the Tigris river, in the village of Bajid Kandala.



This picture shows a view of the Tigris river, in the village of Bajid Kandala, some 50km west of the northern Iraqi city of Dohuk.

Twilight of the Tigris: Iraq's mighty river drying up

It was the river that is said to have watered the biblical Garden of Eden and helped give birth to civilization itself. But today the Tigris is dying. Human activity and climate change have choked its once mighty flow through Iraq, where-with its twin river the Euphrates-it made Mesopotamia a cradle of civilization thousands of years ago. Iraq may be oil-rich but the country is plagued by poverty after decades of war and by droughts and desertification.

Battered by one natural disaster after another, it is one of the five countries most exposed to climate change, according to the UN. From April on, temperatures exceed 35 degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit) and intense sandstorms often turn the sky orange, covering the country in a film of dust. Hellish

Kurdish north: 'Less water every day'

The Tigris' journey through Iraq begins in the mountains of autonomous Kurdistan, near the borders of Turkey and Syria, where local people raise sheep and grow potatoes. "Our life depends on the Tigris," said farmer Pibo Hassan Dolmassa, 41, wearing a dusty coat, in the town of Faysh Khabur. "All our work, our agriculture, depends on it. "Before, the water was pouring in torrents," he said, but over the last two or three years "there is less water every day".

Iraq's government and Kurdish farmers accuse Turkey, where the Tigris has its source, of withholding water in its dams, dramatically reducing the flow into Iraq. According to Iraqi official statistics, the level of the Tigris entering Iraq has dropped to

of stagnant water dotting its parched bed. Drought has dried up the watercourse that is crucial to the region's agriculture. This year authorities have been forced to reduce Iraq's cultivated areas by half, meaning no crops will be grown in the badly-hit Diyala Governorate. "We will be forced to give up farming and sell our animals," said Abu Mehdi, 42, who wears a white djellaba robe.

"We were displaced by the war" against Iran in the 1980s, he said, "and now we are going to be displaced because of water. Without water, we can't live in these areas at all." The farmer went into debt to dig a 30-metre (100-foot) well to try to get water. "We sold everything," Abu Mehdi said, but "it was a failure". The World Bank warned last year that much of Iraq is likely to face a similar fate.



Fishing boats are pictured on the banks of the Shatt Al-Arab, the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers that empties into the Gulf.

migration is already a reality in Iraq," the IOM said.

Baghdad: sandbanks and pollution

This summer in Baghdad, the level of the Tigris dropped so low that people played volleyball in the middle of the river, splashing barely waist-deep through its waters. Iraq's Ministry of Water Resources blame silt because of the river's reduced flow, with sand and soil once washed downstream now settling to form sandbanks. Until recently the Baghdad authorities used heavy machinery to dredge the silt, but with cash tight, work has slowed.

Years of war have destroyed much of Iraq's water infrastructure, with many cities, factories, farms and even hospitals left to dump their waste straight into the river. As sewage and rubbish from Greater Baghdad pour into the shrinking Tigris, the pollution creates a concentrated toxic soup that threatens marine life and human health. Environmental policies have not been a high priority for Iraqi governments struggling with political, security and economic crises. Ecological awareness also remains low among the general public, said activist Hajer Hadi of the Green Climate group, even if "every Iraqi feels climate change through rising temperatures, lower rainfall, falling water levels and dust storms," she said.

South: salt water, dead palms

"You see these palm trees? They are thirsty," said Molla Al-Rached, a 65-year-old farmer, pointing to the brown skeletons of what was once a verdant palm grove. "They need water! Should I try to irrigate

them with a glass of water?" he asked bitterly. "Or with a bottle?" "There is no fresh water, there is no more life," said the farmer, a beige keffiyeh scarf wrapped around his head. He lives at Ras Al-Bisha where the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates river, the Shatt al-Arab, empties into the Gulf, near the borders with Iran and Kuwait.

In nearby Basra-once dubbed the Venice of the Middle East-many of the depleted waterways are choked with rubbish. To the north, much of the once famed Mesopotamian Marshes-the vast wetland home to the "Marsh Arabs" and their unique culture-have been reduced to desert since Saddam Hussein drained them in the 1980s to punish its population. But another threat is impacting the Shatt al-Arab: salt water from the Gulf is pushing ever further upstream as the river flow declines.

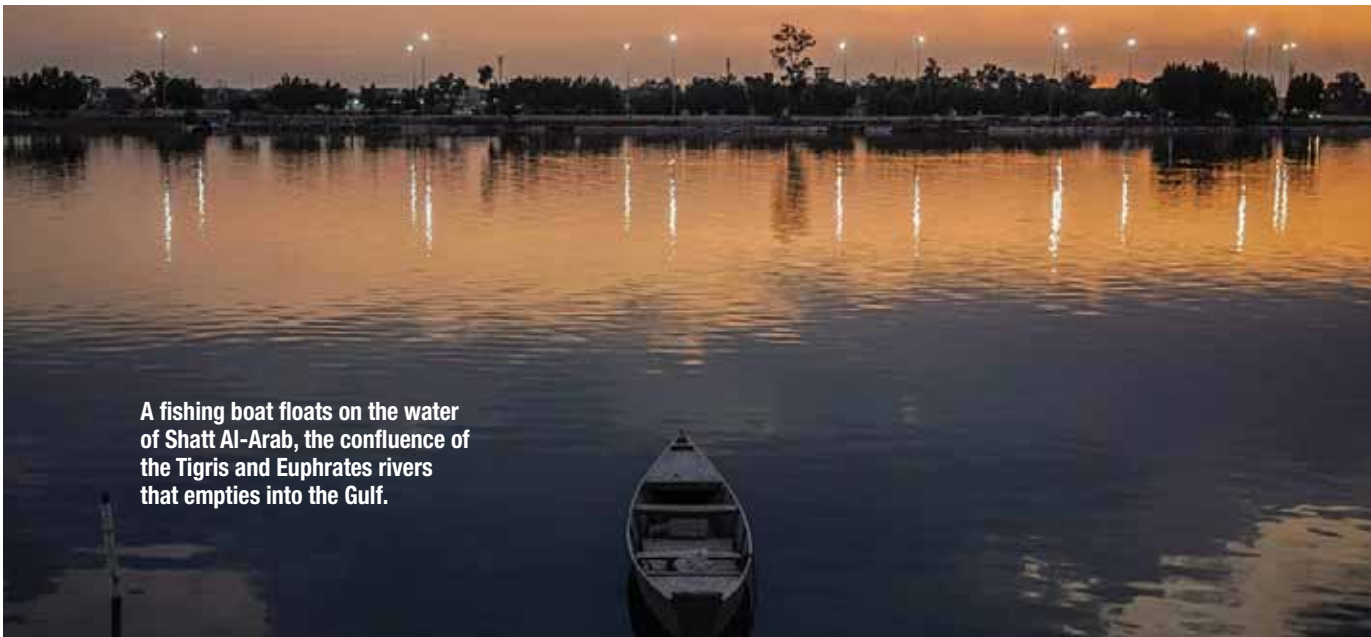
The UN and local farmers say rising salination is already hitting farm yields, in a trend set to worsen as global warming raises sea levels. Al-Rached said he has to buy water from tankers for his livestock, and wildlife is now encroaching into settled areas in search of water. "My government doesn't provide me with water," he said. "I want water, I want to live. I want to plant, like my ancestors."

River delta: A fisherman's plight

Standing barefoot in his boat like a Venetian gondolier, fisherman Naim Haddad steers it home as the sun sets on the waters of the Shatt al-Arab. "From father to son, we have dedicated our lives to fishing," said the 40-year-old holding up the day's catch. In a country where grilled carp is the national dish, the father-of-eight is proud that he receives "no government salary, no allowances". But salination is taking its toll as it pushes out the most prized freshwater species which are replaced by ocean fish.

"In the summer, we have salt water," said Haddad. "The sea water rises and comes here." Last month local authorities reported that salt levels in the river north of Basra reached 6,800 parts per million-nearly seven times that of fresh water.

Haddad can't switch to fishing at sea because his small boat is unsuitable for the choppy Gulf waters, where he would also risk run-ins with the Iranian and Kuwaiti coastguards. And so the fisherman is left at the mercy of Iraq's shrinking rivers, his fate tied to theirs. "If the water goes," he said, "the fishing goes. And so does our livelihood." — AFP



A fishing boat floats on the water of Shatt Al-Arab, the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers that empties into the Gulf.

summers see the mercury top a blistering 50 degrees Celsius-near the limit of human endurance-with frequent power cuts shutting down air-conditioning for millions.

The Tigris, the lifeline connecting the storied cities of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra, has been choked by dams, most of them upstream in Turkey, and falling rainfall. An AFP video journalist travelled along the river's 1,500-kilometre (900-mile) course through Iraq, from the rugged Kurdish north to the Gulf in the south, to document the ecological disaster that is forcing people to change their ancient way of life.

just 35 percent of its average over the past century. Baghdad regularly asks Ankara to release more water. But Turkey's ambassador to Iraq, Ali Riza Guney, urged Iraq to "use the available water more efficiently", tweeting in July that "water is largely wasted in Iraq". He may have a point, say experts. Iraqi farmers tend to flood their fields, as they have done since ancient Sumerian times, rather than irrigate them, resulting in huge water losses.

Central plains: 'We sold everything'

All that is left of the River Diyala, a tributary that meets the Tigris near the capital Baghdad in the central plains, are puddles

"By 2050 a temperature increase of one degree Celsius and a precipitation decrease of 10 percent would cause a 20 percent reduction of available freshwater," it said. "Under these circumstances, nearly one third of the irrigated land in Iraq will have no water." Water scarcity hitting farming and food security are already among the "main drivers of rural-to-urban migration" in Iraq, the UN and several non-government groups said in June. And the International Organization for Migration said last month that "climate factors" had displaced more than 3,300 families in Iraq's central and southern areas in the first three months of this year. "Climate



Iraqi fisherman Naim Haddad, 40, stands barefoot on his boat at sunset on Shatt Al-Arab, the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers that empties into the Gulf, near the city of Basrah in southern Iraq.



A horse is pictured on the land of 65-year-old farmer Molla Al-Rached, in the village of Ras Al-Bisha in southern Iraq.

Sports

All Blacks face pivotal Wallabies clash as Championship goes to wire

‘We’ve had our struggles this year, but it’s been a blessing in disguise’

AUCKLAND, New Zealand: New Zealand can put one hand on the Rugby Championship trophy with victory against Australia at their Eden Park fortress on Saturday, but the champions will not be decided until hours later when South Africa play Argentina in Durban.

Despite a stuttering campaign that has seen defeats to South Africa and Argentina, New Zealand are level on points with the Springboks at the top of the table and it could all come down to points difference if both win on Saturday.

New Zealand last lost at Eden Park in 1994 and they haven't been beaten by the Wallabies there since 1986. Flanker Akira Ioane called the Auckland stadium, which will be a 47,000 sellout on Saturday, a “fortress for the All Blacks”.

“We want to make sure we put in a good performance and don't leave anything up to chance,” he said. New Zealand went top of the Rugby Championship table after winning the Bledisloe Cup for the 20th straight season with a 39-37 win over Australia in Melbourne a week ago, secured only by a controversial try after the siren.

South Africa drew level when they beat Argentina two days later, leaving all four nations with a mathematical chance of winning the title. “It's been a very different championship for all four teams,” said New Zealand head coach Ian Foster on Thursday.

‘Wake-up call’

“It's exciting for the Rugby Championship that we've come to the last game and no one really knows (the outcome).” Lock Sam Whitelock captains the All Blacks as they chase a third consecutive Test win after Sam Cane failed to recover from a head knock.

It's a far cry from the start of the Rugby Championship when the All Blacks came off a 2-1 home series loss to Ireland to be thumped 26-10 by the Springboks in Mbombela. The under-fire Foster clung onto his job when the All Blacks bounced back with a 35-23 victory in Johannesburg but was again under pressure when Argentina won 25-18 in Christchurch.

Foster has opted for a new-look back row against Australia as Ardie Savea returns at number eight after paternity leave, alongside Dalton Papali'i and Akira Ioane. Injuries to David Havili and Quinn Tupaea mean a new centre partnership of Jordie Barrett and Rieko Ioane, with Beauden Barrett starting at fullback.

“We've had our struggles this year, but it's been a blessing in disguise, because it's something new for the young guys coming in and for all of New Zealand,” said Papali'i of a 2022 campaign that has seen the All Blacks lose four of eight Tests.

“We aren't used to it, so it's about us finding our feet again. It's a wake-up call, it's Test footy, the best of the best. It's been a good learning curve.” Australia have been forced into a pack reshuffle after lock Darcy Swain was banned for six weeks earlier Thursday for taking out the leg of Tupaea in Melbourne.

Towering lock Cadeyrn Neville replaces Swain with hard-running Harry Wilson given a chance at number eight. “It's great to have Cadeyrn available and Harry's been working really hard,” said Australia coach Dave Rennie.

Fly-half Bernard Foley retains his place despite being penalised for time-wasting which led to New Zealand's Bledisloe Cup-winning try in Melbourne. New Zealand (15-1): Beauden Barrett; Will Jordan, Rieko Ioane, Jordie Barrett, Caleb Clarke; Richie



MELBOURNE: New Zealand's Will Jordan (C) evades the diving tackle of Australia's Bernard Foley (R) to score a try during the Rugby Championship match between Australia and New Zealand in Melbourne. —AFP

Mo'unga, Aaron Smith; Ardie Savea, Dalton Papali'i, Akira Ioane; Samuel Whitelock, Brodie Retallick; Tyrel Lomax, Codie Taylor, Ethan de Groot; Replacements: Samisoni Taukei'aho, Ofa Tu'ungafasi, Nepo Laulala, Tupou Vaa'i, Hoskins Sotutu, Finlay Christie, Roger Tuivasa-Sheck, Sevu Reece

Australia (15-1): Andrew Kellaway; Tom Wright,

Len Ikitau, Lalakai Foketi, Marika Koroibete; Bernard Foley, Jake Gordon; Harry Wilson, Pete Samu, Rob Valetini; Cadeyrn Neville, Jed Holloway; Allan Alaalatoa, David Porecki, James Slipper (capt)

Replacements: Folau Fainga'a, Angus Bell, Pone Fa'amausili, Nick Frost, Fraser McReight, Nic White, Reece Hodge, Jordan Petaia. —AFP

News in brief

Noble returns to West Ham

LONDON: Former West Ham captain Mark Noble is to return to the club as its sporting director, the Premier League strugglers announced Thursday. The 35-year-old Noble called time on an 18-year career with his boyhood club at the end of last season. He will begin his newly-created role in January. West Ham said in a statement that the former midfielder would “work closely in support of Hammers manager David Moyes and the current board”. The London club are in the relegation zone after winning just one of their seven Premier League games. “I'm really happy to be coming back and can't wait to get started,” Noble said. “I've spent the last 24 years as a player here, first in the academy and then in the first team, and obviously have a deep knowledge and understanding of the club.” He added: “I see it as a position that I can grow and develop in both personally and professionally. “There are always difficult decisions to be made in football but along with my colleagues at the club, I will continue to put the best interests of West Ham United first.”

Federer teams up with Nadal

LONDON: Roger Federer will team up with long-time rival Rafael Nadal for the final match of his glittering career, Laver Cup organisers announced on Thursday. The 20-time Grand Slam champion will play doubles with the Spaniard, who has won 22 majors, at the O2 arena in London on Friday. Federer and Nadal, representing Team Europe, will face US players Frances Tiafoe and Jack Sock of Team World in the evening session. Federer, whose most recent competitive match was a loss to Hubert Hurkacz in last year's Wimbledon quarter-finals, has been struggling with a knee problem and will not play singles in London. “I'm not sure if I can handle it all but I'll try,” said Federer, 41. “This one feels a whole lot different. I'm happy to have him on my team and not playing against him. “Playing with Rafa feels really different. To be able to do it one more time, I'm sure it will be wonderful and I'll try my very best.

‘Status quo’ no option: Strauss

LONDON: Andrew Strauss has insisted “the status quo is not an option” as he called on county chiefs to back his reform plan for English cricket which includes cutting the number of first-class Championship matches. Former England captain Strauss has spent the last six months overseeing a high performance review for the England and Wales Cricket Board, launched following the men's Test team's humiliating 2021/22 Ashes series loss in Australia. His panel have come up with 17 recommendations, 15 of which already have the required backing. But two of the most significant changes needed the support of at least 12 of the 18 first-class counties. Strauss is adamant a reduction from 14 Championship matches per team to 10 is needed. His panel are also urging the adoption of a six-team top division sitting above two secondary conferences, who would play off for one annual promotion, to replace the current two-division model. —AFP

Mayweather expects ‘easy payday, easy opponent’ in Japan

TOKYO: Floyd Mayweather says that Sunday's exhibition boxing match against Japanese mixed martial artist Mikuru Asakura will be an “easy payday, easy cheque, easy opponent”. The 45-year-old boxing great, who is reportedly close to agreeing a rematch with UFC superstar Conor McGregor, beat Japanese kickboxer Tenshin Nasukawa after just two minutes when they fought in an exhibition in Japan in 2018.

The fight was widely seen as a farce but the American vowed to give the crowd this weekend at Saitama Super Arena, just north of Tokyo, their

money's worth in his latest lucrative post-retirement performance.

“I think the last time I came here, it was so quick nobody got a chance to enjoy it,” Mayweather, whose nicknames include “Money”, said Thursday after a practice session which was delayed by an hour because he “overslept”.

“I'll make it quick, but there's not many bouts on the card so I'll make sure to go to three (rounds), unless you all want me to make it quick.” Mayweather was reported this week as saying that he will fight McGregor for a second time next year.

The two met in a much-hyped boxing match in 2017, with Mayweather winning by a 10th-round technical knock-out to retire with a perfect 50-0 record. His previous exhibition match was against “Dangerous” Don Moore in Abu Dhabi in May. Mayweather was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in June. —AFP

Embattled Suns owner Sarver to sell NBA club

LOS ANGELES: Phoenix Suns owner Robert Sarver, banned for a year and fined \$10 million by the NBA for racist and misogynist remarks and workplace bullying, said Wednesday he will sell the team. Following the punishments imposed last week, NBA players union executive director Tamika Tremaglio called for Sarver to be banned for life, and NBA stars LeBron James and Chris Paul declared the penalties too light.

Major sponsor PayPal said it would not renew its deal with the team if Sarver were still involved, and Suns vice chairman Jahm Najafi called for Sarver to resign. “In our current unforgiving climate, it has become painfully clear... whatever good I have done, or could still do, is outweighed by things I have said in the past,” Sarver said in a statement.

“For those reasons, I am beginning the process of seeking buyers for the Suns and (Women's NBA) Mercury.” Sarver's decision was welcomed by NBA commissioner Adam Silver as well as Sarver's co-owners and the NBA Players' Association.

“I fully support the decision by Robert Sarver to sell the Phoenix Suns and Mercury,” Silver said in a statement. “This is the right next step for the organi-

zation and community.” Added NBPA president CJ McCollum: “We thank Mr. Sarver for making a swift decision that was in the best interest of our sports community.” Silver had said when the sanctions were announced that he didn't think the violations rose to the level of forcing Sarver, the Suns managing partner, to sell the club, as was done in 2014 with former Los Angeles Clippers owner Donald Sterling over racist remarks.

Los Angeles Lakers superstar James, a four-time NBA Most Valuable Player, had said the league “got this wrong” with that decision. On Wednesday, he tweeted his approval that Sarver will sell.

“I'm so proud to be a part of a league committed to progress!” James said. In announcing the sale, Sarver declared it “the best course of action for everyone”. Sarver was banned and fined after a 10-month probe into his 18-year tenure at the Suns.

The NBA had commissioned the investigation in the wake of a damning ESPN report on the club's “toxic” work environment. Investigators found that Sarver “engaged in conduct that clearly violated common workplace standards, as reflected in team and League rules and policies”. “This conduct included the use of racially insensitive language; unequal treatment of female employees; sex-related statements and conduct; and harsh treatment of employees that on occasion constituted bullying,” their report said.

Courage to come forward

Investigators, from the law firm of Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz, said multiple witnesses told them



MOTEGI, Japan: Monster Energy Yamaha MotoGP rider Fabio Quartararo of France (L) speaks to Aprilia Racing rider Aleix Espargaro of Spain (R) prior to a pre-event press conference at the MotoGP Japanese Grand Prix in the Twin Ring Motegi circuit in Motegi. —AFP

hunt. Quartararo is relishing the fight, starting at the first Japanese MotoGP in three years after the pandemic cancelled recent editions. “What can you do? With 17 points around all three, everyone is pushing like hell,” he said. “Having only 17 between us three, we will push ourselves to the maximum and in the end, I think it is nice.” —AFP



TOKYO: US boxer great Floyd Mayweather (R) prepares as he takes part in a training session at a gym in Tokyo on September 22, 2022, ahead of his planned exhibition boxing match against Japanese mixed martial artist Mikuru Asakura on September 25. —AFP



Robert Sarver

Sarver's aggressive behavior often seemed intended “solely to provoke a reaction from employees-to embarrass them or assert dominance over them.”

Sarver said Wednesday he thought the one-year suspension would give him time to “focus, make amends and remove my personal controversy from the teams that I and so many fans love.” Amid the ongoing criticism, however, he decided that he didn't want to be “a distraction.”

Suns Legacy Partners, the group that manages the Suns and Mercury, said the decision was “in the best interest of the organization and community.” The group acknowledged the “courage of the people who came forward” and said Sarver's departure was only part of the task of reshaping the work environment of the franchise. —AFP

Osaka pulls out of Pan Pacific Open with pain

TOKYO: Naomi Osaka's woes deepened when the struggling former world number one pulled out of her home Pan Pacific Open in Tokyo complaining of abdominal pain on Thursday. The 24-year-old Japanese was set to play Brazil's Beatriz Haddad Maia in the second round later in the day but withdrew saying her “body won't let” her compete.

“It's an honour to be able to play at the Toray Pan Pacific Open in front of the amazing fans here in Japan,” Osaka said in a statement released by organisers. “This has and always will be a special tournament for me and I wish I could have stepped on court today, but my body won't let me.”

“Thank you for all your support this week and I will see you next year,” she added. Osaka, a four-time Grand Slam winner, was looking to end a poor run of form in Tokyo, where she is the defending champion from the last time the tournament was played in 2019. —AFP

Sports

Undermanned Germany wary of ‘unpleasant’ Hungary in Nations League

‘Hungary have a team that acts with enormous power’

BERLIN: Germany goes into Friday's Nations League clash with Hungary in Leipzig well aware of their opponents' quality, having been held 1-1 in Budapest in the summer. Sitting behind Hungary in second in their group, Germany will have to face the Hungarians missing four first-team players, including captain Manuel Neuer, forward Marco Reus, midfielders Leon Goretzka and Julian Brandt.

Dortmund captain Reus went down with an injured ankle in his side's 1-0 derby win over rivals Schalke on Sunday, while Neuer and Goretzka (both Covid) and Brandt (flu) were ruled out on Wednesday. Speaking to the press ahead of the game, Borussia Moenchengladbach midfielder Jonas Hoffmann, who scored in the 1-1 draw, said Germany needed to prepare for an aggressive and organised opponent.

"Hungary have a team that acts with enormous power, that goes through with their plan for 90 minutes plus stoppage time," Hoffmann said on Wednesday. "We didn't have many chances there (in Budapest) and that says a lot."

"(We must) play purposefully and consistently in Leipzig on Friday night in order to get to the opposition's goal as soon as possible," West Ham defender Thilo Kehrer said his Germany side were wary of their "unpleasant opponents".

"They are unpleasant opponents, we noticed that, but so are the Italians and the English. They will come with a lot of commitment and will." Manager Hansi Flick said he hoped striker Timo Werner, who will play in front of his home crowd in Leipzig, can convert his opportunities into goals.

"He always creates chances in front of goal. He frees himself up skilfully" Flick said. "Improving his efficiency in the weeks leading up to the World Cup would be good for him and for us."

Werner, who scored two goals in Germany's 3-1 win over Ukraine in Leipzig in 2020, has only scored once in six games since returning to RB Leipzig from Chelsea in August. One to watch: Armel Bella Kotchap (Southampton)

The biggest surprise from manager Flick's announcement was the inclusion of uncapped defender Armel Bella Kotchap, who was named in the squad ahead of several experienced players including Borussia Dortmund's Mats Hummels and Bayer Leverkusen's Jonathan Tah.

Paris-born Bella Kotchap made the move to Southampton in the Premier League in the summer after impressing for VfB Bochum, who he helped get promoted to the Bundesliga in the 2020-21 season. While Bella Kotchap represented Germany at junior levels, the 190-cm tall defender was not expecting a call-up for the Nations League, saying he "didn't know the number" when Flick rang him to tell him the news.

"I was very surprised, but also very happy" Bella Kotchap said. Ralph Hasenhuettl, Bella Kotchap's domestic coach - who Flick revealed was a strong advocate pushing for Bella Kotchap's selection - said the German defender had "shown the most consistent performances so far" out of everyone in his Southampton squad.



FRANKFURT, Germany: Germany's players including defender Robin Gosens (L-R), midfielder Joshua Kimmich, forward Lukas Nmecha and midfielder David Raum take part in a training session, on the eve of the UEFA Nations League Group 3 football match between Germany and Hungary. —AFP

Key stats

7 points - Hungary sit first in the group on seven points from four games, with Germany second on six points. England, who Germany meet on Monday, sit last in the four-team group, with two

draws and two losses so far.

3-2 - The surprise scoreline in Germany's upset victory over a Hungarian side captained by Ferenc Puskas in the 1954 World Cup final. Hungary had thrashed Germany 8-3 in the group stages. —AFP

Scots beat Ukraine to boost Nations League push

GLASGOW, United Kingdom: Scotland boosted their bid for Nations League promotion and gained a measure of revenge over Ukraine with a 3-0 win in Glasgow on Wednesday. Steve Clarke's side dominated a one-sided clash at Hampden Park but had to wait until the last 20 minutes for their goals as John McGinn's opener and Lyndon Dykes' brace sent them top of Group B1.

Scotland were beaten 3-1 by Ukraine in an emotionally-charged World Cup play-off at Hampden Park in June. Their failure to qualify for a first World Cup since 1998 still hurts Clarke's players, so this was a cathartic result, albeit one they would rather have had four months ago.

Ukraine's hopes of providing a rare moment of levity in their war-torn nation by reaching the World Cup were eventually dashed as they lost to Wales in the play-off final. A shadow of the team that beat Scotland in the playoffs, Ukraine provided little resistance as Scotland made it three wins from their four Nations League matches.

The Scots have moved above Ukraine to the top of the group as they chase promotion to League A. While the competition is derided by some, Scotland are well aware of the Nations League's importance after securing a Euro 2020 play-off through winning their Nations League group.

In their final group games, Scotland host the Republic of Ireland on Saturday before travelling to Ukraine on September 27. "I'm pleased for the players. They suffered in the summer more than anybody," Clarke said.

"We did a lot of work in the short period we had, a lot of it very boring work in the lecture room, and they obviously took it all on board. They were excellent. "Sometimes you need to respond in football and it's nice that we've responded in this way."

Dykes added: "Obviously I wanted to impact the game, I was disappointed I wasn't starting. The manager went with Che (Adams). "But I came on, I changed the game and got two goals and we got



GLASGOW, United Kingdom: Scotland's striker Che Adams (L) tries to score during the UEFA Nations League B Group 1 football match at Hampden Park stadium, in Glasgow. —AFP

three points so it's good."

After a minute's applause before kick-off to mark the death of Queen Elizabeth II, Scotland should have taken an immediate lead when Che Adams shot straight at Ukraine keeper Anatoliy Trubin. Adams narrowly failed to convert Ryan Christie's cross moments later before Nathan Patterson's delivery was glanced wide by McGinn. Scotland's fast start had Ukraine pinned back and the chances kept coming. Christie headed over from Stuart Armstrong's cross and Armstrong forced a fumbled save from Trubin.

Dykes strikes

Scotland's momentum was interrupted when Everton defender Patterson was stretched off with a possible knee injury. Mykhaylo Mudryk should have capitalised on a wayward clearance from Craig Gordon but his scuffed finish saved the Scotland 'keeper's blushes early in the second half.

Clarke's team kept pressing and came within a whisker of breaking the deadlock as Adams headed McGinn's cross onto the bar before the striker's follow-up was saved by Trubin. By the time Armstrong headed another good chance wide it seemed Scotland were destined for a frustrating night.

But McGinn rewarded Scotland's relentless pressure in the 70th minute as the Aston Villa midfielder rolled his man inside the area and fired into the far corner. Ukraine appealed for a foul but the referee did not check the monitor after getting advice from his video assistant. —AFP

Davis Love. "There were a lot of obvious pairings and a lot of guys that really get along well," Love said. "The obvious ones made the other ones a little bit harder."

Tokyo Olympic champion Schauffele, ranked fifth, and 2021 PGA playoff winner Cantlay, ranked fourth, went 2-0 together in foursomes at last year's Ryder Cup and the 2019 Presidents Cup. "We've just spent a lot of time together," Cantlay said. "He's very intelligent, thinks things through. He's a guy who leaves no stone unturned."

"You get to know each other really well when you're in these team rooms and it's nitty gritty," Schauffele said. "He's a straight-up guy." It's a crucial start for Australia's Scott, seeking a first victory in his 10th Cup appearance, and Japan's Matsuyama as well, the experienced global leaders hoping to inspire the best from a record eight rookie team-

Kuwait's Martial Arts Championship begins tomorrow

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait's first Martial Arts Championship will take place Saturday at Kuwait Boxing Federation Hall in Sabah Al-Salem area. There will be 13 bouts in boxing and Muay Thai, including two women's Muay Thai matches. Participants will be medically tested and weighed Friday to make sure about their fitness and compliance with the rules.

The first Martial Arts Championship will be attended by Vice President of the Spanish Olympic Committee, member of the European Union Sports for All Committee Professor Eduardo Blanco Barrera, Representative of the World Boxing Council (WBC) Techno Balanas, Director of WBC Executive Council and Head of MENA region for Muay Thai Hajji Taher and several sports personalities in Kuwait.

WBC representative in Kuwait Meshal Al-Fajji said the organizing committee completed all preparations for the launch of the first sport event of its kind in Kuwait and the Arabian Gulf. He said we worked for several months to ensure the successful launch of the first Muay Thai Championship with major support from Kuwait Olympic Committee Board Member, Head of Sports Committees Sheikh Mubarak Faisal Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Kuwait Muay Thai Committee President Abdelsalam Al-Sindy and Kuwait Boxing Federation President Mohammad Mansi.



Hajji Taher



The championship will start with a match between Rakan Al-Malalah and Seif Al-Malalah in Muay Thai, followed by a women's match between Rana Al-Suqobi and Haneen Bushehri for under 51 kg. The third match will be between Othman Al-Mutawa and Ous Nasruldeen in the under 48 kg. The fourth match will be between Majd Fakhani and Ali Akbar in the under 81 kg. This will be followed by the first boxing match between Hussein Mubarak and Mishal Al-Enezi for under 56 kg. The Muay Thai will be completed by a match between Mubarak Jumaa and Mudhar Al-Nabulsi in the 71 kg, followed by the second women's Muay Thai match between Haneen Naseem and Asmaa Al-Qabandi in the 51 kg, followed by a match between Abdallah Saleem and Khalid Al-Nabulsi in the 77 kg. The ninth match will be between Ibrahim Al-Nahat and Falah Al-Mutairi in the above 91 kg, then there will be a boxing bout between Meshal Al-Kandary and Fadi Al-Wakeel for under 77 kg, then a match between Adnan Al-Qazweeni and Abdelrahman Al-Sanad for the under 74 kg. The match before last will be between Faisal Al-Bughaili and Dawood Faisal in the 65 kg. Matches will be concluded by a match for the WBC Kuwait championship between Muhannad Al-Maghrahi and Omar Mansour in the under 65 kg category.

Matsuyama-Scott face Schauffele-Cantlay to open Presidents Cup

CHARLOTTE, United States: Americans Xander Schauffele and Patrick Cantlay, both ranked in the world's top five, will face Masters winners Hideki Matsuyama and Adam Scott when the Presidents Cup tees off Thursday.

Pairings for the five opening foursomes (alternate shot) matches were drawn Wednesday at Quail Hollow by Internationals captain Trevor Immelman and US captain

mates. "We probably need most of our guys to peak this week to really shake down the American team," Scott said. "It's a hard thing to do. They have to embrace it and put it all out on the golf course." The Americans own an 11-1-1 edge in the rivalry with eight consecutive triumphs and have never lost on home soil to the non-European squad.

While the Americans boast 12 of the world's 25 top-ranked players and are overwhelming favorites, the underdog Internationals have embraced a nothing-to-lose attitude. "We feel like our best golf is more than enough to be not just in contention, but to win a lot of matches," Australian Cameron Davis said.

"I don't think any of us are thinking it's going to be a steamroll the other direction. We feel like it could be an upset, which would be awesome." Thursday's second match

sends the US duo of two-time major winner Justin Thomas and three-time major winner Jordan Spieth against South Korean Im Sung-jae and Canada's Corey Conners.

South Koreans Lee Kyoung-hoon and Kim Joo-hyung meet two-time major winner Collin Morikawa and Cameron Young in match three.

"They were lining up to play with Cam Young," Love said. "Collin had the experience. A very similar type pairing. You get a guy that drives it really long and really straight and a guy that's really steady, great ball striker."

Top-ranked reigning Masters champion Scottie Scheffler and fellow US newcomer Sam Burns face Kim Si-woo and Davis in match four while the last matchup finds Americans Max Homa and Tony Finau against Canada's Taylor Pendrith and Chile's Mito Pereira. —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9
Maternity Hospital	24843100		
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700		
Chest Hospital	24849400		
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Kaizen center	25716707
Adan Hospital	23940620	Rawda	22517733
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Adaliya	22517144

Clinics

Khaldiya	24848075	Dasmah	22532265
Kaifan	24849807	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shamiya	24848913	Shaab	22518752
Shuwaikh	24814507	Qibla	22459381
Abdullah Salem	22549134	Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Nuzha	22526804	Mirqab	22456536
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764	Sharq	22465401
Qadsiya	22515088	Salmiya	25746401

CHANGE OF NAME

Yalla Venkatamma holder of Passport No. L1432096 do hereby change my name to Konka Parvathi given name Yalla Venkatamma surname all purposes I will henceforth be. (C# 2406) — 21-09-2022



SYDNEY, Australia: Australia's Bec Allen shoots during the Women's Basketball World Cup group B game between Australia and France in Sydney on September 22, 2022. —AFP

US make ominous start to women's WCup

SYDNEY, Australia: Breanna Stewart drilled 22 points as the United States launched their bid Thursday for a fourth straight women's basketball world title with an 87-72 win over Belgium, as France upset hosts Australia to ruin veteran Lauren Jackson's return. The American Olympic champions were 48-39 clear at half-time and never relented, despite missing three players from their 12-strong roster who are still en route to Sydney after the WNBA Finals.

Jewell Loyd and Alyssa Thomas both added 14 points while Julie Vanloo scored 13 to lead Belgium on the opening day of the 10-day tournament in Sydney. The victory was the Americans' 23rd in a row at the World Cup, an incredible streak that began in 2010.

"It was about what we expected, we knew we were going to come out hard and do things well, but also make mistakes. It was the first time we were on the court with the team," said Stewart. Coach Cheryl Reeve said she was particularly pleased with their defence.

"We expected us to be a little bit rough in terms of our chemistry, but we had good chemistry on the defensive side, which I thought was really good," she said. Australia, the 2018 beaten finalists and world number three, crashed 70-57 to Olympic bronze medalists France.

Their shooting outside the arc let them down, with just five of 23 dropping, as Gabby Williams starred for the French with 23 points and two assists. "When push came to shove I think our defence let us down in the third quarter," said Australian centre Marianna Tolo. "It was tough."

The game marked the return to top-level competition of Jackson, a four-time Olympic medalist and seven-time WNBA all-star who retired in 2016 with a persistent knee injury. Now a mother of two, she launched a comeback in April to make her fifth World Cup and first in 12 years.

The 41-year-old spent 10 minutes on court and netted a three-pointer to ensure she became only the third player in women's World Cup history to net 600 competition points,

behind Brazilian pair Hortencia Marcari and Janeth Dos Santos Arcain.

Game high

Despite the retirement of stalwarts Sue Bird and Diana Taurasi, and the absence of the jailed Brittney Griner, the USA remain hot favourites to land an 11th title. Chelsea Gray, Kelsey Plum and Aja Wilson, who were all on the Las Vegas Aces team that sealed the WNBA Finals 3-1 against the Connecticut Sun last weekend, have yet to arrive in Australia and did not feature on Thursday.

Nevertheless, the team quickly found their rhythm and they raced to a 32-22 first-quarter lead. Belgium, who finished fourth in 2018, rallied to take the second quarter 17-16, but they were no match for the United States' solid defence and shooting prowess.

Along with Belgium, the USA are in Group A with China, South Korea, Puerto Rico and Bosnia and Herzegovina, with

the top four making the quarter-finals. Puerto Rico clocked their first-ever World Cup win in only their second championship by crushing the Jonquel Jones-led Bosnia and Herzegovina 82-58.

Star veteran Arella Guirantes scored a game-high 26 points, nine rebounds and eight assists—the first time since the 1994 tournament that a player had bagged at least 25 points, eight rebounds and eight assists in a single game.

"I'm lost for words right now since we have been grinding so much together," said Guirantes after delivering some upbeat news for her homeland, which is recovering from being pounded by Hurricane Fiona.

China crushed South Korea 107-44, controlling the game from the tip-off to demonstrate their podium ambitions while Asian champions Japan proved a class above Mali in Group B, romping home 89-56 with 16 three-pointers. World number four Canada had a tougher task against Serbia before prevailing 67-60. —AFP



FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 booth at The Avenues. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Saeed Al-Kuwari



Mohammed Rashid Al-Khendi



Mohammed Al-Athba

FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 booth opens at Avenues

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Projects and Legacy Committee held an introductory tour in Kuwait on Thursday at The Avenues mall to provide citizens and residents with updates on the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, upcoming tournaments, events and activities.

In a press statement, Saeed Al-Kuwari, Executive Director of the Hayya platform at the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, said: "Our participation in Kuwait is to provide information about the World Cup. We are keen to be in direct contact with the public, as the Kuwaiti public are one of the biggest fans of the World Cup. We are keen to answer all inquiries and technical problems related to the Hayya card (fan ID) or any challenges fans may face while applying. We convey our voice to the world that the tournament is close to you. Our team is here for any inquiries, even if the fans want us to make reservations step by step."

Mohammed Rashid Al-Khendi, local and regional media relations expert at the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, said the booth in Kuwait will be present till

October 5, in conjunction with other booths that are also being launched in other Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia in Jeddah and Riyadh and the UAE. He pointed out that the goal of the campaign is to be closer to fans and people who love and have a passion for the football tournament, in addition to fans who will be in Qatar for the World Cup less than two months from now. "There is a great desire from the Kuwaiti public, and we are present here daily at The Avenues during the two-week period to provide the facilities and all the required support and assistance," he added.

Mohammed Al-Athba, Director of Transportation Operations, said the committee is here to interact with the public. "We will answer anyone who has an inquiry about the Hayya platform or about transportation or accommodation, which is a prerequisite for applying to the Hayya platform. The Hayya card offers many services. Anyone who holds the card can use public transportation, whether buses or the metro, for free. We encourage people to download the application, where it helps users to know their favorite food, places and events depending on answers they provide the platform with," he said.

Information and brochures will be provided at the booth on the most important topics of interest to fans and details on the Hayya card, as well as detailing the services and ways of accessing stadiums, especially for those coming from outside Qatar. The booth will also provide valuable information about accommodation, as well as a presentation of the most important entertainment destinations in Qatar, such as restaurants, cafes, shopping centers, attractions and archaeological and cultural sites.

With a gamer prince and oil billions, Saudi turns to eSports

RIYADH: Wearing headphones and anti-sweat finger sleeves, gamers from eight countries guided gun-toting avatars through a battle royale in the Saudi capital, as cheering onlookers watched the action on a big screen. The PUBG Mobile tournament was part of Gamers8, a summer festival spotlighting Saudi Arabia's emergence as a global eSports dynamo—one that officials hope can compete with powerhouses like China and South Korea.

Much like with Formula One and professional golf, the world's biggest oil exporter has in recent years leveraged its immense wealth to assert itself on the eSports stage, hosting glitzy conferences and snapping up established tournament organisers.

These moves have attracted the kind of criticism Saudi officials have come to expect, with some eSports leaders objecting to Riyadh's human rights record. Yet the lack of long-term financing for eSports makes the industry especially eager to do business with the Saudis, which helps explain why the backlash so far has been relatively muted, analysts say.

Saudi gamers, meanwhile, are revelling in their country's newfound status and the eye-watering prize pools it brings. "In the past, there was no support," said 22-year-old Faissal Ghafiri, who competed in the PUBG tournament, which featured \$3 million in prize money.

"Thank God, now is the best time for me to play eSports and participate in tournaments," he added, noting that what was once a hobby had transformed into a lucrative "job".

Call of duty

Saudi Arabia's interest in gaming and eSports comes from the very top, with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said to be an avid "Call of Duty" player. The national eSports federation was created in 2017, and the number of eSports teams in the kingdom has since blossomed from two to more than 100.

Survey findings indicate 21 million people—nearly two-thirds the national population—consider themselves gamers. In January, the kingdom's sovereign wealth fund launched the

Savvy Gaming Group, which acquired top eSports firms ESL Gaming and FACEIT in deals reportedly worth a total of \$1.5 billion.

Last week, Prince Mohammed released a national eSports strategy that calls for the kingdom to create some 39,000 eSports-related jobs by 2030 while producing more than 30 games in domestic studios. Next year Riyadh will host the Global Esports Games, billed as the world's "flagship" competitive eSports event. "I think what's incredible is that the government has put eSports front and centre, whereas a lot of countries are still trying to work out a positioning," said Chester King, CEO of British Esports. "The investment, I would say, is probably top of the world."

Gaming is also expected to be a major component of headline-grabbing development projects like the Red Sea megacity NEOM, with its planned 170-kilometre-long (105 miles) twin skyscrapers known as The Line.

Yet NEOM is also where Saudi Arabia has encountered its biggest eSports setback. Two years ago, Riot Games announced a partnership that would have made NEOM a sponsor of the European championship for the game League of Legends.

"Saudi Arabia's reputation will always be a hindrance to the Western eSports community, despite attempts to improve it," said Jason Delestre of the University of Lille, who studies the geopolitics of eSports.

Saudi officials are undeterred, however, and they have deep backing in the eSports world. "Gaming was always a bit more morally flexible, as they are mostly project-based and lack a sustainable business model," said Tobias Scholz, an eSports expert at the University of Siegen in Germany.

"eSports need the money compared to golf or others." Vlad Marinescu, president of the International Esports Federation, dismissed any suggestion the kingdom was using eSports to engage in reputation-laundering. "Laundering is a word that has the prerequisite of starting with something dirty. The culture of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is beautiful and rich," Marinescu told AFP.

Prince Faisal bin Bandar bin Sultan, chairman of the Saudi Esports Federation, told AFP his vision is for the kingdom to become a natural choice for all eSports programming. "One of the most amazing things for me is at our recent event, at Gamers8, the amount of young Saudi players who came up to me and said, 'We always loved watching these things, but we never thought we would have it here,'" he recalled. "And that's the emotion, and that's the image that I want to keep." —AFP