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Women return to Assembly as Kuwaitis vote for change

Heavy turnout as citizens flock to vote • At least 14 new faces in parliament



KUWAIT: Alia Al-Khaled (left), Ahmad Al-Saadoun (center) and Jenan Bushehri (right) celebrate with their supporters after winning seats in the National Assembly elections on Sept 29, 2022.

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti voters, vying for political stability after years of crises, voted on Thursday for massive change, according to early election results. At least two women candidates - Alia Al-Khaled in the second constituency and Jenan Bushehri in the third constituency - were almost certain of winning seats. The previous National Assembly had no female members. Among the main winners were prominent opposition leader and former three-time speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun, 87, who is tipped to become the next Assembly speaker.

At the time of going to press, at least 14 new faces were in strong position to win seats in the 50-seat National Assembly and as many as 26 members of the dissolved Assembly were likely to be changed, according to the results. The previous Assembly was dissolved by HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in August over non-stop political disputes between the for-

mer government and opposition MPs.

In a historic Amiri speech, delivered by HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in June, HH the Amir pledged that the government will not interfere in the polls or in the election of the speaker. He also pledged he will safeguard the democratic system in Kuwait. Most polling centers reported heavy turnout, which was estimated at well over 60 percent.

SEE PAGES 2-5

Former Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, who served as speaker between 2013 and 2022, did not contest the elections, saying he plans to come back stronger. After casting his vote, Ghanem expressed hope that the next Assembly and government will avoid the mistakes of the past and focus on cooperation to achieve much-needed stability. Ghanem said that if political stability is achieved, it

will positively reflect on all people and on the country. Kuwait, which has a sovereign wealth fund worth \$700 billion, has been plunged into political turmoil, which intensified in the past two decades. This was the 10th general election since 2003 and in the past three years, as many as five Cabinets had been formed due to political bickering. After the official announcement of the results, the government of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah, hailed as a reformist, will submit its resignation in accordance with the constitution.

Sheikh Ahmad will most likely be asked to form the next Cabinet, which will cooperate with the new Assembly. Former opposition MP Marzouq Al-Khalifa was in a comfortable position to win a seat in the fourth constituency although he is running in the election while in jail after he was convicted by the court of appeals of taking part in outlawed primary elections ahead of the 2020 elections.



Bader Al-Mulla celebrates his victory.



Kuwaitis cast their votes in a festive mood during parliamentary elections on Sept 29, 2022. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and Fouad Al-Shaikh



We, the people: Voters optimistic about change



KUWAIT: People vote in the National Assembly elections on Sept 29, 2022. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and Fouad Al-Shaikh

By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

KUWAIT: During the National Assembly elections on Thursday, Kuwait Times spoke to some voters to find out about their ambitions, hopes and the major issues they hope will be addressed in the next parliament. Almost everyone was hopeful, stressing this is a time for change, as the old era of favoritism must come to an end and the next Assembly must tackle the major issues affecting citizens in the country. A couple of voters preferred to remain anonymous:

Kuwait Times: What are your hopes for the next National Assembly?

Jassim Al-Kandari: What we are noticing is that we are on the right path. We hope for development, entertainment, housing, healthcare and other things important for our country. We hope there will be 10 electoral districts. Thankfully, we have Their Highnesses the Amir and the Crown Prince in the new era we are all optimistic about.

Salah Al-Amir: My aspiration is for reform. The people's representative whom we have chosen must ride the wave of reformation. We hope the government is serious and we hope the representatives cooperate with the government and develop our country.

Bu Ahmad: We hope for coordination between the government and the National Assembly. We hope new laws are passed and the negative situation is fixed. We are hopeful for development, and we are ambitious. Everyone can feel the negative situation.

Khaled Al-Hamaad: We hope for the best in the next Assembly because Kuwait deserves better than this. We need development and employment for our children, away from needless struggles and infighting in the Assembly. The two branches must agree. We don't want problems - all countries are developing and we must be in line.

Najim Al-Zangaah: We need development; we need capable candidates. I hope to see new faces and real change.

Dr Waleed Al-Tunaib: We hope for stability, and then everything will develop. We will start thinking about education and economic issues. This will even improve the external perspective of the country and our national security will be better, if we are stable. Stability needs us to go through many stages - the previous stages were needed in order to develop, as it happened with other democratic countries that improved.

Hani Al-Khalidi: This is a message for everyone. The interests of Kuwait are more important than anything. Their Highnesses the Amir and Crown Prince have insisted that we must look for the interests of the country. This election is crucial - there is no place for nepotism and voting for relatives. We must vote for the candidate who defends the rights of Kuwait, and this will secure our future and make Kuwait return as the pearl of the GCC.

Dr Waleed Hamadah: We hope the MPs perform their legislative role and put forth laws for the interest of the country and nationals. We hope they stay away from infighting, so that Kuwait becomes better than it was before.

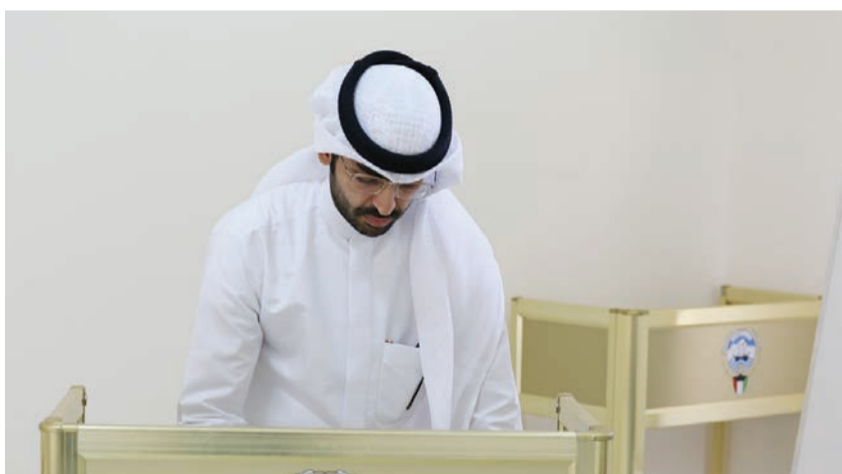
Salah Al-Farhan: We hope things will be better, but all we have seen is abusive language from the candidates. I think things will remain the same from what I have heard from the candidates' speeches. I am not optimistic.

Musaad Al-Fadhli: Our choice is for the honest candidate who performs their duty towards the country and thinks of the country's interest rather than their own. The country needs understanding people who do not think about ethnicities and religious differences. They should only think that Kuwait deserves the best through their services. Kuwait is our mother, and we hope the situation becomes the pearl of the GCC once again. We hope they perform their full duties from their hearts that Kuwait deserves.

Bader Al-Damkhi: My expectations for the current election outcomes are different from the previous ones due to the great speech of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, that touched on essential things the country is suffering from. When the results become better, they will automatically impact other things, including foreign affairs.

Anonymous 1: My hope is that we find solutions for the housing problem and develop education. We hope for more job opportunities for young Kuwaitis. We need more infrastructure development and entertainment projects. We want Kuwait to return as it was - the pearl of the GCC. All the best for the candidates who will win.

Anonymous 2: We hope the National Assembly is



Kuwait Times Deputy Editor-in-Chief Abdullah Boftain votes in the Assembly elections.



full of achievements, away from infighting. We are hopeful for a popular speaker of the Assembly and a reformative government.

Kuwait Times: What are the most important issues that must be addressed?

Jassim Al-Kandari: They must look out for our citizens and retirees. Our middle class is vanishing, and it is getting worse. They must increase salaries and write off debts.

Salah Al-Amir: Firstly, we must get rid of nepotism. I am a citizen with rights, and I should not resort to a representative in order to get my rights. Wasta must end, and the candidate should not make citizens feel that they owe them a favor. Secondly, we want to fix the country, and if we fix these two issues, we will start moving forward towards the right path.

Bu Ahmad: We must fix housing, healthcare, education and infrastructure, as well as employment.

Khaled Al-Hamaad: We must fix employment issues. It is not right that a college graduate remains jobless for two years, or their salaries are low while there is inflation everywhere. Moreover, we need more services related to infrastructure and the roads. We need housing quickly - our children should not wait for 25 years to get a house.

Najim Al-Zangaah: We must fix education and healthcare. We have many problems such as the situation of stateless residents, who must have their rights.

Ahmad Al-Shutairi: We must fix education and health.

Dr Waleed Al-Tunaib: Our most important issue is education. Once we fix our education, then everything will improve. This starts with raising our kids correctly at home.

Hani Al-Khalidi: We have many issues such as education and sports. We must start with our most important internal problems. Thankfully, our reputation is known all over the world. We hope that candidates give the best for the interest of Kuwait.

Dr Waleed Hamadah: We must fix social problems such as housing issues and the rise in real estate prices. The education issue must be looked after, especially after the pandemic. We must also look after healthcare. We must look at the problem of salaries. We have heard of unifying salaries in various sectors. We must fix the unemployment problem and must defeat nepotism and wasta. We must execute development programs that make Kuwait an attractive environment rather than a repulsive one. There are many factors, and we hope that the upcoming Assembly will be a reformative one rather than an aggravating one.

Musaad Al-Fadhli: The citizen is the base of the country. If you provide them their rights and the means to give back to their country, then it is necessary to provide them with education, healthcare and housing, along with debt relief. For those with weak financial means, it is very hard to survive and produce for their country. The citizen asks for representatives to give them their rights and set regulations that will lead to security, comfort and stability in the country.

Anonymous 1: Education, education and education. If we fix the education problem, then everything will be better.

Anonymous 2: We must fix education, then healthcare and roads.

Kuwait Times: Do you think women will have a chance to win and resolve their problems?

Jassim Al-Kandari: Women are base of society - we hope some female candidates will be elected.

Bu Ahmad: Maybe the chances of women aren't the best, but we hope the candidates who win will take care of women's issues and fix them, as they are half of the society.

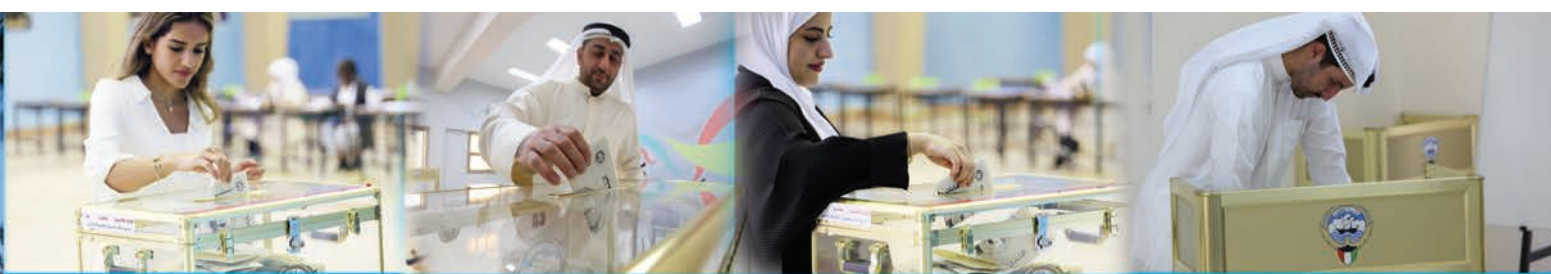
Khaled Al-Hamaad: Women are our mothers, sisters, wives and daughters, and they all deserve the best. But from the visits of some candidates, we do not see strength in their speech. For example, one candidate was saying that once I get to the National Assembly I will work - but we need to know what her goals and program are before being elected.

Najim Al-Zangaah: We hope that she wins. In my opinion, we need half of the Assembly to be women.

Bader Al-Damkhi: I am supporting the presence of women in the Assembly, especially with the previous experience that was great and led to improvement in women's issues.

Anonymous: Women candidates might have a chance, and we hope they have good programs.

In conclusion, most voters are hopeful and want to see change from previous elections.



Former National Assembly speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem (Left) and former National Assembly speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun vote in the Assembly elections. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and Fouad Al-Shaikh

Media analysts laud positive electoral system

By Mustafa Qamhiya

KUWAIT: Local and international media outlets carried out extensive media coverage of Kuwait's assembly elections, with radio, television and print outlets giving special focus on the leadership's calls for correcting the political situation in the country.

Mustafa Qamhiya, Managing Editor, Kuwait Times spoke to few of the media analysts and independent researchers who shared their opinions on the Assembly elections and the way forward.

Adel Darwish, writer and commentator with the Parliamentary Press Gallery in London said that, "We promote democratic values in Britain and work as independent parliament journalists and so I am here, to look for a parliamentarian's view of democracy in Kuwait."

Darwish pointed out that democracy was unique in the Arab world and as with other democracies across the world, is constantly evolving. "We have a constitutional advantage here and we have observed a certain transition happening in Kuwait. Also, we have seen how significant public opinion is in the country and this is also reflective in their choices - Kuwaitis are keen to know how much they need to pay to go to school or to fuel their car."

He also outlined the structure of the Kuwaiti constitution as one which allotted roles for the parliament, the government and the state with each having their own individual role to play. "The role of the press is neither social nor economic, as these are privately owned institutions, but it is still a place to showcase the public opinion, which is why there needs to be a parliamentary press separate from the Ministry of Information." Darwish argued that the parliamentary press which usually functions under a separate code of practice has its own elected community and Chairman or Secretary, adding that, "parliamentary journalists can keep an eye on members of the parliament and can even put them on trial in front of the public."

Dr Said Shehata, Lecturer in Middle East politics and international relations, University of London, opined that, "Democracy in Kuwait goes back to the constitution which was put in place in 1962, out of a belief in the Kuwaiti leadership who have participated in policy making, even as early as the 1930s, in the form of local councils, formed to listen to public opinion."

He said that Kuwait's leadership and the statements that have been made by them signaled the unity in the country and also underlined the importance given to the public opinion. "This can be seen everywhere, at the polling stations and voting centers, where men and women have enthusiastically come forward to vote." Shehata said that the reason for a large turnout was because, "people were hopeful of a change."

"The leadership decided that things needed to be changed and initiated a proper route to democracy, to elect responsible members to the Assembly and to ensure a free election."

Meanwhile, **Ahmad Yousuf** from Anadolu Agency, who covers the Gulf region, said that he came from the agency to observe the voting procedures in Kuwait.

"We went to two schools in the morning - one for men and the other for women. The turnout was quite good with people present from various age groups and it was quite evident that the people of Kuwait were keen to work towards reformation and contribute to the development of their country."

He observed that Kuwait is one of the leading democratic countries in the region and "it started on this path quite early and is known for its integrity." Yousuf added that the role of the National Assembly was renowned for its effectiveness, as an institution that spoke on behalf of the public and this was reflective in the diverse movements and opposition parties in Kuwait.

Elie Abouaoun, Director, Middle East and North Africa Center at the United States Institute for Peace said that, "Democracy is a word with many meanings. But what I was able to see during the last two days and this morning is a consistent effort by Kuwaitis, whether authorities or political forces and organizations, to improve the practice of democracy in Kuwait. This time, this election is obviously a bit different, because of the road map that was set by the Amir and the Crown Prince. This roadmap included important electoral reforms which I hope will be put into practice by the end of this electoral process."

Abouaoun pointed out that electoral reforms, if imple-

mented properly should lead to reforms but added that these could only be seen after the outcome of the elections. He also said that on his visit to a polling station for women, he saw women from all age groups volunteering and working within the center and was pleased to see that it was managed very well, with no irregularities.

Speaking about the functioning of the polling stations, he said that the two centers were managed very well, with voters receiving proper assistance from those that were there to help them, adding that, "the head of the polling stations insisted on the privacy of the voters."

He also argued that, "The Kuwaiti leadership has started a top-down process to achieve political change. But a top-down process is not sustainable unless there is a parallel bottom-up change as well, as change cannot be imposed - it needs to be complimented by the people."

Leon Shahabian, Researcher with Global Insights Group, said that, "As an American Lebanese researcher who follow the GCC from Washington, this is a wonderful opportunity to see a second wave of development happening here in Kuwait." He lauded the positive changes that were happening in the country, adding that the country was at the forefront of a significant change movement. "It just needs the right leadership and structure in the parliament and the government. The positive signs are already there, even before the electoral campaigns - this is a different election."

Speaking on the historical relations shared between the US and the Kuwait, Shahabian said that he hoped to



Adel Darwish



Dr Said Shehata



Ahmad Yousuf



Elie Abouaoun



Fajer Al-Houti



George Kallivayalil



Leon Shahabian

let young Americans know what the older generations have always felt about Kuwait and added that he looked forward to "this new chapter in bilateral relations."

"I think the change will eventually happen because a lot of positive things are happening after the dissolution of the assembly. I think this is not only witnessed in the leadership but also among the youth as the younger generation is also observing what is happening in other GCC countries."

Meanwhile, **George Kallivayalil**, Associate Editor and Chief of Bureau of south Indian newspaper, Deepika, observed that "people in the country are optimistic about the election and its outcome," adding that the voters were hopeful that the elections would bring more stability, development and prosperity to the country.

Kallivayalil, who has covered Kuwait elections as an observer twice, said that he had visited four polling booths on Thursday. "I could see voters were very excited to participate in the democratic process, particularly the youth and women, who turned out in large numbers. Even the elderly voters came enthusiastically to the polling stations to cast their votes. These are quite positive things for democracy in the country."

The newspaper also acknowledges the special efforts taken by Fajer Al-Houti who works with the Media Center, Ministry of Information for arranging interviews for the story.

Women voters optimistic about election results



KUWAIT: People vote in the National Assembly elections on Sept 29, 2022. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and Fouad Al-Shaikh

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: After HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah dissolved the National Assembly and called on the people of Kuwait to elect a new parliament, the country witnessed great democratic developments in the five electoral constituencies. On Election Day, Kuwait Times toured several constituencies and asked citizens about their hopes for the new Assembly, the main issues they wish the new parliament resolves and their opinion about the presence of women in the Assembly.

Nada Hassan Al-Qallaf said she hopes the next Assembly meets her expectations, calling on the new representatives to improve citizens' standard of living and boost their incomes. She pointed out the voices of women candidates in the current election are louder than last time, so she is expecting women to be elected to the Assembly, especially since there are great and qualified candidates this time.

Dana Al-Fadli stressed she is expecting the next Assembly to resolve the main issues affecting citizens, such as balancing the demographics, improving the level of education and raising the income of citizens. Regarding her expectations from female candidates, she said the presence of women in the Assembly is essential to highlight the issues that affect other women. However, she said she voted for a male candidate due to her conviction that he is a better candidate for her.

"Currently, people have more awareness and will choose their candidate in a better way. We are optimistic that this Assembly will do better than the previous ones. If people choose the best candidate, we will witness reforms in the country, even if it is a slow process," Eman Al-Sahhaf pointed out. She said the new Assembly should focus on humanitarian issues, such as the issue of bedoons (stateless people), and after that resolve other issues like housing and raising the standard of living of citizens. Sahhaf stressed her support for women candidates and their importance to be in the parliament.

Dana Al-Qallaf told Kuwait Times she hopes the new Assembly will end the bedoon issue, adding she did not vote for anyone as she was not being convinced with any candidate in her

constituency. She called on women candidates to exert more efforts to be equal to the number of men in the Assembly.

"I have witnessed over the years several elections, but this time I have noticed awareness and understanding from citizens the true meaning of a representative. Every human being should have the right to choose whom they want, and the new election law is a great step towards supporting the freedom to choose. Byelections are one of the things that should have been banned years ago," Bahija Ibrahim Khuraibet said. "Supporting Kuwaiti women candidates should be over their previous work and achievements and not merely for the position," she added.

Fatima Al-Taher said she is against the presence of women in the Assembly due to traditions and from a religious point of view. "The state should belong to men and not to women," she stressed. Hanaa Al-Othman hoped the election results match the ambitions of the Kuwaiti people.

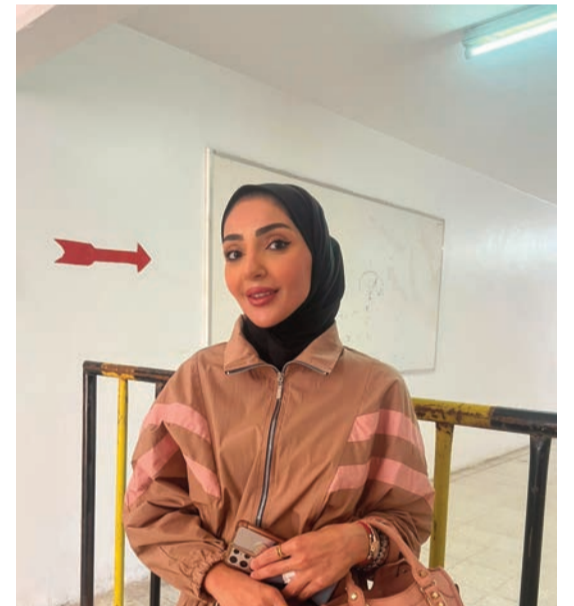
"Reforms in the country have already started. The government, which is the executive authority, launched unprecedented reforms since the speech of His Highness the Amir, and citizens have started to feel their worth. Regarding Assembly representatives, they have their own agendas. Our responsibility as citizens is to choose reformists aligned with governmental authorities to improve the country's situation," Fai Al-Jeran told Kuwait Times. She stressed the government and the next Assembly should tackle the issue of demographics due to its importance, which will lead to the resolution of all other issues the country suffers from.

Jeran said although she supports the idea of women being in the Assembly, she couldn't find any female candidate who represents her views. "Only one woman has a great proposal, but unfortunately, she is not in my constituency. Despite her lifestyle differing from mine, I found her to be a great representative for women's issues," she added.

Anwar, who refused to give her full name, said there are many issues that need reforms, such as housing and the bedoon issue, pointing out she is against naturalizing them as the country does not have enough space to accept them. "If the government wants to give them Kuwaiti citizenship, they should be housed in new areas. Otherwise, I am against the idea," she said.



Bahija Ibrahim Khuraibet



Dana Al-Fadli



Fatima Al-Taher



Nada Hassan Al-Qallaf



Local

Kuwait receives third batch of Eurofighter Typhoon jets



KUWAIT: Military officials at the ceremony to mark the arrival of the Eurofighter Typhoon Tranche 3 jets.

KUWAIT: Kuwait's military said on Wednesday that it has received two more Eurofighter Typhoon Tranche 3 jets, as part of the third batch of jets received from an order list made for 28 jets - meant to enhance the combat readiness of Kuwait Air Force. The jet, which is character-

ized by electronic warfare mechanisms and high-speed response capabilities, is one of the latest multi-role fighters, according to a statement released by the Kuwait Armed Forces. The jets have, so far, achieved 100 flying hours. A ceremony was held to mark the aircraft's landing at

the Ali Al-Salem Al-Sabah Air Base, in the presence of the base commander, Air Commodore Dhafer Al-Ajmi, Italy's Ambassador to Kuwait, Carlo Balducci, Italy's military attache, Colonel Salvatore Ferrara and a number of Kuwait Air Force officers. — KUNA

KRCS assists voters during elections

KUWAIT: Volunteers from the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) provided assistance to voters who found it difficult to reach their respective polling stations.

Around 200 volunteers are stationed across the different constituencies in Kuwait to help and support those in need of medical assistance. — KUNA



Women in Kuwait vote for their future

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti women, on Thursday, marked their strong presence during the national assembly elections, by turning to vote in record numbers. In an indication of the high level of political awareness in Kuwait, this year's elections have witnessed a large number of female voters from various age groups cast their votes across different constituencies in the country. Kuwaiti women also participated as representatives of ministers and other governmental authorities, some working with candidates, while others volunteered as organizers and supporters. —KUNA



KUWAIT: HE Miguel Moro Aguilar with officials at the launch of the Spanish Business Council Kuwait (SBCK).

Embassy of Spain launches SBCK

KUWAIT: The launch of the Spanish Business Council Kuwait (SBCK) was officially announced at an event organized by the Embassy of Spain and hosted at the residence of HE Miguel Moro Aguilar, Ambassador of Spain to Kuwait. The event started with a networking meeting, where around 60 top executives from Spain and Kuwait gathered to celebrate this milestone in Kuwait. HE Miguel Moro Aguilar opened the festivities by thanking all attendees for their interest in this project that is expected to "solidify a friendship existing for over 60 years". Speaking at the event, Aguilar said that, "the signing of the strategic partnership between Ribera Salud and Daman and the new direct flight route between Kuwait and Madrid is expected to enhance connectivity between Kuwait and the Spanish-speaking world."

Yahya Al-Sheibani, Indra's General Manager and SBCK's President, talked about a few other projects of significance led by Spanish companies and brands. He also saluted HE Moro Aguilar for his outstanding efforts to unite the Spanish community in Kuwait and initiate the SBCK initiative. Al-Sheibani added, "cultural awareness is key to building successful professional and personal relationships. Therefore, one of the SBCK's key roles will be to facilitate the exchange of information



and experiences, but also to become a communication channel with public and private entities in both countries". The newly appointed Commercial Attaché at the Spanish Embassy, Miguel Ballesteros, highlighted key figures to provide further context regarding the importance of Spain and Kuwait's commercial relations.

"Despite the worldwide pandemic, Spain has maintained its presence overseas. Exports have increased by 21 percent, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. The outstanding bond between the royal families of Spain and Kuwait has been crucial in maintaining significant commercial ties between both countries. Spanish exports to Kuwait totaled €400m, representing a 26 percent increase compared to the previous year and the 2020 Kuwait's stock value in Spain reached €400m," he said.



KUWAIT: Members of the Kuwait Journalists' Association monitor the electoral process. — Photos by KUNA

NGOs monitor Assembly elections

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) took part in the 2022 National Assembly elections for the 17th legislative term on Thursday, to ensure that democratic values

such as integrity and freedom of choice were observed during the elections. The NGOs monitored the electoral process and spread awareness among voters to vote for the most trustworthy candidate, away from sectarian or ethnic interests, to achieve progress and development in the country. The elections were monitored by the National Integrity Association, Transparency Society as well as the Kuwait Journalists Society. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Society of National Integrity supervisor watches the electoral process.



US VP Harris tours DMZ after N Korea missile launches

Lebanon fails to elect new president as crisis deepens



PUNTA GORDA, United States: Debris litters a street in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian in Punta Gorda, Florida on September 29, 2022. —AFP

Hurricane Ian pounds Florida

'This is going to be a storm we talk about for many years to come'

PUNTA GORDA, United States: Hurricane Ian left much of coastal southwest Florida in darkness early Thursday, bringing "catastrophic" flooding that left officials readying a huge emergency response to a storm of rare intensity.

The US Border Patrol said 20 migrants were missing after their boat sank, with four Cubans swimming to shore in the Florida Keys islands and three rescued at sea by the coast guard. The National Hurricane Center (NHC) said the eye of the "extremely dangerous" hurricane made landfall just after 3:00 pm (1900 GMT) on the barrier island of Cayo Costa, west of the city of Fort Myers.

Dramatic television footage from the coastal city of Naples showed floodwaters surging into beachfront homes, submerging roads and sweeping away vehicles. Some neighborhoods in Fort Myers, which has a population of more than 80,000, resembled lakes. The NHC said Ian's maximum sustained winds reached 150 miles (240 kilometers) per hour when it landed.

It later weakened to a Category 1 hurricane with winds dropping to a maximum 75 miles per hour, battering Florida with storm surges, damaging

winds and "life-threatening catastrophic" flooding, the NHC said at around 2:00 am local time Wednesday (0600 GMT).

More than two million customers were without electricity in Florida early Thursday, out of a total of more than 11 million, with southwestern areas of the state the hardest hit, according to the PowerOutage.us tracking website. Ian is set to affect several million people across Florida and in the southeastern states of Georgia and South Carolina. As hurricane conditions spread, forecasters warned of a once-in-a-generation calamity.

"This is going to be a storm we talk about for many years to come," said National Weather Service director Ken Graham. "It's a historic event." Florida's Governor Ron DeSantis said the state was going to experience a "nasty, nasty day, two days."

'Life-threatening'

The town of Punta Gorda, north of Fort Myers, was in near-total darkness after the storm wiped out power, save for the few buildings with generators. Howling winds ripped branches off trees, pulled chunks out of roofs, and blew the fronds of

palm trees horizontal.

About 2.5 million people were under mandatory evacuation orders in a dozen coastal Florida counties, with several dozen shelters set up, and voluntary evacuation recommended in others.

For those who decided to ride out the storm, authorities stressed it was too late to flee and residents should hunker down and stay indoors. Airports in Tampa and Orlando stopped all commercial flights, and cruise ship companies delayed departures or canceled voyages.

With up to 30 inches (76 centimeters) of rain expected to fall on parts of the Sunshine State, and a storm surge that could reach devastating levels of five to eight feet (1.5 to 2.4 meters), authorities warned of dire emergency conditions. The storm was set to move across central Florida before emerging in the Atlantic Ocean later Thursday.

Rebuilding work begins

Ian had plunged all of Cuba into darkness a day earlier, after battering the country's west as a Category 3 storm and downing the island's power network. At least two people died in Pinar del Rio

province, Cuban state media reported. By Wednesday power had been restored for some residents of Havana and another 11 provinces, but not in Cuba's three worst-affected provinces in the west of the country.

In the United States, the Pentagon said 3,200 national guard personnel were called up in Florida, with another 1,800 on the way. DeSantis said state and federal responders were assigning thousands of personnel to address the storm response.

"There will be thousands of Floridians who will need help rebuilding," he said. As climate change warms the ocean's surface, the number of powerful tropical storms, or cyclones, with stronger winds and more precipitation are likely to increase.

The total number of cyclones, however, may not.

According to Gary Lackmann, a professor of atmospheric science at North Carolina State University, studies have also detected a potential link between climate change and rapid intensification — when a relatively weak tropical storm surges to a Category 3 hurricane or higher in a 24-hour period, as happened with Ian. "There remains a consensus that there will be fewer storms, but that the strongest will get stronger," Lackmann told. — AFP



ANKARA, Turkey: Demonstrators hold slogans during a protest over the death of Iranian Mahsa Amini and in solidarity with Iranian protesters in Ankara. —AFP

Iran celebrities warned against inciting protests

TEHRAN: Iranian celebrities were warned Thursday against coming out in support of protests that flared across the country over the death of young Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini in morality police custody.

A wave of unrest has rocked Iran since the 22-year-old died on September 16 after her arrest by the morality police in Tehran for allegedly failing to observe the Islamic republic's strict dress code for women. The street violence has led to the deaths of dozens of people—mostly protesters but also members of the security forces—and hundreds of arrests.

"We will take action against the celebrities who have fanned the flames of the riots," Tehran provincial governor Mohsen Mansouri said, quoted by ISNA news agency. On Wednesday, Iran's Mehr news agency said former state television host Mahmoud Shahriari had been arrested for allegedly "encouraging riots and solidarity with the enemy".

A number of Iranian sportsmen as well as actors and filmmakers have put their support behind the movement, asking authorities to listen to the people's

demands. Iran's two-time Oscar winning director Asghar Farhadi on Sunday urged people around the world to "stand in solidarity" with the protesters.

"They are looking for simple yet fundamental rights that the state has denied them for years," Farhadi said, in a video message on Instagram. At a football match against Senegal in Vienna on Tuesday, the entire Iranian team remained dressed in black during the anthems rather than exposing the national strip.

In an Instagram post, star forward Sardar Azmoun condemned the authorities and appeared to complain of a gag order against the team, before retracting his statement. Another former prominent player, Ali Karimi, has repeatedly supported the protests and condemned Amini's death on Instagram and Twitter. Iran's judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei has criticised celebrities over their actions.

"Those who became famous thanks to support from the system have joined the enemy when times were difficult, instead of being with the people," said Ejei. "All of them should know that they have to pay back the material and spiritual damage caused to the people and the country," he added.

Meanwhile, Iran on Thursday arrested a reporter who covered the funeral of Mahsa Amini, her lawyer said, the latest of a growing number of journalists to be detained since protests erupted over the young woman's death. —AFP

Kremlin announces Ukraine annexation ceremony for Friday

MOSCOW: Russia will formally annex four regions of Ukraine its troops occupy at a grand ceremony in Moscow on Friday, the Kremlin has announced, after it suggested using nuclear weapons to defend the territories. The threats from senior Russian officials have not deterred a sweeping counter-offensive from Kyiv, which has been pushing back Russian troops in the east and is edging nearer the Donetsk region city of Lyman that Moscow's forces battered for weeks to fully capture.

President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the annexation would be formalised at a ceremony in the Kremlin. The Russian leader will make a "major" speech, he added. "Tomorrow in Saint George's Hall at the Grand Kremlin Palace at 15:00 (1200 GMT) a signing ceremony will take place on the incorporation of the new territories into Russia," Peskov told reporters.

The Kremlin-installed leaders of the four regions were gathered in the Russian capital on Thursday, a day after pro-Moscow authorities had appealed to Putin directly to integrate the territories into Russia.

Their nearly simultaneous requests to the Kremlin came after the four regions claimed residents had unanimously backed the move in hastily organised referendums that were dismissed by Kyiv and the West as illegal, fraudulent and void.

Ukraine advances in Donetsk

Ukraine after the so-called referendums said the only appropriate response from the West was to hit Russia with more sanctions and to supply Ukrainian forces with more weapons to keep reclaiming territory. "Ukraine cannot and will not tolerate any attempts by Russia to seize any part of our land," President Volodymyr Zelensky said late Wednesday.

The four territories — Kherson and Zaporizhzhia in the south; Donetsk and Lugansk in the east — create a crucial land corridor between Russia and the Crimean peninsula, annexed by Moscow in 2014. Together, all five make up around 20 percent of Ukraine, whose forces in recent weeks have been clawing back ground.

Kyiv's army in particular has been showing progress in the eastern Kharkiv region and recapturing territory in Donetsk, and military observers say Kyiv's forces are close to capturing Lyman.

"The enemy is carrying out regular attempts to encircle the city," a pro-Russian official in the Donetsk region, Alexei Nikonov, told state TV on Thursday. "At the moment, our units manage to repel all attacks," he claimed. —AFP



MOSCOW, Russia: Russian soldiers stand on Red Square in central Moscow on September 29, 2022, as the square is sealed prior to a ceremony of the incorporation of the new territories into Russia. Banners on the stage read: "Donetsk, Lugansk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson - Russia!". — AFP

International

'Help how we can': Kazakhstan welcomes Russians fleeing draft

'Every day people are coming, we simply don't know where to house them'

ORAL, Kazakhstan: Emergency housing, paperwork support and a bit of compassion: Kazakhs were trying to aid an influx of Russians who have fled to avoid being called up to fight in Ukraine. Queues of vehicles and groups of Russians—mostly young men—dragging their suitcases at the Kazakhstan border this week echoed the outflow seen elsewhere from Russia since President Vladimir Putin ordered a draft.

"Every day, more and more people are coming, we simply don't know where to house them," said Diana Mukanayeva, who spontaneously came to help out at a train station at the border. Kazakhstan has seen an unprecedented influx and by Tuesday said 98,000 Russians had arrived since Putin's call-up of 300,000 reservists to contribute to Moscow's war in Ukraine.

The surge has been seen elsewhere, including Finland, Georgia and Mongolia, as Russian men refuse to participate in the seven-month-old war that has drawn fierce opposition from the West.

Mukanayeva, wrapped up in a black duffel coat topped by a bright red volunteer vest, said Kazakhs understand the plight of Russians forced to "leaving everything behind and run".

Russian men seeking refuge in a Central Asian nation was a reversal of the usual order, with migrants for decades leaving their homes in places like Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to find work in Moscow and other Russian regions. "(Russians) tell us: 'We don't want to kill and we don't want to be killed...' so we, as humans, we just help in any way we can," Mukanayeva added.

Crowded housing

Some in Kazakhstan have even housed Russians for

free-valuable help since rent prices in the Kazakh regions neighbouring Russia have increased by up to 34 percent this week, according to rental website Krisha.

Given the influx, the northwestern border town of Oral first made its cinema and sport halls available to house Russians. But more have kept coming, so authorities opened a temporary welcoming centre at a children's summer camp and by Thursday about 200 people were in its colourful dorms.

Volunteers were helping register the newcomers—a mandatory step for any Russian wishing to stay more than 30 days. One of them was Yuri Shvyn, a 39-year-old estate agent from Moscow. Shvyn says was "really surprised at the welcome we got at the border... everyone is helping out".

Kazakhs have also created help groups on messaging app Telegram with advice on how to get mobile phone cards or find a flat. "We are all really stressed out, but now that we crossed the border, people are calming down a bit," said Shvyn, who left right after mobilisation was announced. "But everyone is in the same state: we do not know what will be next," he added.

Young Russian was starting to find his marks

Uncertain future

Shvyn was hesitant, saying he could try to go to another country or stay and look for work in Kazakhstan "depending on the situation". On Tuesday, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev promised his country would ensure the care and safety of Russians fleeing a "hopeless" situation.

According to current rules, registered Russians can stay in Kazakhstan for 90 days without a visa. Tatyana Keloskyna has been volunteering at the children's camp, helping register newcomers dealing with Kazakh bureaucracy.



ORAL, Kazakhstan: Russian citizens queue outside a public service centre to receive an individual identification number for foreigners in the city of Oral (Uralsk), Kazakhstan. —AFP

"Many say they don't plan on leaving Kazakhstan, and want to look for a job here," Keloskyna said, so she and other volunteers walk them through the paperwork. "Even our residents don't know how to do that," Keloskyna added with a laugh.

Near another border crossing in the northern

Kazakh city of Petropavl, Mikhail Kondakov proudly showed AFP his first official Kazakh documents. After a "very difficult, hard, fun and interesting" trip, the young Russian was starting to find his marks.

"We are almost settled, already found a place, and people have been super nice," he added, smiling. But Kondakov's future is a "huge question mark" as he has no idea when he will be able to return to Russia, where his girlfriend remains. —AFP

Lebanon fails to elect new president as crisis deepens

BEIRUT: Lebanon's parliament failed to elect a new president after a first round of voting Thursday amid deep divisions over a replacement for Michel Aoun whose term expires next month. A majority of lawmakers cast blank ballots, suggesting the election process is likely to drag on, an outcome Lebanon can ill afford as it wrestles with a crippling financial crisis.

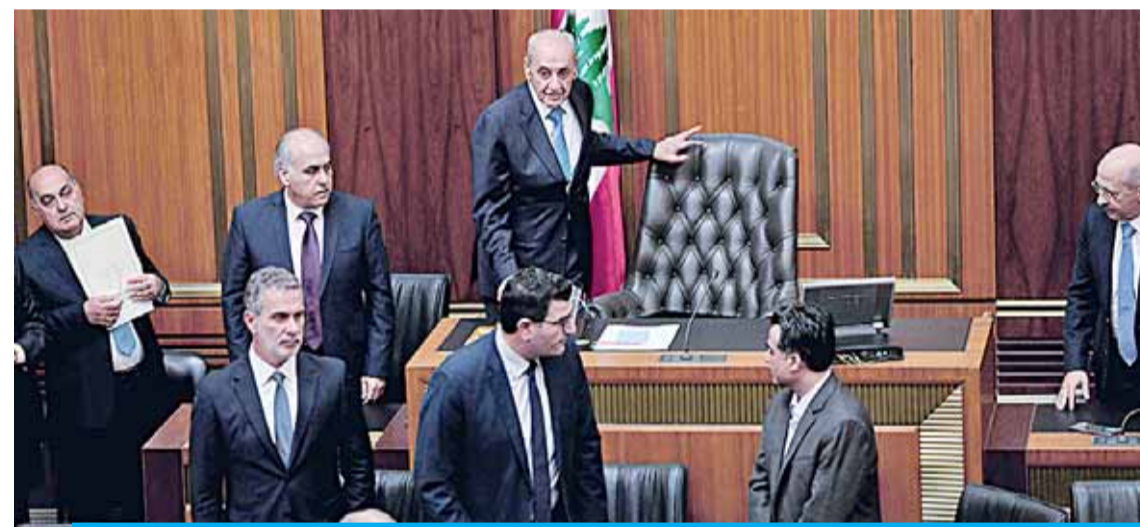
Speaker Nabih Berri said he would call a new session of parliament "when an agreement is reached on the next president"—a process that could take months in a country where constitutional deadlines are routinely missed.

Thursday's session was attended by 122 of parliament's 128 members, of whom 66 cast blank ballots. Christian politician Michel Moawad, the son of former president Rene Moawad, emerged as the front-runner but his 36 votes fell well short of the 86 needed to win in the first round.

Under Lebanon's longstanding confessional power-sharing system, the presidency is reserved for a Maronite Christian. A walkout by some MPs meant there was no second round of voting.

Deep divisions among lawmakers have raised fears Lebanon could be left without a president after Aoun's mandate expires at the end of October. The incumbent's own election in 2016 came after a 29-month vacancy at the presidential palace as lawmakers made 45 failed attempts to reach consensus on a candidate.

A statement by Aoun's office said the president was "satisfied with the launch of the electoral process" and expressed hopes parliament would continue to meet to



BEIRUT, Lebanon: Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri (C) attends a parliament session to elect a new President in Beirut on September 29, 2022. —AFP

elect a president within the constitutional timeframe.

'Clear risk'

The political parties that must now agree on the next head of state have yet to appoint a new government to replace the outgoing one after its mandate expired in May. "If there is a political vacuum, the economic crisis would intensify and there is a clear risk of security incidents," said analyst Karim Bitar.

The Lebanese pound has lost more than 95 percent of its value on the black market since 2019 in a financial meltdown branded by the World Bank as one of the worst in modern times. The crisis has caused poverty rates to reach more than 80 percent of the population, as food prices have risen by 2,000 percent, the United Nations has said.

The international community has pressed Lebanese lawmakers to elect a new president in "timely" fashion to avoid plunging the country deeper into crisis. Last week, France, Saudi Arabia and the United States issued a joint statement urging MPs to "elect a president who can unite the Lebanese people".

Lebanon is under pressure from the International Monetary Fund to streamline the implementation of reforms required to unlock billions in loans before Aoun's term expires. As part of that effort, lawmakers on Monday approved an overdue budget for 2022. The budget set the exchange rate for revenues from customs duties at 15,000 pounds to the dollar—less than half the black market rate—contravening calls by the IMF to unify the exchange rates operating in Lebanon. —AFP

Rwandan tycoon had key genocide role, trial hears

THE HAGUE, Netherlands: Rwandan tycoon Felicien Kabuga played a crucial role in the 1994 genocide that shocked the world, prosecutors said as he boycotted the opening of his own trial in The Hague on Thursday.

The last major suspect from the slaughter, the now-87-year-old set up a hate broadcaster that urged ethnic Hutus to kill rival Tutsis and armed the murderous Interahamwe militia with machetes, a UN tribunal heard.

The wheelchair-bound Kabuga refused to appear in court and stayed in his jail cell as the trial got underway, more than a quarter of a century after the 100-day rampage that left over 800,000 people dead.

"Twenty-eight years after the events, this trial is about holding

Felicien Kabuga to account for his substantial and intentional role in that genocide," lead prosecutor Rashid S. Rashid told the court. "Kabuga didn't need to wield a rifle or a machete at a roadblock, rather he supplied weapons in bulk and facilitated the training that prepared the Interahamwe to use them," he added.

"He didn't need to pick up a microphone to call for the extermination of the Tutsi on the radio, rather he founded, funded and served as president of... the radio station that broadcast genocidal propaganda across Rwanda."

After decades on the run, Kabuga was arrested in France in 2020 and sent to a UN court. Kabuga's lawyers entered a not guilty plea at a first appearance in 2020 at the UN's International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, and have repeatedly tried to halt the trial on health grounds.

Head judge Iain Bonomy said on Thursday that Kabuga had decided not



THE HAGUE, Netherlands: Felicien Kabuga's lawyer Emmanuel Altit (right) arrives ahead of the trial at the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT) in The Hague. —AFP

to attend the opening of the trial in person or watch by video link but "appropriate course is to proceed". Kabuga issued a statement saying that he court

had refused to let him appoint his own lawyer and that he had lost confidence in his own defence attorney, Emmanuel Altit. —AFP

After Pope outreach, Ortega calls Church a 'dictatorship'

MANAGUA, Nicaragua: Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega on Wednesday called the Catholic Church a "perfect dictatorship" for not allowing members to elect the pope and other authority figures. In the Church, "everything is imposed. It's a perfect dictatorship. It's a perfect tyranny," he said, reflecting ongoing tensions between his government and the religious institution over 2018 protests. "If

they are going to be democratic, let them start with Catholics voting for the pope, for cardinals, for bishops," Ortega said during a televised speech to mark the 43rd anniversary of the Nicaraguan police's establishment.

The Catholic Church in Nicaragua has been under increasing government pressure since Ortega accused it of backing the protests against his government in 2018. A crackdown against the demonstrators left hundreds dead.

Ortega maintains the protests were part of a United States-backed opposition plot to unseat him, and accuses bishops of complicity. During his speech Wednesday, Ortega called out bishops and priests as working on behalf of "American imperialism."

"I would say to His Holiness the Pope, respectfully, to

the Catholic authorities—I am Catholic—as a Christian, I don't feel represented," he said, referencing the Church's "terrible history." Ortega criticized subjects ranging from the Inquisition in Spain and South America to the abuse of Indigenous children in Canada. "We hear (the Church) talk about democracy," he said, suggesting that the faithful elect representatives to positions of Church leadership.

Rising tensions

Pope Francis, leader of the Catholic Church, earlier this month insisted on the importance of "never stopping the dialogue" with Nicaragua. "There is a dialogue. We are talking with the government," the pope said. "That does not mean that we approve of everything the government does, or that we disapprove." In

his speech Wednesday, Ortega also criticized the US Assistant Secretary of State Brian Nichols, and the government of Chile, whose president Gabriel Boric recently criticized the Nicaraguan president for human rights violations.

Earlier Wednesday, a diplomatic source said that Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Denis Moncada had notified European Union ambassador to Managua, Bettina Muscheidt, of her expulsion, though Ortega did not mention it in his speech.

The EU and the United States have imposed sanctions against Nicaraguan officials over the last four years, citing human rights violations. Strain between the Catholic Church and Nicaragua grew in March, when Managua expelled the Vatican's ambassador to the country. —AFP

Gunmen kill five soldiers, civilian in South Nigeria

LAGOS: Gunmen killed five soldiers and a civilian in southeast Nigeria, police and local media said Thursday, after the latest bloodshed in a region where separatist tensions often flare. Wednesday's attack on troops in Umuze area of Anambra state was condemned by the governor though he did provide casualty numbers.

Security will be a major issue in February's election to replace President Muhammadu Buhari, with troops fighting jihadists, separatist gunmen and criminal gangs across parts of Nigeria. "There was some shooting at Umuze yesterday leaving some people dead," Anambra state police spokesman Tochukwu Ikenga told AFP, refusing to disclose casualty figures from Wednesday's attack.

"We have deployed our men to hunt down the assailants," he said. Local media said five soldiers in a vehicle were ambushed and shot dead, while a civilian bystander was killed by stray bullet. The armed forces did not immediately respond to a call seeking details.

The assault came barely three weeks after the convoy of an opposition lawmaker, Ifeanyi Ubah, was ambushed in the state, killing five people including two security escorts. Although the senator was unhurt, the assault underscored growing insecurity in the region.

No group has claimed responsibility for the violence, less than five months before February 25 presidential, senate and congressional elections. In a statement late Wednesday, Anambra state governor Charles Soludo condemned the killing of the soldiers and the attack on the lawmaker.

"We condemn this wicked and cruel attack in the strongest terms. The perpetrators of this act must pay," Soludo said. "We are not going to rest on our oars, including those people that attacked Senator Ifeanyi Ubah and the rest. There will be absolutely no hiding place for them." Southeast Nigeria has seen scores of attacks blamed on the outlawed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) group or its armed wing ESN. IPOB, which seeks a separate state for ethnic Igbo people, has repeatedly denied responsibility for violence in the region.

More than 100 police officers and other security personnel have been killed since the beginning of last year in targeted attacks, according to local media tallies. Prisons have been raided with scores of inmates freed and weapons stolen. Local offices of the national electoral authorities have also been targeted.

IPOB's leader Nnamdi Kanu is in government custody and faces trial for treason after he was captured overseas and brought back to Nigeria. Separatism is a sensitive issue in a nation where the declaration of an independent Republic of Biafra in 1967 by Igbo army officers sparked a three-year civil war that left more than one million people dead. —AFP

International

US VP Harris tours DMZ after North Korea missile launches

US, S Korean soldiers serving shoulder to shoulder... to maintain security, stability of this region

SEOUL: US Vice President Kamala Harris toured South Korea's heavily fortified border with the nuclear-armed North on Thursday, part of a trip aimed at strengthening the security alliance with Seoul. Pyongyang conducted two banned ballistic missile launches in the days before Harris's arrival, continuing a record-breaking streak of weapons tests this year.

At an observation post atop a steep hill overlooking North Korea, Harris peered through bulky binoculars as US and South Korean soldiers pointed out features, including defences, in the area. "It's so close," she said.



Harris visits Panmunjom Truce Village

Harris also visited the Panmunjom Truce Village—where then-US president Donald Trump met the North's Kim Jong Un in 2019 — and talked to US soldiers at Camp Bonifas in the Joint Security Area.

On the North Korean side of the border at Panmunjom, guards in hazmat suits could be seen watching as Harris was shown the demarcation line between the two countries—which remain technically at war. Speaking at the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), Harris said that US and South Korean soldiers were "serving shoulder to shoulder... to maintain the security and the stability of this region of the world".

She said the US commitment to South Korea's

defence was "ironclad", adding that the allies were "aligned" in their response to the growing threat posed by the North's weapons programs. The allies both want "a complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula", but in the interim they are "ready to address any contingency", she said.

South Korean and US officials have warned for months that Kim Jong Un is preparing to conduct another nuclear test. Harris decried North Korea's "brutal dictatorship, rampant human rights violations and an unlawful weapons program that threatens peace and stability".

Yoon talks

Washington has about 28,500 troops stationed in South Korea to help protect it from the North, and the allies are conducting a large-scale joint naval exercise this week in a show of force. Harris' trip to the DMZ is likely to infuriate Pyongyang, which branded United States House Speaker Nancy Pelosi the "worst destroyer of international peace" when she visited the border in August.

Harris arrived in Seoul after a trip to Japan, where she attended the state funeral of assassinated former prime minister Shinzo Abe. Earlier Thursday, Harris met President Yoon Suk-yeol for talks dominated by security issues—although Seoul also raised its concerns over a new law signed by US President Joe Biden that removes subsidies for electric cars built outside America, impacting Korean automakers such as Hyundai and Kia.

Harris, America's first woman vice president, also met what the White House called "groundbreaking women leaders" of South Korea to discuss gender equality issues, a topic she said she raised with Yoon during their talks. Yoon, who has pledged to abolish Seoul's Ministry of Gender Equality, has faced domestic criticism for a lack of women in his cabinet.



PANMUNJOM: US Vice President Kamala Harris is given a tour near the demarcation line at the demilitarized zone (DMZ) separating North and South Korea, in Panmunjom on September 29, 2022. — AFP

Nuclear test?

On Wednesday, the South's spy agency said North Korea's next nuclear test could happen as soon as next month, likely after China's upcoming party congress but before the US midterms. The isolated regime has tested nuclear weapons six times since 2006, most recently in 2017. Earlier this month it changed its laws, declaring itself an "irreversible" nuclear power.

"North Korea's growing nuclear missile threat raises concerns in Seoul about the reliability of Washington's defence commitments," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul. But sending the USS Ronald Reagan supercarrier and Harris to South Korea

demonstrates both America's military capabilities and political will, he added. During President Yoon's tenure, Seoul and Washington have boosted joint military exercises, which they insist are purely defensive. North Korea sees them as rehearsals for an invasion.

During her trip, Harris also raised the issue of Seoul working more closely with Japan on security issues. Seoul announced Thursday that it would hold trilateral anti-submarine drills with Japan and the US, the first such exercises since 2017.

South Korean officials said this weekend they had detected signs Pyongyang could be preparing to fire a submarine-launched ballistic missile. — AFP



KOLKATA: File photo shows, Indian Army Lieutenant General Anil Chauhan salutes during a ceremony to mark "Vijay Diwas," which commemorate the victory over Pakistan during the 1971 war that led to the independence of Bangladesh. — AFP

India appoints 'China expert' as defence chief

NEW DELHI: India has appointed as its new defence chief a general who led forces on its disputed frontier with China, as New Delhi seeks to counter Beijing's growing military assertiveness. Lieutenant General Anil Chauhan's appointment comes in the midst of a root-and-branch reform of India's armed forces, and nearly a year after the previous defence chief died in a helicopter crash. India has been wary of its northern neighbour's growing troop presence along their immense frontier, and border disputes—including deadly Himalayan clashes in 2020 — have been a perennial source of tension.

Chauhan, described as a "China expert" by local media, had been serving as counsel to India's national security adviser after his retirement from active service last year. He will take up the role of chief of defence staff "until further orders", a defence ministry statement said late Wednesday. Chauhan commanded ground forces on India's eastern front—including much of the disputed border with China—before stepping down. Both countries fought a full-scale war in the region in 1962 for control of India's northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims in its entirety and considers part of Tibet.

New Delhi and Beijing have regularly accused each other of trying to seize territory at key flashpoints along their 3,500-kilometre (2,200-mile) divide,

India broadens abortion rights for unmarried women

NEW DELHI: India's top court widened abortion rights on Thursday by ruling that all women could end their pregnancy up to 24 weeks from conception, abolishing restrictions placed on unmarried mothers. Abortions have been legal in India since 1971, the year reforms permitted terminations in various instances including contraceptive failure among married couples.

The marriage requirement was removed in an overhaul of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act last year, which also saw the legal abortion limit raised

known as the Line of Actual Control. Their troops fought a high-altitude skirmish in 2020 along the border dividing Tibet from India's state of Ladakh, killing 20 Indian and at least four Chinese soldiers, and precipitating a sharp deterioration in relations.

But both countries this month began pulling back soldiers from around the site of that incident after more than a dozen rounds of top-level military talks—and after a two-year stand-off. New Delhi is also concerned over Beijing's increasing presence in the Indian Ocean, seeing the region as firmly within its sphere of influence.

India and the United States are both members of the so-called Quad, a security alliance focused on the Indo-Pacific and aimed at providing a more substantive counterweight to China.

Delayed succession

Chauhan's career also included a commanding role in disputed Kashmir—home to a long-running insurgency against Indian rule—and cross-border strikes in 2019 against militant groups in neighbouring Myanmar. His appointment ends months of uncertainty over who would succeed General Bipin Rawat, who was killed in a helicopter crash in December 2021.

Rawat, 63, was the first chief of defence staff and was considered a close supporter of Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who created the post especially for him. While in office, Rawat ruffled Beijing's feathers by repeatedly questioning its actions at their disputed borders and warning Nepal about China's growing footprint.

India has been trying to modernise and streamline its 1.4 million-strong armed forces, and is also working to reduce its reliance on foreign arms, unveiling its first locally made aircraft carrier earlier this month. — AFP

from 20 to 24 weeks of pregnancy. But the amended law did not explicitly guarantee abortion rights to unmarried women after 20 weeks to account for the new limit—a guarantee the Supreme Court has now enshrined. "The MTP Act recognises the reproductive autonomy of every pregnant woman to choose medical intervention to terminate her pregnancy," its judgement said. Any exclusion of single women's rights to "safe and legal abortion" would be "unconstitutional", it added.

The decision came in response to a petition from a 25-year-old woman who was seeking a ruling on her right to terminate her pregnancy after her relationship with a domestic partner ended. Indian law has permitted abortion in the case of sexual assault since 1971, and Thursday's ruling included a determination that spousal rape would also be legal grounds for termination. "Any other interpretation would have the effect of compelling a woman to give birth to and raise a child

Taleban fire into air to disperse women's rally

KABUL: Taleban forces on Thursday used gunfire to disperse a women's rally in the Afghan capital supporting protests in Iran over the death of a woman in morality police custody. Both Afghanistan and Iran are run by hardline Islamist governments that enforce strict dress codes on women. Chanting the same "Women, life, freedom" mantra used in Iran, about 25 women protested in front of Kabul's Iranian embassy before Taleban forces fired into the air, an AFP correspondent reported. In neighbouring Iran, dozens of people have been killed since demonstrations erupted over 22-year-old Mahsa Amini's death after she was arrested for allegedly breaching rules on hijabs and modest clothing.

On Thursday in Kabul, women in headscarves carried banners that read: "Iran has risen, now it's our turn!" and "From Kabul to Iran, say no to dictatorship!" "We need to end these horrific governments," said a protester who did not reveal her name for security reasons.

"People here are also tired of the Taleban's crimes. We are sure that one day our people will rise in the same way as the Iranian people," she said. Taleban forces swiftly snatched the banners and tore them in front of the protesters.

They also ordered some journalists to delete videos of the rally. An organiser, speaking anonymously, told AFP the rally was staged "to show our support and solidarity with the people of Iran and the women victims of the Taleban in Afghanistan".

'Severe restrictions'

Protests staged by women in Afghanistan have become increasingly rare after the detention of core activists at the start of the year. Like in Iran, women risk arrest, violence and stigma for taking part in demonstrations calling for their rights.

Since returning to power last year, the Taleban have issued a slew of restrictions controlling women's lives based on their interpretation of Islamic sharia law. Many of the rules—including dress code, segregation from men and travelling with a male guardian—are monitored by the Taleban's vice and virtue police who roam the streets dressed in white. Women must fully cover themselves in public, preferably with the all-encompassing burqa, according to the rules, which are enforced with varying rigour across the country. The Taleban have also blocked girls from returning to secondary schools and barred women from many government jobs, although some senior Taleban are divided on the issue of education. — AFP

with a partner who inflicts mental and physical harm upon her," the judgement said. Marital rape is not a crime in India, despite efforts by activists to have it recognised as such in order to improve the country's abysmal record on sexual violence.

Thursday's decision was hailed by feminist campaigners, with activist Brinda Adige describing it as "one of the most progressive judgements" issued by the court. "It absolutely respects the rights and choice of women," she said. Despite India's broad recognition of abortion rights, the law bans sex-selective abortions—a practice that has nonetheless persisted. Parents in India have historically favoured sons over daughters, who are often considered burdensome and costly due to the tradition of wedding dowries.

Poverty remains a major barrier to safe and legal abortions in India, forcing women to seek help from illicit back-street operators or resort to dangerous self-medication. — AFP

Myanmar sentences Australian economist, Suu Kyi to 3 years

YANGON: Myanmar's junta sentenced an Australian economist to three years in prison Thursday while also handing down another conviction to ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi, a source told AFP on Thursday.

Both have been detained since a coup in February last year, when the military ousted Suu Kyi's government, for which Sean Turnell was an adviser. "Mr Sean Turnell, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and another three were sentenced to three years imprisonment each under the Official Secrets Act," the source told AFP, adding that Suu Kyi would appeal her verdict.

Turnell was also convicted for three years under the country's immigration act, the source said, adding that he will serve the second conviction concurrently, and that his sentence would be eligible for a time already served deduction. His sentence provoked a swift reaction from Canberra, with the foreign ministry rejecting his conviction and urging his "immediate release". Suu Kyi has already been convicted of corruption and a clutch of other charges by a closed court.

A junta spokesman did not respond to a request for comment. Turnell was in the middle of a phone interview with the BBC when he was detained after the 2021 coup. "I've just been detained at the moment, and perhaps charged with something, I don't know what that would be, could be anything at all of course," Turnell told the broadcaster at the time.

In August, he pleaded not guilty to breaching the colonial-era secrets act during his trial in a junta court—inaccessible to journalists—in the capital Naypyidaw. He was facing a maximum penalty of 14 years in prison. The exact details of Turnell's alleged offence have not been made public, though state television has said he had access to "secret state financial information" and had tried to flee the country.

'Immediate release'

In a statement following Turnell's conviction, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong rejected the charges and urged his "immediate release". She said the economist was tried in a "closed court" and Australian officials had made "every effort to attend the verdict but were denied access". "We will continue to take every opportunity to advocate strongly for Professor Turnell until he has returned to his family in Australia," she added. Turnell's wife Ha Vu said her family was devastated over the news.

"It's heartbreaking for me, our daughter, Sean's 85-year-old father and the rest of our family," she said in a statement. "My husband has already been in a Myanmar prison for almost two-thirds of his sentence. Please consider the contributions that he has made to Myanmar, and deport him now," she added.

Human rights organisations also condemned the sentences. The convictions demonstrated the junta had "no qualms about their international pariah status", said Elaine Pearson, Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "Concerted action" from the international community was needed "to turn the human rights situation around in the country", she said. — AFP



Aung San Suu Kyi

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2022

Business

UK's PM defends 'difficult' tax cuts despite market turmoil

Truss says urgent action needed to get Britain moving

LONDON: UK Prime Minister Liz Truss on Thursday defended her tax cutting policy after days of silence during which markets tanked and the Bank of England was forced into an emergency intervention. "We had to take urgent action to get our economy growing, get Britain moving, and also deal with inflation," she said in a round of local BBC radio interviews.

"And of course, that means taking controversial and difficult decisions, but I'm prepared to do that as prime minister," she said in her first comments to UK media since the crisis sparked by Friday's "mini-budget". "It's important the United Kingdom on the front foot, that we are pulling all the levers we can to drive economic growth. That is what we are pushing ahead with."

In power for less than a month, Truss is already under severe pressure after the markets reacted to her government's tax cuts by sending the pound to an all-time low against the dollar. UK markets remain highly volatile, with the central bank intervening on Wednesday to buy government bonds in order to prevent a "material risk" to stability.

The Bank of England announced a two-week program to buy long-term UK bonds, capped initially at £65 billion (\$71 billion), as UK pension funds scrambled to sell investments in order to remain solvent.

After sterling hit its dollar low early Monday, the bank said it would "not hesitate to change interest rates by as much as needed" to curb high inflation. But it also signaled that it would wait until its next policy meeting on November 3 before fully assessing the impact of the

government's contentious plans. Opposition leaders have demanded that Truss cancel her Conservative party's annual conference starting on Sunday and recall parliament over the crisis.

Truss v IMF

Markets are concerned that Britain cannot fund its huge spending commitments, having announced a massive fuel subsidy package alongside the tax cuts. Truss defended her fiscal policy, which includes a cut to the top rate of income tax, arguing the UK currently had its highest tax burden in 70 years.

"We've reduced those taxes across the board. And of course people who are better off tend to pay more taxes," she said. The pound slipped again on Thursday, while former Bank of England chief Mark Carney said the government had "undercut" financial institutions.

"Unfortunately having a partial budget, in these circumstances-tough global economy, tough financial market position, working at cross-purposes with the bank-has led to quite dramatic moves in financial markets," he told the BBC. But Truss insisted she was working "very closely" with the central bank. In a highly unusual intervention on Wednesday, the International Monetary Fund said it was "closely monitoring" developments and urged the UK government to change tack.

It noted that Truss and her finance minister, Kwasi Kwarteng, were trying to deal with the energy shock and boost growth. "However, given elevated inflation pressures in many countries... we do not recommend



LONDON: Britain's Chief Secretary to the Treasury Chris Philp (left) is interviewed by a TV journalist as he leaves from Millbank Studios in central London on September 29, 2022. — AFP

large and untargeted fiscal packages at this juncture."

The IMF stressed the importance of fiscal policy not working "at cross purposes to monetary policy".

Many central banks, including the Bank of England, are aggressively hiking interest rates in a bid to cool decades-high inflation. "There are many people with

many different opinions, but what I think nobody is arguing with is that we had to take action to deal with what is a very, very difficult economic situation," Truss retorted. "My priority was making sure that we were supporting the British people in what is going to be a very difficult winter." — AFP

Swiss franc's surge against the euro a boon for business

PARIS: The Swiss franc is breaking records against the euro, giving the Swiss economy a temporary boost as central banks battle inflation-although experts remain cautious about the months ahead.

Seen as a safe haven, the Swiss currency briefly hit a high of 0.94 francs to the euro on Monday following the Italian general election. While it has since eased back a little, it is nevertheless at the highest levels since the launch of the single currency more than 20 years ago, outside a brief flash crash in 2015.

"It's more about the weakness of the euro than the strength of the Swiss franc," Credit Suisse economist Maxime Botteron told AFP, citing the franc's steadier performance against the US dollar. "European growth is showing signs of running out of steam, even recession," he said, noting that "these indicators come in a context where the Swiss National Bank (SNB) has changed its monetary policy". Switzerland's central bank has abandoned the negative rate it has imposed since 2015 to combat the overvaluation of its currency.

Like other central banks, the SNB seeks to prevent inflation from taking root. But in the midst of soaring energy prices, the franc's rise is providing it with welcome help in curbing price increases.

"In Switzerland, two-thirds of inflation is due to imports. An appreciation of the Swiss franc therefore reduces the rise of these goods a little," said Botteron, adding that the SNB "therefore has less need to tighten monetary policy" than other central banks.

In August, inflation rose to 3.5 percent, its highest level in 29 years, but far behind the 9.1 percent recorded last month in the eurozone.



LONDON: A board displaying the price of euro and US dollars against British pound sterling, is pictured outside a currency exchange store in central London. — AFP

Tourism boost

"There is a very clear strategy to shield Switzerland against the rising inflation coming from the eurozone, the US and other trading partners," said Thomas Flury, UBS bank's global head of currency strategy. The franc's rise has not triggered panic, unlike in 2015 when exporters feared their production costs and export prices would explode.

"High inflation in the eurozone makes the real appreciation much less dramatic than in the past," said Flury. "Acceptance is coming because companies in Switzerland would rather have a stronger Swiss franc than discussions on wage rises that French or German companies will have to do, as well as the cost pressures from imports." If this rise in the franc eases somewhat the pressure on their imports, Swiss companies, with well-filled order books, also have some leeway to increase their prices, said Botteron. In tourism, another sector sensitive to the exchange rate, the franc's rise has enabled Swiss hoteliers to increase their prices to a lesser degree than in neighbouring countries given the lower inflation, a spokesman for the Hotellerie Suisse hotel industry body told AFP.—AFP

Spain inflation slows significantly to 9% in September

MADRID: Spanish inflation eased in September from a nearly four-decade high, thanks to a drop in electricity and fuel prices, provisional data from the National Statistics Institute (INE) showed Thursday.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has sent inflation soaring worldwide, prompting central banks to hike interest rates in an effort to rein in consumer prices. Spain's annual rate stood at 9.0 percent in September, down from 10.5 percent in August. Inflation had remained in double digits since June, a level not seen since the mid-1980s. "This development is largely due to the fall in prices of electricity which went up in September 2021," the INE said in a statement. The definitive figures will be released next month. "It has also been influenced, albeit to a lesser extent, by the fall in fuel prices," it added. Core inflation, which excludes certain prices such as energy, fell by 0.2 percentage points to 6.2 percent, it said. The government of Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has in recent months rolled out aid packages to help households and businesses weather the inflationary pressure, which has soared across Europe due to the Ukraine war. It has introduced free public transport, subsidized petrol prices and temporarily slashed the sales tax on gas among other measures, in moves that are expected to cost some 30 billion euros (\$30 billion) — or 2.3 percent of Spain's gross domestic product. — AFP

EU grapples with runaway energy prices

BRUSSELS: The EU on Friday will seek urgent ways to bring down skyrocketing energy prices as winter looms, with "sabotage" of gas pipelines from Russia this week injecting drama into the effort. Energy ministers will gather in Brussels to consider an emergency European Commission proposal that includes cutting power use in the bloc, imposing windfall levies on energy companies and discussing a price cap on wholesale gas supplies. Europe has found itself over a barrel as fossil fuel deliveries from Russia dry up. EU sanctions on Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine, which include shutting Russian oil starting in December, have prompted the Kremlin to retaliate by severely reducing supplies of natural gas.

Unexplained leaks on the undersea Nord Stream 1 and 2 gas pipelines from Russia to Germany — seen as "sabotage" by EU leaders, with suspicion falling on Moscow — have aggravated the situation.

Sky-high bills

Alarm is rising sharply among Europeans faced with climbing energy bills. "It's utterly impossible to pay," Pascale Dumont, a baker in a Belgian town called Gedinne, told AFP after her business's monthly electricity bill jumped tenfold, to 11,836 euros (\$11,500).

"If you work it out over a year, it's how much a house costs!" she exclaimed. Business Europe, an EU lobby, warned that "the current state of high gas and electricity prices bears the imminent risk of production losses and shutdowns of thousands of European companies". The EU country on the frontline of the energy crunch is Germany, the bloc's export powerhouse which had long been dependent on Russian gas.

After recording a jump to 10 percent inflation, its government said it will borrow 200 billion euros to shield German households and businesses from "an energy war". That adds to various national initiatives across the European Union totaling many hundreds of billions of euros — a hefty bill added to the one run-up during the worst of the COVID pandemic.

The European Commission is trying to leverage the COVID-era cooperation to forge a common EU approach on energy.

"Europe is facing energy blackmail by Russia, and global demand for gas is higher than supply," EU energy commissioner Kadri Simson said. "We need to work along the whole chain to tackle the challenge," she said, adding that a price cap on the wholesale price of gas entering the EU "is possible" if other measures fail to bring results.

Ethiopia raises fuel prices 20%

ADDIS ABABA: Fuel prices in Ethiopia rose by about 20 percent Thursday, in the second such increase in less than three months as the government lifts fuel subsidies, deepening economic hardship in Africa's second most populous country. The government began to phase out subsidies for petroleum products in July, imposing an initial hike of 30-40 percent on petrol and diesel, with drivers reporting severe shortages and long queues at petrol stations.

The Horn of Africa country of more than 110 mil-

Price cap mooted

One core proposal with strong backing is a "cap" on non-gas electricity producers' profits and a "contribution" from other energy majors. The levies — the commission refuses to call them a "windfall tax" — are calculated to raise 140 billion euros which can be spent to cushion consumers.

Another is to encourage reduced energy consumption, for instance by turning off public lighting earlier, lowering thermostats to a maximum of 19 degrees Celsius (66 degrees Fahrenheit) and lower peak-hour power use. The Bruegel think tank in Brussels, however, said those steps are "not sufficient". "A more comprehensive plan needs to ensure that all countries bring forward every available supply-side flexibility, make real efforts to reduce gas and electricity demand, keep their energy markets open and pool demand to get a better deal from external gas suppliers," it said.



WERNE, Germany: This file photo shows pipes and pressure gauges for gas at the Open Grid Europe (OGE), one of Europe's largest gas transmission system operators, in Werne, western Germany. — AFP

Part of the problem in coming up with a more biting EU approach is the different energy mixes in member countries. France, for example, is largely nuclear-powered, while eastern EU countries rely on fossil fuels, and Spain gets its gas from North Africa. Fifteen EU countries, among them France, Italy and Poland, have written a joint letter calling for a price cap on all gas imports into the bloc — covering pipeline gas from Russia but also liquefied natural gas (LNG) shipments from the US and elsewhere.

An EU official briefing journalists on condition of anonymity called that idea "radical". The "significant risks" it carried included a sudden shortfall in gas supplies to Europe, especially from LNG suppliers diverting ships to more lucrative buyers elsewhere in the world. One possible solution would be a centralized EU buying for gas "but the complexity of such a mechanism is such that I think in a short timeframe it is difficult to address," the official said. — AFP

lion people has seen inflation hovering at 30-35 percent over the past several months, with the Russian invasion of Ukraine causing prices of basic items to soar.

In a statement released late Wednesday, the trade ministry said that in order to ensure that "our retail prices reflect the international market, a new oil price starting September 28 (midnight) has been implemented". It added that it would revise the price every three months in line with "our country's current economic situation and the state of the oil market".

Under the new measures, the price of diesel was up by 22 percent to 59.90 birr (\$1.13), while the price of petrol rose nearly 20 percent to 57.05 birr, the ministry said. The global surge in prices for basic goods has also eaten into the foreign exchange reserves of the largely importing nation. — AFP

Finnair plans 200 jobs cuts

HELSINKI: Finnish airline Finnair said Thursday it was opening negotiations to cut around 200 jobs, in an effort to stem losses after a difficult few years for the aviation industry. The Nordic carrier announced a new strategy earlier this month to cut costs, including trimming its fleet, after the closure of Russian air space and the COVID-19 pandemic eroded profitability.

In the latest move Finnair said in a Thursday statement that it had started negotiations on redundancies which could see around 200 jobs lost globally. "Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the closed Russian airspace have impacted our business significantly," Finnair CEO Topi Manner said. "Thus, in addition to other actions to restore Finnair's profitability, we have to discuss measures that are, unfortunately, the most painful ones for our employees." The airline has maintained connections to Asia following the European Union's decision to close its airspace to Russian aircraft and a tit-for-tat response from Moscow, but at the cost of a diversion of several hours and added fuel costs.

The carrier said the profitability plan will meet the "changes in Finnair's operating environment", adding it will be "operating with a smaller capacity than before the pandemic." Like many of its competitors, Finnair was forced to take major cost-cutting measures to cope with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. At the end of 2021, Finnair had 5,365 employees, about 850 fewer than at the end of 2020 and 1,400 fewer than before COVID-19. — AFP

Business

Porsche ignites blockbuster IPO, defying market turmoil

Carmaker seeks to leverage its brand power to overcome downturn

FRANKFURT: Luxury sports carmaker Porsche raced onto the Frankfurt stock exchange Thursday with one of Europe's biggest listings in years, leveraging its brand power to defy global market turmoil.

Its shares rose to over 84.70 euros (\$81.90) in morning trading, bettering the 82.50 euros price set by its parent company Volkswagen, and outperforming a weak Frankfurt market. Even as markets worldwide suffer from surging inflation and mounting recession fears, the maker of the 911 sports car has pushed ahead with the bold flotation that gives Porsche a valuation of more than 76 billion euros.

The carmaker's chief Oliver Blume said the listing was a "historic moment for Porsche", as he rang the bell to mark the start of trading at the Frankfurt exchange. "A big, proud day for all of us... We are adding a new chapter to the unique history of Porsche," added Blume, who is also the CEO of the wider German auto group Volkswagen.

Volkswagen is set to raise 9.4 billion euros (\$9.2 billion) from the listing, with some to be ploughed into the group's shift to electric vehicles that is bringing it into greater competition with US rival Tesla. In terms of value of shares issued, Porsche's is the biggest stock market debut in Germany since Deutsche Telekom's in 1996, and the largest in Europe since the 2011 flotation of Switzerland-based commodities giant Glencore.

'Crazy, cool'

Analysts have looked to the carmaker's market entry for some cheer against a morose eco-

nomie backdrop, with investment bank Berenberg saying it could "offer a catalyst in an industry sorely lacking positive surprises". It has generated buzz in Porsche's home market of Germany, where top tabloid Bild described it as "crazy, cool, fast-paced".

"Sports car icon Porsche goes full throttle and races onto the stock market," read a column in the paper. It has also drawn interest from major investors, including Qatar and Abu Dhabi's public investment funds, Norway's sovereign wealth fund and US asset management firm T. Rowe Price.

The IPO has seen 113.9 million shares of "Porsche AG" issued.

While the carmaker's valuation is below some earlier estimates, it still catapults it above rivals such as BMW, with a valuation of 47 billion euros, and Mercedes-Benz, with a 56-billion-euro capitalisation.

Electric drive

Porsche has joined the electric drive of the Volkswagen group, whose brands also include Audi and Skoda, in earnest. The electric "Taycan" has been the brand's best-selling model since January, an electric version of the "Macan" is due in 2024, as well as the launch of a new SUV in the middle of the decade. The electric strategy includes building battery factories across Europe and the US. Volkswagen announced this week it will work with Belgian group Umicore to produce battery materials.



FRANKFURT, Germany: Oliver Blume, CEO of German car producer Porsche AG, stands in front of a board displaying the chart of Germany's share index DAX during the launch of Porsche's initial public offering (IPO) at the Frankfurt Stock Exchange in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany, on September 29, 2022. —AFP

The IPO sees preferential shares sold to investors, which have no voting rights, while Volkswagen is also selling 25 percent of the carmaker to Porsche SE. The eponymous company is a listed holding controlled by the Porsche-Piech family, who in turn are the main shareholders in Volkswagen. This means that Porsche SE will have a blocking minority that will allow it to steer the future of the company. Volkswagen hopes that list-

ing a minority stake in Porsche will push up its own stock market value, which is 85 billion euros—just a fraction of Tesla's, at just over \$900 billion.

While the Porsche IPO generated excitement, concerns surrounding governance have been brewing at Volkswagen. The dual role of Blume — who has kept the top job at Porsche, despite being recently appointed CEO of Volkswagen group — has in particular raised eyebrows. —AFP

Hey big spender: Tax breaks and huge outlays

LONDON: The United Kingdom's new budget is part tax breaks inspired by "trickle-down economics", part massive borrowing to fund a costly freeze on energy bills following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Here is what you need to know about this unlikely blend of measures:

Wealth 'trickling down'

The tax cuts announced by the UK government echo those in the United States under Republican presidents Donald Trump in 2017 and Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. Inspired by "trickle-down economics", the theory holds that lower taxes on the rich give them more cash to spend, creating growth and jobs for the benefit of all.

The theory is hotly contested. A study published in 2020 by the London School of Economics found "economic performance, as measured by real GDP per capita and the unemployment rate, is not significantly affected by major tax cuts for the rich".

Researchers drew their conclusions after looking at data from 18 countries from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), including the United Kingdom and the United States, over five decades. Critics charge the new measures will benefit the rich far more than the poorest, as millions of Britons suffer from a cost-of-living crisis. But Prime Minister Liz Truss has dismissed accusations the tax breaks for the wealthy were unfair as "people on higher incomes generally pay more tax".

Massive public spending

In the 1980s, then Conservative prime minister Margaret Thatcher also introduced tax cuts—but she simultaneously cut public spending. But the new government has done the opposite.

"Usually, when tax cuts are announced, governments also announce a reduction in spending or other tax increases to show they are serious," said Belgium-based economist Gregory Claeys.

But in the United Kingdom today "it's being combined with extra expenses, an enormous package" of spending, he said. With UK public debt already at around 100 percent of GDP, economists estimate that the whole economic package will cost £100 billion to £200 billion—on top of financial aid already earmarked to deal with the energy crisis. Credit ratings agency Moody's has warned about the debt impact of the new tax-slashing budget.

"The Treasury estimates that a two-year cap on energy bills for households and businesses will cost £60 billion (2.4 percent of GDP) over the next six months and will be funded largely by new borrowing," it said. The ratings agency has called Britain's new fiscal policy regime "credit negative", adding that a sustained confidence shock could "permanently" weaken its debt affordability.

Finance Minister Kwasi Kwarteng's big tax cuts and energy price freeze, aimed at boosting the recession-threatened economy, appears to have had the opposite effect. The British pound sunk to a record low against the dollar on Monday on concerns the tax-cut plan could derail public finances, though it then rebounded the next day. The measures also come as the Bank of England is hiking interest rates in a bid to cool decades-high inflation. — AFP

BBC to cut 400 staff at its World Service

LONDON: Nearly 400 staff at BBC World Service will lose their jobs as part of a cost-cutting program and move to digital platforms, the broadcaster announced on Thursday, paring down its Iranian-language service among others.

The BBC, which marks its centenary next month, said its international services needed to make savings of £28.5 million (\$31 million) as part of wider reductions of £500 million, which unions blamed on the UK government. In July the broadcaster detailed plans to merge BBC World News television and its domestic UK equivalent into a single channel to launch in April next year. BBC World Service—one of the UK's most recognisable global brands—currently operates in 41 languages around the world with a weekly audience of some 364 million people.

But the corporation said audience habits were changing and more people were accessing news online, which along with a freeze on BBC funding and increased operating costs meant a move to "digital-first" made financial sense. "Today's proposals entail a net total of around 382 post closures," the public service broadcaster said in an online statement. Eleven language services—Azerbaijani, Brasil, Marathi, Mundo, Punjabi, Russian, Serbian, Sinhala, Thai, Turkish, and Vietnamese—are already digital only.

Under the restructuring plans they will be joined by seven more: Chinese, Gujarati, Igbo, Indonesian, Pidgin, Urdu and Yoruba. Radio services in Arabic, Persian, Kyrgyz, Hindi, Bengali, Chinese, Indonesian,



Tamil and Urdu will stop, if the proposals are approved by staff and unions.

No language services will close, the broadcaster insisted, although some production will move out of London and schedules would change. The Thai service will move to Bangkok, the Korean service to Seoul and the Bangla service to Dhaka.

The "Focus on Africa" television bulletin will be broadcast from Nairobi, it added. BBC World Service director Liliane Landor said there was a "compelling case" for expanding digital services, as audiences had more than doubled since 2018. "The way audiences are accessing news and content is changing and the challenge of reaching and engaging people around the world with quality, trusted journalism is growing," she added.

The head of the broadcasting union Bectu, Philippa Childs, said they were disappointed at the proposed changes. "While we recognize the BBC must adapt to meet the challenges of a changing

media landscape, once again it is workers who are hit by the government's poorly judged political decisions," she said. The government's freezing of the license fee which pays for BBC World Service had created the funding squeeze and the need for cuts, she added. Bectu will push for staff to be redeployed where possible and to ensure it "mitigates the needs for any compulsory redundancies", Childs said. BBC World Service is funded out of the UK license fee—currently £159 for a color TV and payable by every household with a television set.

The BBC has faced repeated claims from right-wingers since the UK's divisive Brexit referendum in 2016 of political bias, and pushing a "woke", London-centric liberal agenda. But it has faced similar accusations of political bias in favor of the right from the left. The government announced a freeze on the license fee in January, in what was seen by critics as an attempt to save the then-prime minister Boris Johnson's job. —AFP

US unveils new rules to track shell companies

WASHINGTON: The US Treasury on Thursday unveiled new rules that will require firms doing business in the country to disclose their ownership, a move designed to crack down on corruption, money laundering and tax evasion by shell companies.

The tougher requirements will apply to firms backed by Russian oligarchs that have tried to evade sanctions imposed over the invasion of Ukraine, Treasury said in a statement. "For too long, it has been far too easy for criminals, Russian oligarchs, and other bad actors to fund their illicit

activity by hiding and moving money through anonymous shell companies and other corporate structures right here in the United States," said Himamauli Das, acting director of Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN).

"This final rule is a significant step forward in our efforts to support national security, intelligence, and law enforcement agencies in their work to curb illicit activities." The requirements take effect January 1, 2024 for any company created or registered to do business in the United States, according to the announcement. Existing firms will have one year to make their first report.

The move, part of President Joe Biden's government-wide effort to counter graft and corruption, closes loopholes in US efforts to counter money laundering and improve transparency. Treasury said illicit actors frequently use corporate structures such as shell and front companies to hide their identities and launder their ill-gotten gains through the



Janet Ellen

United States, but the rules will create a database of beneficial owners of these firms. The reporting provisions are required under the Corporate Transparency Act (CTA) approved by Congress in early 2021. — AFP

Chinese EV maker Leapmotor dives 42% on Hong Kong debut

BEIJING: Chinese electric vehicle manufacturer Zhejiang Leapmotor Technology suffered Hong Kong's worst trading debut so far this year, plunging more than 40 percent on Thursday morning.

Leapmotor raised around \$800 million earlier this month with an initial public offering that saw its shares sold for HK\$48 (\$6.11). But on its first day of trading Thursday, it tumbled as much as 41.6 percent to HK\$28.05, the steepest first-day decline by a listing larger than \$250 million in Hong Kong this year according to Bloomberg News.

Another Chinese company saw a disappointing start to trade on Thursday. Onewo Inc, the property management unit of real estate developer China Vanke, sank 7.9 percent to HK\$45.45 after raising around \$739 million in its IPO.

Hong Kong used to be a bonanza location for Chinese IPOs with investors frequently seeing handsome spikes on the first day of trading. But ongoing concerns about the state of China's economy under strict zero-Covid controls, combined with global market anxiety as the Federal Reserve turns increasingly hawkish to control spiraling inflation has hit Hong Kong's already troubled stock market.

Hong Kong has one of the worst performing major bourses, sliding steadily since February 2021.

The Hang Seng Index, which tracks major companies, has lost more than 25 percent so far this year. Half of the firms that have listed in the city so far this year and raised more than \$100 million have fallen on their first day, according to Bloomberg News data.

Founded in 2015, Leapmotor focuses on the mid-to high-end EV market with a price range of 150,000 to 300,000 yuan (\$21,400-\$42,800). China's electric car market is particularly competitive, with manufacturers jostling to take advantage of an industry boosted in recent months by generous purchase subsidies from local governments.

China's EV market is huge, covering everything



BEIJING: Chinese electric vehicle manufacturer Zhejiang Leapmotor Technology suffered Hong Kong's worst trading debut so far this year, plunging more than 40 percent on Thursday morning.

from luxury vehicles to more affordable models. Manufacturer Wuling last year sold 400,000 Mini EV vehicles, a mass market super compact with a price tag of \$4,000. The best-selling European electric car is the Renault Zoe, of which 77,000 were sold last year. —AFP

Business

Germany deploys €200bn shield in raging 'energy war'

German inflation to rise in 2023 as economy shrinks

BERLIN: Germany on Thursday extended a 200-billion-euro (\$194-billion) shield to protect households and businesses from skyrocketing power costs, as Europe's biggest economy found itself in an "energy war over prosperity and freedom" against Russia. "The German government will do everything so that prices sink," Chancellor Olaf Scholz vowed, announcing a price cap for electricity and gas, as well as a plan to cream off windfall profits made by energy companies little hit by soaring gas prices.

The multi-billion-euro fund was designed to ensure that Germany could contend with the fallout from rising prices "this year and next year and the one after that", Scholz said. Thursday's announcement came as inflation soared to a 70-year high of 10 percent in September, according to official data, driven higher by spiking energy prices.

The country was also predicted to sink into a recession in 2023, with consumer prices seen reaching 8.8 percent annually, leading economic institutes said Thursday. Germany, which has been highly dependent on imports of fossil fuels from Russia to meet its energy needs, has come under acute pressure as dwindling supplies from Moscow have stoked prices for the fuel.

"We find ourselves in an energy war over prosperity and freedom," Finance Minister Christian Lindner said. Protecting consumers against the rising bills was a "crystal clear answer" to Russian President Vladimir Putin that Germany was "strong economically", he added.

'Bakers and craftsmen'

Protection from rising prices was needed for "pensioners, workers, families... but also bakers and craftsmen or big industrial plants that are dependent on electricity and the gas supply", Scholz said.

Confidence amongst businesses and consumers has dropped precipitously in recent months as Germany slips towards a winter recession. As well as rising household bills, some businesses have been forced to rein in produc-

tion or operate a loss as their energy costs soar.

The gas price cap should cover "at least a part" of the gas used by households and businesses, while "maintaining an incentive to reduce gas use" over the winter as supplies are limited, the government said in a statement. In the same way, the government would work to limit the price of electricity for consumers by skimming off profits made by energy firms that have profited by the higher asking prices for gas but which do not use the energy source to generate power.

Ahead of the announcement, analysts warned that a full energy price cap would rob consumers of a reason to limit their usage, just as the government is imploring households to make every saving possible over the winter.

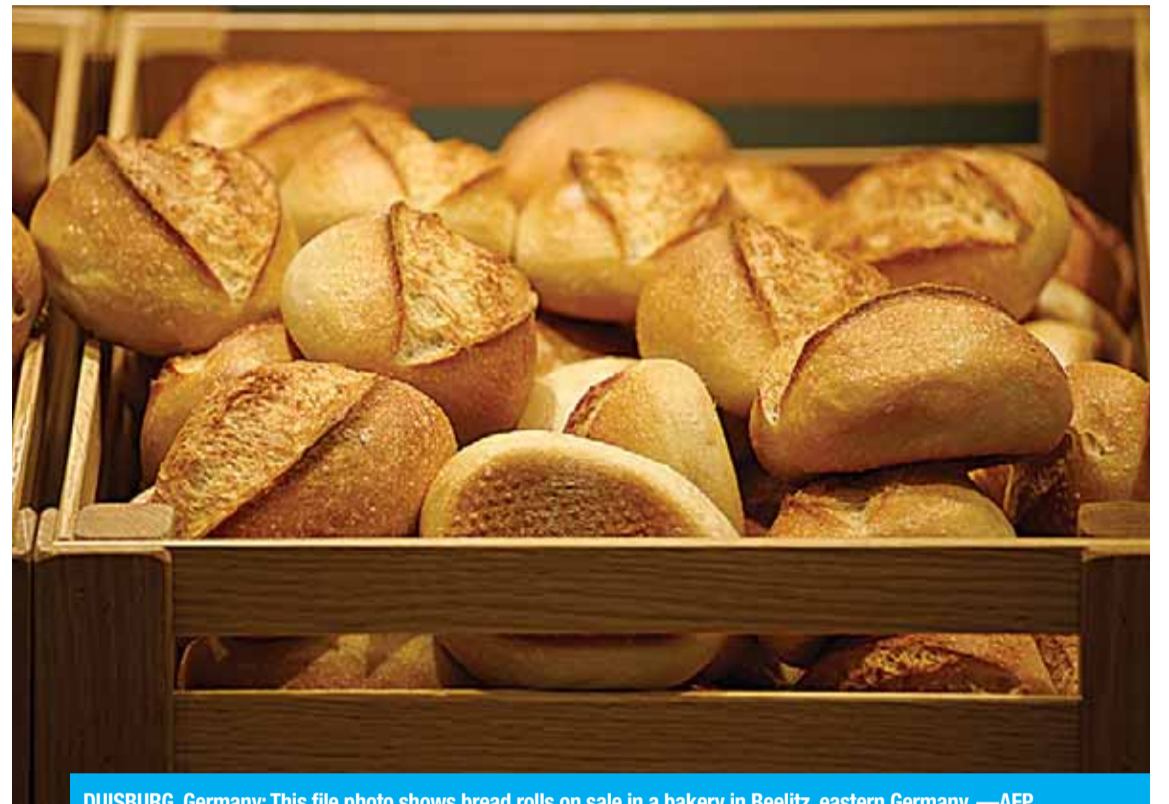
One in two flats in Germany is heated with gas, with figures from Thursday showing national usage was above average for the time of year. "Without significant reductions, including in private households, it will be difficult to avoid a gas shortage," the head of the Federal Network Agency Klaus Mueller warned.

Gas levy

Scholz also announced that the government would be scrapping a controversial gas levy that would have allowed energy companies to pass on rising costs and stabilize their business.

Germany has moved to prop up the energy market, announcing the nationalization of struggling provider Uniper, which had been one of the biggest importers of Russian gas. An agreement on the financing for the new package only emerged after weeks of haggling within the three-way coalition between Scholz's Social Democrats, the Greens and the liberal FDP.

The 200 billion euros would be pumped into an economic stability fund outside the government's main budget, allowing the government to stick to constitutional debt rules that limit public deficits—a red line for FDP leader Lindner. "Through these measures, we want to send a



DUISBURG, Germany: This file photo shows bread rolls on sale in a bakery in Beelitz, eastern Germany. —AFP

clear signal to the capital markets that even while we use such a shield, Germany will keep to its stability-oriented fiscal policy. German bonds remain the gold standard in the world," he said.

Over the last months, Germany has also rushed to tap new sources of energy to reduce the demands put on gas.

Earlier this month, the government said it would keep two nuclear power plants running beyond the end of the year to prop up the electricity grid.

The decision marked a major U-turn, with the traditionally anti-nuclear Greens consenting to delay Merkel era plans to exit atomic energy. —AFP

Germans urged to save more gas despite cold weather

BERLIN: Germany's top energy regulator on Thursday issued an urgent warning to consumers to save more gas regardless of chilly weather as figures showed above-average usage, despite repeated pleas for restraint.

"Without significant reductions, including in private households, it will be difficult to avoid a gas shortage this winter," Federal Network Agency (BNetzA) head Klaus Mueller said in a statement. Figures from the agency published on Thursday showed consumption of 483 gigawatt hours (GWh) for the week beginning September 19, well above the average of 422 GWh for 2018 to 2021.

"Although the week was significantly colder than the same week in previous years, the savings required to avoid a gas shortage must be achieved regardless of temperatures," the agency said.

A reduction of at least 20 percent would be needed to avoid shortages, it added. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has led to an acute energy crisis in Germany, with Moscow increasingly squeezing gas supplies.

Europe's biggest economy was previously heavily dependent on Russian gas and has been scrambling to secure supplies from elsewhere. BNetzA on Thursday said Germany's gas storage facilities were 91.5 percent full heading into the winter but more savings were still necessary.

"Gas must be saved, even if it gets even colder

towards winter. This will depend on each and every one of us," Mueller said. The German government has repeatedly called on consumers to save energy amid the turmoil caused by the war in Ukraine.

Vonovia, the country's largest property group, plans to limit the temperature in its 350,000 homes to 17 degrees Celsius (63 degrees Fahrenheit) at night.

Germany's Bundestag lower house of parliament is also planning to turn off the hot water in its offices and keep the air temperature no higher than 20 degrees Celsius this winter. —AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2022

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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	1,015	976	1,025	976	49	25,047,459	-47	-4.59%	2.79%	966	990	17.8	1.91	2.5%	0.99
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	318	300	318	300	18	24,157,036	-20	-6.25%	12.90%	294	303	17.6	1.45	2.1%	1.21
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	205	198	205	196	9	8,194,073	-8	-3.88%	-5.54%	196	203	31.8	0.63	1.9%	1.17
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	238	222	238	221	17	10,091,829	-18	-7.50%	-7.13%	222	227	19.2	0.83	2.1%	1.30
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	889	841	889	841	48	77,376,265	-44	-4.92%	11.19%	840	860	29.2	3.68	1.3%	1.16
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	801	765	801	761	40	5,370,979	-41	-5.09%	7.39%	761	773	50.8	3.11	0.6%	1.08
204	National Investments	Financial Services	258	231	258	220	38	12,325,026	-29	-11.15%	5.48%	227	237	8.9	0.95	18.9%	1.80
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	141	133	142	133	9	8,074,044	-12	-8.28%	-6.34%	132	137	346.2	0.71	3.7%	1.01
252	Al Intiaz Investment	Financial Services	85	75.5	85	75.1	9.4	3,056,147	-9.5	-11.18%	-36.02%	75.1	82.9	-	0.46	11.5%	1.21
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	110	101	110	100	11	25,166,628	-11	-9.82%	-41.88%	99.5	109	12.8	0.77	2.8%	1.08
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	886	863	888	850	38	3,277,338	-24	-2.71%	15.36%	850	875	18.6	2.01	1.5%	1.05
501	National Industries	Financial Services	250	229	250	229	21	43,257,054	-24	-9.49%	-4.96%	227	235	5.5	1.01	4.6%	1.46
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,232	1,070	1,232	1,065	167	2,687,442	-171	-13.78%	22.85%	1,058	1,090	10.3	1.03	5.4%	0.98
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	880	830	887	830	57	3,065,906	-52	-5.90%	-2.58%	820	837	9.5	1.72	7.1%	0.94
526	Al Qurain	Basic Materials	300	271	300	271	29	1,268,726	-29	-9.67%	-21.90%	271	296	10.6	0.68	6.5%	1.05
603	Agility	Industrials	714	668	728	656	72	51,806,498	-81	-10.81%	-15.17%	656	728	52.2	1.16	2.5%	1.51
605	Zain	Telecommunications	575	585	594	564	30	26,086,888	5	0.86%	-1.68%	581	589	13.9	2.14	5.6%	0.82
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,270	3,275	3,399	3,200	199	712,951	-6	-0.18%	1.58%	3,250	3,286	7.7	3.68	12.0%	0.68
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	171	174	180	167	13	4,500,496	0	0.00%	-20.18%	167	184	NULL	0.65	0.0%	1.14
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,730	1,655	1,780	1,601	179	464,024	-75	-4.34%	28.29%	1,645	1,680	13.6	12.19	2.7%	1.37
818	Ahil United Bank	Banking	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
821	Warba Bank	Banking	233	221	233	218	15	22,383,849	-15	-6.36%	-19.34%	218	229	26.3	1.21	0.0%	1.10
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	398	374	402	362	40	3,051,906	-27	-6.73%	-35.23%	362	405	38.4	1.10	4.2%	0.50
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	375	380	381	358	23	716,080	-2	-0.52%	2.70%	380	390	28.2	1.52	2.7%	0.78
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	200	195	200	193	7	5,216,665	-5	-2.50%	-14.47%	193	201	14.9	2.18	9.3%	0.49
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,253	2,079	2,270	2,060	210	760,688	-201	-8.82%	2.92%	2,045	2,106	22.8	7.34	3.1%	0.84
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	798	785	808	770	38	2,630,124	-13	-1.63%	-	770	800	12.4	3.65	-	0.56

* As of end of week closing

Lifestyle | Features



Dr Erik Lucero, Lead Engineer of Google Quantum AI, leads media on a tour of the Quantum Computing Lab at the Quantum AI campus in Goleta, California.— AFP photos



Dr Erik Lucero, Lead Engineer of Google Quantum AI, leads media on a tour of the Quantum Computing Lab at the Quantum AI campus in Goleta.

Tracing uncertainty: Google harnesses quantum mechanics at California lab

Outside, balmy September sunshine warms an idyllic coast, as California basks in yet another perfect day. Inside, it's minus 460 Fahrenheit (-273 Celsius) in some spots, pockets of cold that bristle with the impossible physics of quantum mechanics - a science in which things can simultaneously exist, not exist and also be something in between.

This is Google's Quantum AI laboratory, where dozens of super-smart people labor in an office kitted out with climbing walls and electric bikes to shape the next generation of computers - a generation that will be unlike anything users currently have in their pockets or offices. "It is a new type of computer that uses quantum mechanics to do computations and allows us... to solve problems that would otherwise be impossible," explains Erik Lucero, lead engineer at the campus near Santa Barbara.

"It's not going to replace your mobile phone, your desktop; it's going to be working in parallel with those things." Quantum mechanics is a field of research that scientists say could be used one day to help limit global warming, design city traffic systems or develop powerful new drugs. The promises are so great that governments, tech giants and start-ups around the world

are investing billions of dollars in it, employing some of the biggest brains around.

Schrodinger's cat

Old fashioned computing is built on the idea of binary certainty: tens of thousands of "bits" of data that are each definitely either "on" or "off," represented by either a one or a zero. Quantum computing uses uncertainty: its "qubits" can exist in a state of both one-ness and zero-ness in what is called a superposition. The most famous illustration of a quantum superposition is Schrodinger's cat - a hypothetical animal locked in a box with a flask of poison which may or may not shatter. While the box is shut, the cat is simultaneously alive and dead. But once you interfere with the quantum state and open the box, the question of the cat's life or death is resolved.

Quantum computers use this uncertainty to perform lots of seemingly contradictory calculations at the same time - a bit like being able to go down every possible route in a maze all at once, instead of trying each one in series until you find the right path. The difficulty for quantum computer designers is getting these qubits to

maintain their superposition long enough to make a calculation.

As soon as something interferes with them - noise, muck, the wrong temperature - the superposition collapses, and you're left with a random and likely nonsensical answer. The quantum computer Google showed off to journalists resembles a steampunk wedding cake hung upside-down from a support structure. Each layer of metal and curved wires gets progressively colder, down to the final stage, where the palm-sized processor is cooled to just 10 Millikelvin, or about -460 Fahrenheit (-273 Celsius).

That temperature - only a shade above absolute zero, the lowest temperature possible in the universe - is vital for the superconductivity Google's design relies on. While the layer-cake computer is not huge - about half a person high - a decent amount of lab space is taken up with the equipment to cool it - pipes whoosh overhead with helium dilutions compressing and expanding, using the same process that keeps your refrigerator cold.

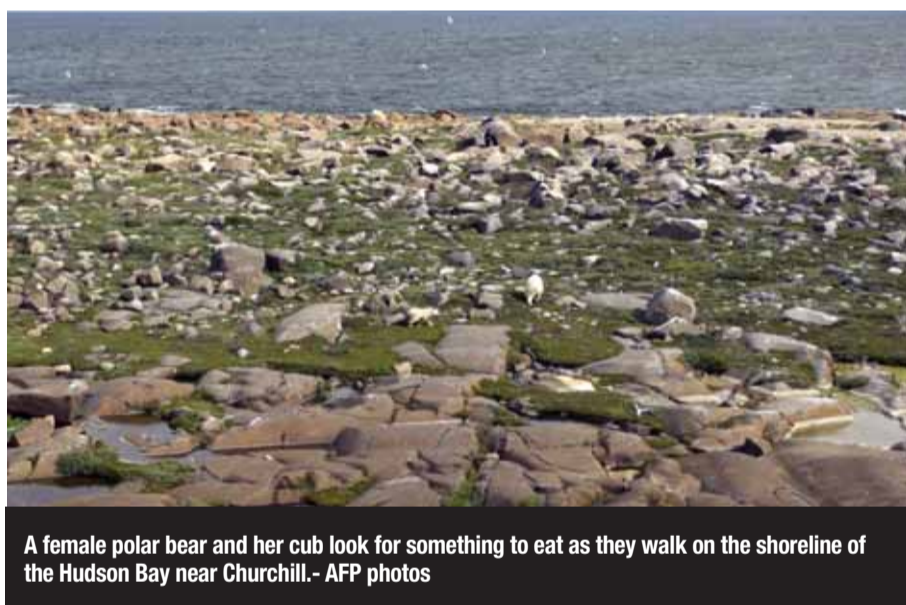
Future

But... what does it all actually do? Well, says Daniel Lidar, an expert in quantum

systems at the University of Southern California, it's a field that promises much when it matures, but which is still a toddler. "We've learned how to crawl but we've certainly not yet learned how to walk or jump or run," he told AFP.

The key to its growth will be solving the problem of the superpositional collapses - the opening of the cat's box - to allow for meaningful calculations. As this process of error correction improves, problems such as city traffic optimization, which is fiendishly hard on a classical computer because of the number of independent variables involved - the cars themselves - could come within reach, said Lidar. "On (an error-corrected) quantum computer, you could solve that problem," he said.

For Lucero and his colleagues, these future possibilities are worth the brain ache. "Quantum mechanics is one of the best theories that we have today to experience nature. This is a computer that speaks the language of nature. "And if we want to go out and figure out these really challenging problems, to help save our planet, and things like climate change, than having a computer that can do exactly that, I'd want that." — AFP



A female polar bear and her cub look for something to eat as they walk on the shoreline of the Hudson Bay near Churchill.— AFP photos

Canada's Hudson Bay a summer refuge for thousands of belugas

Half a dozen beluga whales dive and reemerge around tourist paddle boards in Canada's Hudson Bay, a handful of about 55,000 of the creatures that migrate from the Arctic to the bay's more temperate waters each summer. Far from the Seine river where a beluga strayed in early August north of Paris, the estuaries that flow into the bay in northern Canada offer a sanctuary for the small white whales to give birth in relative warm and shelter.



In the murky bay, the belugas, with small dark eyes and what look like wide smiles, seem to enjoy the presence of a cluster of tourists who travelled to the remote town of Churchill - home to some 800 people and only accessible by train or plane - to observe the cetaceans. For more than seven months of the year, between November and June, the bay is

frozen. The thaw marks the return of the belugas to the haven, where they are protected from orcas and feed on the rich food found in the estuaries. The gray color of the young whales stands out against the bright white adults as they glide through the water in packs, all the while communicating in their own array of sounds.

Hydrophone

Nicknamed "canaries of the sea" due to the 50 or so different vocalizations - whistles, clicks, chirps and squeals - they emit, belugas are "social butterflies" and "sound is the glue of that society," said Valeria Vergara, who has been studying them for years. "Belugas are sound-centered species, and sound to them is really like vision to us," the researcher with the Raincoast Conservation Foundation told AFP.

Listening at the speaker of a hydrophone, the 53-year-old scientist tries to distinguish the multitude of sounds from the depths - a cacophony to the untrained ear. "They need to rely on sound to communicate and they also rely on sound to echolocate, to find their way... to find food," said Vergara, who has identified "contact calls" used between members of a pod.

Newborn belugas, which measure around 1.8 meters (six feet) long and weigh some 80 kilos (175 pounds), remain dependent on their mother for two years. As an adult, the mammal - which generally matures in the icy waters around Greenland and in the north of Canada, Norway and Russia - can grow to six meters long and live between 40 and 60 years. The Hudson Bay beluga population is the largest in the world. But the decrease in ice due to climate change, in an area that is warming three to four times faster than the rest of the planet, is a cause for concern for researchers.— AFP

The Himalayas: An ever-more dangerous adventure destination

US climber Hilaree Nelson's death has brought home how treacherous the Himalayas are, dangers that guides and experts say are rising due to climate change and as more people seek high-altitude thrills. Nelson, 49, was fatally swept down from close to the peak of the 8,163-metre Manaslu, the world's eighth-highest mountain that she and her partner were attempting to ski down. Her body was retrieved on Wednesday.

What are the biggest killers?

Nepal is home to the most popular Himalayan peaks. Between 1950 and 2021, 1,042 deaths were recorded there, 405 of them this century. A third of deaths are caused by avalanches, according to the Himalayan Database, and a third by climbers falling. Many also die from mountain sickness and exhaustion. The deadliest is 8,091-metre Annapurna massif, with 72 deaths for 365 ascents since the 1950s-or one for every five successful summits. Dhaulagiri and Kanchenjunga both have a death rate of over 10 percent. Steep passages and avalanche danger have earned Pakistan's K2 the name "savage mountain", with at least 70 fatalities since 1947. The most deaths occur on Everest, with more than 300 dying between 1950 and 2021. But with many more climbers, the fatality rate is comparatively low at 2.84 percent.

How has climate change hit Himalayas?

A 2019 study warned that Himalayan glaciers were melting twice as fast before the turn of the century. Another study this year, using carbon dating, showed the top layer of ice close to the Everest summit was around 2,000 years old, suggesting that the glacier was thinning more than 80 times faster than the

time it took to form.

How has this increased the dangers?

Although no extensive research has been done looking at climate change and mountaineering risks in the Himalayas, climbers have reported crevasses widening, running water on previously snowy slopes, and increasing formation of glacial lakes. "Wearing snow crampons on thinning ice and exposed rocks can be particularly dangerous," said the hugely experienced Nepali mountaineer Sanu Sherpa, 47, who has climbed all 14 highest peaks in the world twice. "Snow coverage is a lot less. I worry that the mountains will be just rocks in the next few generations."

As glaciers become more unpredictable, avalanche risk can increase. In 2014, an immense tumbling wall of snow, ice and rock killed 16 Nepali guides on Everest's treacherous Khumbu Icefall in one of the deadliest accidents on the Himalayas. "The weather has become more erratic. Some years warmer, others colder," a mountaineering blogger Alan Arnette told AFP. "Overall, the usual historical patterns cannot be used as predictions, so climbing has become much more dangerous concerning the weather."

What about overcrowding?

But experts say a major killer is also the inexperience of a new wave of ill-prepared mountaineer tourists rushing for summits among the hundreds who flock to Nepal, Pakistan and Tibet every year. The rapid growth of the climbing industry has created fierce competition among companies for business, raising fears that some were cutting corners on safety. Nepal this year issued 404 permits for Manaslu peak, double than usual. Pakistan issued about 200 for K2, twice the usual number. In 2019 a massive traffic jam on Everest forced teams to wait hours in freezing temperatures, lowering depleted oxygen levels that can lead to sickness and exhaustion. At least four of the 11 deaths that year were blamed on overcrowding.— AFP



Indian laborers work on a construction site with a view of the Himalayas in an area that was hit during the deadly floods in Rudraprayag District in northern Uttarakhand state.— AFP

Joan of Arc becomes non-binary icon in London play

A new play in London has reinvented France's sainted Joan of Arc as a non-binary icon, who rejects female identity as they struggle to find a place in a man's world. "I, Joan" had not even been performed at Shakespeare's Globe theatre in August when Time Out magazine called it "the most controversial play of the year". The first images, showing Joan with breasts bound, were enough to set social networks alight. Hardly a month goes by in Britain without a battle about gender identity and the play has given all sides in the debate fresh ammunition.

The play about France's patron saint, the 'maid of Orleans' who repelled the English in the Hundred Years War in the 15th century, was written by Charlie Josephine, with Joan played by Shobell Thom. Both Josephine and Thom were born female but define themselves as non-binary. The staging of the play at the landmark theatre on the South Bank of the River Thames is firmly contemporary, with no period costume.

The wife of the king's eldest son or dauphin, the later king Charles VII, is played by a black woman. Modern choreography defines the fight scenes. But Joan's story is still told from meeting the dauphin and fighting battles to standing trial and being burnt at the stake in 1431. The question of gender runs throughout. "To be born a girl and you are not a girl."

Joan rejects the dresses that people expect them to put on. "I am not a woman. I do not fit that word," they say. One of her friends suggests: "Maybe your word has not been invented yet?" Her allies then suggest she uses the pronoun "they", prompting huge cheers from the audience. Opponents in the play call her "she". At Joan's trial for heresy, one sentence is repeated by the judges: "Do you think it is well to take men's dress? Even if it is unlawful?" "What are you so afraid of?" Joan replies, laughing. "I am not a woman. I am a warrior."

Controversy

Feminists such as Heather Binning, founder of the UK-wide Women's Rights Network, are against the portrayal. "She experienced what she experienced because she was a woman. You can't change that," she said. "This lobby group is hijacking all our inspirational women from history. This ideology is insulting to women."

"There's a lot of women we don't know about because history was written by men for men." But Josephine and Thom defended the play. "I forgot I was blaspheming a saint," Josephine wrote in The Guardian. "Nobody is taking historical Joan away from you," insisted Thom on Twitter. "Nobody is taking away your Joan, whatever Joan may mean to you..." "This show is art: it's an exploration, it's imagination."

Shakespeare's Globe took the same approach, likening the interpretation in "I, Joan" to the approach of the celebrated English playwright. "Shakespeare did not write historically accurate plays. He took figures of the past to ask questions about the world around him," it said. "Our writers of today are no different. History has provided countless and wonderful examples of Joan portrayed as a woman. "This production is simply offering the possibility of another point of view. That is the role of theatre: to simply ask the question 'imagine if?'"

Zeitgeist

Re-examining Joan's life through a contemporary lens is also taking hold in her native France. "It's the Zeitgeist," said Valerie Tourelle, a university professor specializing in the Hundred Years War and the author of a 2020 book on Joan. "It doesn't shock me. There are women who decided to take a different path from both men and women. That's the case with Joan of Arc," she added.

Asked about Joan's wearing of men's clothes, she said: "It was for protection against rape and it's much easier to ride a horse as a man than looking like an Amazon." Nevertheless, for Tourelle, men's clothes on Joan was the key issue at the heresy trial. "This is material proof that backs up the religious argument. For men of the Church, Joan in these clothes went beyond her status as a woman." — AFP

Lifestyle | Features

SKIN WHITENING PRODUCTS REMAIN POPULAR IN CAMEROON DESPITE RISKS

Wearing a large hat protecting her face from the sun's rays in Cameroon, 63-year-old Jeanne now bitterly regrets using skin whitening products after being diagnosed with skin cancer. She is one of many women in Cameroon who use the controversial products that have been banned after social media outrage.

"I am embarrassed when people look at me," the trader in the capital of Yaounde said, wishing to only use her first name. After a lesion grew on her face over five months, she went to a doctor who diagnosed her with one of the most common skin cancers. Doctors told her the cancer is linked to her use of skin lightening products for 40 years. Jeanne, like millions worldwide, used the products for more "desirable" lighter skin, an ideal pushed by the beauty industry.



A woman, who uses skin whitening cosmetics, poses in Abidjan.

According to the Cameroon Dermatology Society (Socaderm), nearly 30 percent of residents in the economic capital Douala and a quarter of schoolgirls used the products in 2019. For some like 20-year-old student Annette, the effects can be harsh. She said she suffers from red patches on her face, peeling skin and also burns. "Under a strong sun, my face



A pedestrian walks past a hoarding advertising a skin-whitening cream on a street in Abidjan. Many African countries including Ivory Coast have banned the use of skin-lightening products because of health concerns. — AFP photos

became hot and I had to stop," she said. The products with names like "White now" and "Super white", are instantly recognizable on shop shelves by the fair-skinned women on the packaging.

Dangerous chemicals

The furore began in the summer after social media users criticized opposition MP Nourane Fotsing over her company that sells the products, angry that an elected official would profit from them. Many of the products have never been scientifically tested and contain dangerous levels of chemicals that inhibit the production of melanin, a substance produced in the body by exposure to the sun.

One of the chemicals is hydroquinone, banned in the European Union since 2001 because of the risk of cancer and genetic mutations. Cameroon's health ministry on August 19 banned the import, production and distribution of cosmetic and personal hygiene products containing dangerous

substances such as hydroquinone and mercury. Hydroquinone is in fact one of the most used in whitening products in Cameroon, according to a 2019 study by Yaounde I University.

'Public health problem'

"We encounter patients complaining of symptoms linked to skin depigmentation every day," Alain Patrice Meledie Ndjong, a dermatologist at a hospital in Douala, said. It is a "public health problem". According to the World Health Organization, the products are commonly used in many African, Asian and Caribbean countries by both women and men, and also among dark-skinned populations in Europe and North America. Other skin whitening products include potions, tablets and even injections. Some of the substances, when ingested, can cause diabetes, obesity, hypertension or kidney or liver failure, warned Ndjong, adding there was also a psychological



A salesperson holds up skin whitening products in a boutique at the Marche de Marcory.

impact on individuals like "anxiety and depression".

Despite the horror stories, men and women believe they will become more beautiful after using the products. "Beauty standards promoted by media, advertising and marketing reinforce the bias that lighter skin tone is more desirable than darker skin tone." Sociologist Achille Pinghane Yonta of Yaounde University offers blunter analysis of why the creams remain popular.

"There is a desire" rooted "in our consciences to want to look like" Western populations, he said. "It's a very old practice. It's even said, in some parts of the country, that a light-skinned woman's dowry is higher than that of a darker woman." But for Pascaline Mbida, she felt the difference. "I noticed that men were more attracted to women with lighter skin and I had confirmation of this when I whitened my skin, I had never got so much attention," Mbida said.

Black market

But the cost put off Mbida, who is currently unemployed. She spent 30,000 Central African Francs (45 euros) per month on the products. The mandatory monthly minimum wage in Cameroon is 36,270 (55 euros). Since the ban, police have launched raids, much to the chagrin of the sector's players who claim some seizures don't distinguish between the products that are banned by the government and those that are not.

The WHO in 2019 said "the skin lightening industry is one of the fastest growing" worldwide and was estimated to be worth \$31.2 billion by 2024. The cosmetic and personal hygiene market grew in Cameroon by seven percent in 2020 and was worth 380 billion CFA (around 580 million euros). Despite the ban, there is already a black market for the products. — AFP

Britain's Queen and the artists who captured her

Filmed, photographed and painted from all angles over many decades, Queen Elizabeth II sat for a string of renowned British artists whose works have been brought together in a new exhibition. At the entrance to London's Quantus gallery, more used to showing the works of street artists like Banksy or Stony, a bronze bust of the queen who died on September 8 welcomes visitors.

It is one of the centrepieces of Majesty: A Tribute to the Queen which features works by three artists who portrayed Elizabeth at different stages of her life and through a range of mediums. Frances Segelman did three sessions with the monarch in 2007. "I didn't want to portray her like some artists do, they distort things, they want to make a sensation, and I didn't want to do that," she told AFP.

Her sculpture was testament to Elizabeth's "solid, strong rock" like presence in British life. But meeting the queen in person, she said, threw up some surprises. There was "this wonderful woman there, who I had looked at all my life and she's just sitting there, she's just lovely, talking about different things". Segelman was relieved that her subject proved so friendly, but soon realized it was also preventing her from concentrating.

"Ma'am you don't have to speak to me" - Worried about how to ask the queen to stop talking, she eventually plucked up the courage to tell her "Ma'am you don't have to speak to me, you can just relax if you like". The queen, however "just carried on talking, it didn't make any difference", she recalled. The exhibition also features artworks by Christian Furr, the youngest artist to be commissioned to paint an official portrait of the queen. "I



An image of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II is seen in the window of a high street store in Edinburgh. — AFP

wanted to do something different, that captured her personality, her liveliness, her life, her humour, and also her humanity," Furr said.

Although there was an "ordinariness" to the queen, she was also "majestic", he said. Only 28 when she sat for him in 1995, he said he felt out of tune with the nineties when so-called Britart - known for its use of new materials and creative processes - dominated the art scene. "I was completely out of fashion. It was (all) Britart when I created that painting. It was completely anachronistic." His portrait stands in contrast to the black and white works of Rob Munday, a holograms specialist, that create a 3D effect by combining several images of the same subject.

Entitled "Equanimity", his main work, produced with Chris Levine in 2004, has become one of the most iconic images of the queen. It has been featured on stamps and banknotes and on the cover

of Time magazine in 2012 to mark the queen's diamond jubilee. From the front, looking straight at the lens, the queen appears dressed in black, wearing a crown and white fur teamed with a string of pearls. Moving around her, the viewer can see different images of the monarch.

In the early 2000s "it was still very new technology" that required the model to be perfectly still, he said. The queen however was "very accommodating". The monarch was "very used" to sitting for artists and so was in many ways the "perfect sitter", he said. He was still slightly nervous about her reaction to the final result but need not have worried. "Of course I was a bit worried about what she is going to think about such a realistic portrait, but she was fine with that," he recalled. — AFP

Coolio, rapper behind hit 'Gangsta's Paradise,' dies

Coolio, the US rapper best known for the chart-topping 1995 song "Gangsta's Paradise," has died, his manager said Wednesday. He was 59 years old. The Grammy-winning musician passed away in Los Angeles. No cause of death was immediately provided. Coolio's friend and long-standing manager Jarez Posey confirmed the news to AFP without providing additional details.

Posey told celebrity news website TMZ that Coolio was found unresponsive in the bathroom of a friend's house on Wednesday afternoon. Born Artis Leon Ivey Jr on August 1, 1963 in Pennsylvania, the artist spent most of his life in Compton, California, attending community college and working jobs including airport security before finding success in rap.

Coolio began his music career in California in the late 1980s, digging roots in the Los Angeles scene by 1994 when he signed to Tommy Boy Records. His single "Fantastic Voyage" off his debut studio album "It Takes a Thief" charted as high as three on the Billboard Hot 100. But it was "Gangsta's Paradise" the following year that would make Coolio a household name. The rapper soared to global fame in 1995 when he released the song for the soundtrack of the film "Dangerous Minds" that starred Michelle Pfeiffer.

It was the year's top single, and scored Coolio a Grammy for best rap solo performance for the track at the subsequent awards gala. With a hook lifted from Stevie Wonder's 1976 track "Pastime Paradise" off of that artist's seminal "Songs In The Key of Life," the hit sold millions of copies worldwide, topping pop charts in 16 countries. "Heartbroken to hear of the passing of the gifted artist @coolio," wrote Pfeiffer on social media. "A life cut entirely too short." "30 years later I still get chills when I hear the song."

'It wrote me'

In an interview more than a decade later with Britain's "The Voice," Coolio said he had "no clue" that the song would go on to endure for so many years. "I didn't write Gangsta's Paradise-it wrote me," he said. "It was its own entity, out there in the spirit world, trying to find its way to the world, and it chose me as the vessel to come through." "I thought it was going to be a hood record; I never thought it would cross over the way that it did-to all ages, races, genres, countries and generations." He never recreated the success of his signature track but later put out hits including "1, 2, 3, 4 (Sumpin' New)" and "Too Hot."



Coolio performs at 90sFEST Pop Culture and Music Festival in this file photo in Brooklyn, New York. — AFP

An enduring star of gangsta rap, Coolio's high-spirited music videos brought him an increased following. He later pursued an acting career, including nabbing a part in 1997's "Batman and Robin" and making a number of television cameos including on the hit 1990s show "The Nanny." The social media reaction to the rapper's death was one of shock, with 1990s rapper Vanilla Ice tweeting: "I'm freaking out I just heard my good friend Coolio passed away." "Peaceful Journey Brother. #Coolio," wrote Questlove. — AFP



French singer Kaaris

French rapper Kaaris released in domestic violence probe

French rapper Kaaris was released late Wednesday after turning himself in for questioning over domestic violence allegations by an ex-partner, prosecutors told AFP Thursday. Investigators in the Paris suburb of Evry said that the probe would continue into the alleged attack on Linda P., with whom early French trap pioneer Kaaris has a child.

The two were interviewed together for eight hours starting on Wednesday afternoon, the rapper's lawyers Yassine

Maharsi and Yassine Yakouti said. "We questioned the accuser about her lies," Kaaris's representatives added, saying their client was "relaxed and satisfied". Linda P's lawyers, Adrien Gabeaud and Sema Akman, for their part said that prosecutors would "doubtless summon Kaaris before the criminal court".

The rapper's ex filed a criminal complaint against him in July, prompting Kaaris to lodge his own complaint for a false report. Linda P said that the violence took place after Kaaris suddenly

began acting distant, which upset their child. She discovered that he had moved to a new house and went to find him there, where she claims he kicked and punched her in the garage, and tore out her fingernails. Linda P said that she had to use crutches and wore a splint on her leg for two weeks afterwards.

Kaaris said in his counter-complaint that she "conjured out of nothing the violent acts that she later reported to judicial authorities", adding that her aim was to "exert a form of media, judicial and

financial pressure" on him. Kaaris, born in Ivory Coast as Gnakouri Okou, has been known for dark sounds and crude lyrics on his solo albums since the release of the successful and critically acclaimed "Or Noir" in 2013. In recent years, his feud with his former mentor Booba has made headlines, including for a 2018 brawl at a Paris airport that saw both men sentenced to suspended jail terms. — AFP

Sports

Teams 'reloading' to dethrone Warriors as NBA champions

Sharp-shooter Curry aiming for his fifth championship

TOKYO: Stephen Curry said Thursday that NBA teams are "reloading" to dethrone the Golden State Warriors as champions, as they begin their pre-season preparations this weekend in Japan. Sharp-shooter Curry is aiming for his fifth championship when the season gets underway next month, and he urged his Warriors teammates to "embrace" the target on their backs.

"It's very easy to stay motivated because you want to maintain this feeling for as long as you can," Curry said in Tokyo, where the Warriors will play the Washington Wizards in two pre-season games. "We also know that defending a championship is the hardest thing to do in our sport. Not many teams are able to do it and every team is reloading to beat you, so we have to embrace that and try to keep getting better."

The Warriors beat the Boston Celtics in last season's NBA Finals to win the title for a seventh time. Curry was named NBA Finals Most Valuable Player after a series of dazzling performances to capture one of the few accolades previously missing from his resume. The 34-year-old said he had managed to get some rest

after a "crazy busy summer" and is itching for the new season to get started.

"I'm looking to get into the routine of the season because that's kind of my happy place, to try to be the best basketball player I can be and get ready for this year," said Curry, a two-time regular-season MVP. Friday's game at Saitama Super Arena, north of Tokyo, will mark the first time that NBA teams have played pre-season games overseas since the pandemic began. The Wizards, who did not reach the playoffs last season, have Japanese star Rui Hachimura in their squad.

Warriors head coach Steve Kerr warned that "nobody will play a ton of minutes", but Curry promised to "put on a great show" for the Japanese fans. "It's a special opportunity to embrace Japanese culture, the fans, to show appreciation for how the game of basketball, the NBA, has grown around the world," he said. "Obviously it's really early in our journey this season, our first pre-season games, but we'll do our best to have fun with it, put on a great show and enjoy the atmosphere that will be in the arena." —AFP



SAN FRANCISCO: Stephen Curry #30 of the Golden State Warriors poses with the four Larry O'Brien Championship Trophies that he has won with the Warriors during the Warriors Media Day in San Francisco, California. —AFP

Bigger England Test fees could stop exodus

LONDON: Exeter director of rugby Rob Baxter said Wednesday that higher England match fees could help stop players leaving the Premiership for bigger salaries abroad after Sam Simmonds agreed a move to Montpellier. The England back-row forward, 27, will join the French champions after next year's Rugby World Cup.

He is expected to be available for the showpiece tournament in France, but after that will be ineligible to represent England should the Rugby Football Union maintain its policy of refusing to select overseas-based players for international duty. There are those, including Saracens boss Mark McCall, who believe the departure of a leading Premiership player in the prime of his career to a foreign club has wider implications for the English game.

Baxter, however, was philosophical over the impending exit of Simmonds, who has 14 caps for England and has also represented the British and Irish Lions. "It is not a negative when a player leaves you because someone wants them and can afford to pay them more than you can," he said. "It is negative when you fall out and a person moves for no positive reason at all. It's very rare that happens here. "Sam goes with our blessing for a great adventure, a great opportunity in France," added Baxter.

McCall though was particularly concerned by Simmonds' desire to play club rugby in France while in his 20s. "I say that because Sam is 27, nearing his peak and is now making himself ineligible for England," the Saracens boss said Tuesday. "I kind of understand someone who is early 30s doing it after they've had their international career and want to experience something different. "But to start losing the best young talent in the Premiership, someone like Sam, is a worry."

Dire finances

The dire finances of Premiership clubs - worsened by the coronavirus pandemic - resulted in a decision to reduce the salary cap to £5 million (\$5.3 million) from £6.4 million. The reduced wages make it more difficult for English clubs to compete with wealthy sides in France and Japan. The fear is that other members of Eddie Jones' Test squad will follow Simmonds overseas. The cap for Premiership clubs is due to return to £6.4 million for the 2024/25 season. Baxter added Wednesday: "Even in the £6.4 million cap, you could lose players, particularly to France. "I suppose with a £5 million cap, all of a sudden the attraction of staying in England lessens a little bit because of the difference in the figures.

"There is another argument that if England paid them more per game - that will cause some debate because England players are pretty well paid compared to some other nations - but that's another way of bridging the gap. Players add up the whole package. "It's a challenge, and something that is going to happen for a little bit. But it is not keeping me awake at night." Baxter's comments come after Premiership side Worcester were suspended from all competitions and placed into administration this week.

The club failed to meet a RFU deadline requesting proof of insurance cover and funding for the club's monthly payroll. Worcester's debts total more than £25 million but they are not the only one of the Premiership's 13 clubs facing potential financial collapse. Wasps, twice European champions, announced last week their intention to appoint administrators. There are fears Worcester and Wasps represent the tip of an iceberg, with the collective debts of all Premiership clubs estimated at more than £500 million. —AFP

Pakistan thump England in T20I

LAHORE: Prolific opener Mohammad Rizwan hit a fighting half-century before debutant all-rounder Aamer Jamal started with the ball as Pakistan beat England by six runs in another last-over finish in the fifth T20 international in Lahore on Wednesday. Rizwan's 46-ball 63 was the cornerstone of Pakistan's 145 all out in 19 overs after express pacer Mark Wood grabbed 3-20 to derail the home team who were asked to bat first at Gaddafi Stadium.

England's stand-in skipper Moeen Ali smashed a brilliant undefeated 37-ball 51, with four sixes and two fours, but failed to score the 15 needed off the final over as England managed 139-7. Jamal kept his cool despite being hit for a six off the third ball, conceding just eight to give Pakistan a 3-2 lead in the seven-match series. England won the first and third matches while Pakistan took the second and fourth, all played in Karachi.

Pakistan needed wickets to defend a below-par total and all six bowlers responded with at least a wicket each, with Haris Rauf grabbing 2-41.

Opens Alex Hales (one) and Phil Salt (three) were gone by the fourth over before the dismissals of Ben Duckett (10) and Harry Brook (four) left England struggling at 54-4. Dawid Malan stopped the slide with a patient 35-ball 36, studded with six boundaries, before Ali raised his team's hopes of victory. But the asking rate climbed with 40 needed off the last three overs and 28 off the last two.

Moeen reached his seventh T20I fifty off 35 balls. "I will give credit to the bowlers who defended a not-so-big total," said Pakistan skipper Babar Azam. "I think Jamal showed great character by bowling the last over and his confidence got him over the line." Ali, meanwhile, said England should have chased down the target. "Disappointed we didn't chase those runs, we're a better team than that but we got strangled by the spinners in the middle overs," said Ali, whose team had fallen three runs short in pursuit of 166 on Sunday.

Earlier, Pakistan struggled against the pace of Wood. Wood-playing only his second international since an elbow injury in March followed by surgery - was ably assisted by Sam Curran (2-23) and David Willey (2-23) as Pakistan were dismissed in 19



LAHORE: Pakistan's wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan plays a shot during the fifth Twenty20 international cricket match between Pakistan and England at the Gaddafi Cricket Stadium in Lahore on September 28, 2022. —AFP

overs. Amid a middle-order collapse from 42-1, which saw Pakistan lose six wickets off 48 balls for just 58 runs, Rizwan held on with a defiant knock, his fourth fifty in five matches in this series.

Wood dismissed Azam in the third over for nine before David Willey removed Shan Masood and Iftikhar Ahmed to derail Pakistan. Mohammad

Nawaz (nought) and Shadab Khan (seven) fell to injudicious run outs to leave Pakistan tottering at 100-7. Rizwan completed his 20th T20I half-century before hitting Curran straight into the hands of Adil Rashid at deep square-leg in the 18th over. Rizwan struck three sixes and two fours. The remaining matches are on Friday and Sunday, also in Lahore. —AFP

Pitch surprise as India down SA in T20 opener

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Fast bowler Arshdeep Singh rattled the opposition batting on a seaming pitch to set up India's eight-wicket win over South Africa (SA) in their opening Twenty20 international on Wednesday. South Africa recovered from 9-5 in 2.3 overs to post 106-8 after India elected to field first at the start of the three-match series in Thiruvananthapuram.

Arshdeep, a left-arm quick, returned figures of 3-32 and fellow pace bowler Deepak Chahar took two wickets on an unusually bowler-friendly track in India. India lost skipper Rohit Sharma for a duck and star batsman Virat Kohli for three before the hosts achieved their target with 20 balls to spare and take a 1-0 lead. KL Rahul (51) and Suryakumar Yadav (50) put on an unbeaten 93-run partnership to complete the chase as India move into their final two matches ahead of the T20 World Cup starting next month in Australia.

"We have played in a few difficult conditions like these but I haven't got runs in those, so this was

hard work," Rahul said after hitting the winning six. "Ice baths and wickets like these is not something we enjoy, but we have to do it sometimes." Rohit expressed surprise with the nature of the pitch and said, "We knew there will be something for the bowlers, but not through the 20 overs we bowled." New-ball bowlers Chahar and Arshdeep made it count after India lost pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah to "back pain" before the start of the match.

Suryakumar blitz

Number eight Keshav Maharaj hit 41 off 35 balls to help South Africa bat the full 20 overs and add some respectability to their meagre total. Chahar bowled skipper Temba Bavuma for a fourth-ball duck and fellow opener Quinton de Kock dragged a delivery on to his stumps from left-arm quick Arshdeep.

The Proteas slipped further into trouble when Arshdeep had Rilee Rossouw caught behind for nought and then bowled David Miller the next ball. It was South Africa's worst-ever start to a T20 international when Tristan Stubbs fell to Chahar in the third over. Aiden Markram (25) Wayne Parnell (24) put together 33 runs for the sixth wicket to slow India's momentum.

Markram smashed three fours and one six before being trapped lbw by Harshal Patel as India successfully reviewed the on-field umpire's initial



India's Arshdeep Singh

decision. Parnell fell in the 16th over but Maharaj stood firm before his knock ended in the final over as Patel picked up his second wicket. "We didn't expect that (pitch), we practiced here two days, ago," said Bavuma. "We saw the wicket was spicy, but we didn't expect it like that. You expected to hit through the line coming to India." —AFP

USA face Canada in women's basketball World Cup semis

SYDNEY: Connecticut Sun forward Alyssa Thomas nailed 13 points, 14 rebounds and seven assists as an all-conquering United States close in on an 11th title after setting up a women's basketball World Cup semi-final against Canada Thursday. Guard Kelsey Plum added a game-high 17 points in a 88-55 pummeling of Serbia, with the three-time defending champions strong on both offence and defense.

They will meet Canada in Sydney on Friday after the world number four swept past Puerto Rico 79-60 in their bid for a first medal since capturing bronze in 1986. An impressive China battled past Olympic bronze medalists France 85-71 to make their first semi-final in 28 years and will face either hosts Australia - the beaten 2018 final-

ists - or Belgium in the other semi-final. The US victory made it a 10th consecutive World Cup that the Americans have gone undefeated before the last four, with coach Cheryl Reeve content despite a slow start, when they trailed for the first time all tournament. "I thought Serbia executed their game plan and took us out of one of our largest identities in pool play, and that was scoring in the paint," she said. "But overall, I thought our response was really good. Once we got out of the first quarter, we adjusted a little bit and we found success ... I thought our defense was really hard to play against."

Little separated the two sides in the first frame, with the US taking a narrow 25-23 lead, shooting 57 percent to Serbia's 48 percent. The US has been brutal in punishing errors, and they stepped up a gear to dominate around the board, building a 50-33 half-time lead on the back of a 12-0 run. Serbia, ranked 10, was shooting just 30 percent from the field and were held to

only seven points in the third quarter, going more than eight minutes without scoring, before the Americans put another 22 points past them in the fourth to romp home.

Identity

"Serbia really tested us, they played super physical, more physical than we have seen all tournament," said Plum. "I felt early on their pressure bothered us, but we were able to get it under control." It was never going to be easy for the Serbs, with the US on a 28-game unbeaten streak, their longest since winning 26 from 1994-2006. They will next meet a young Canadian team rejuvenated under coach Victor Lapena, coming through the group phase with just one narrow defeat, against Australia.

They were too strong for Puerto Rico, racing to a 21-11 first-quarter lead then putting on another 18 points by half-time, successfully blunting the threat posed by dangervoman Arella Guirantes. The Puerto



Connecticut Sun forward Alyssa Thomas

Ricans improved their defense and shooting percentage to come out on top of the third quarter as Guirantes got into her stride, ending with a game-high 19 points. But it proved too little too late. "This is a great accomplishment for Canadian basketball," said Kia Nurse, who downed 17 points. —AFP

Sports

All rise! Yankees' slugger blasts 61st homer to equal Maris record

30-year-old power-hitter ends his drought in spectacular fashion

TORONTO: New York Yankees slugger Aaron Judge blasted his 61st home run of the season on Wednesday to equal the legendary Roger Maris's longstanding American League record. Judge, who has been motoring towards Maris's record all season, had been stuck on 60 home runs after failing to homer in seven straight games and 33 at bats. But the 30-year-old power-hitter ended his drought in spectacular fashion on Wednesday, crushing a 394-foot two-run homer on a 3-2 count from Toronto pitcher Tim Lincecum in the seventh inning to give New York a 5-3 lead.

Judge's record-equaling blast brought the Rogers Centre crowd to its feet for a rousing ovation as Yankees players gathered at home plate to congratulate the right fielder as he rounded the bases. "I was just trying to start a rally and get something going," Judge said afterwards. "Luckily I got a pitch over the plate and was able to put a good swing on it."

"I was hoping it got over the fence. I didn't know at first. It's an incredible honor. There's a lot of emotions. It took me a bit longer than I wanted it to. But it's something pretty special," Judge added that he had been taken back to be greeted by his teammates at home plate. "I wasn't expecting it," Judge said after the Yankees 8-3 victory. "You never know what the guys are going to do. But seeing the love from my teammates, who I show up to work with every single day, to be able to share that moment with them is tough to describe."

'Love these moments'

"I'm playing a kids' game. I love these moments. Those

are the moments you live for," Judge said. Yankees legend Maris - whose son Roger Maris Jr was on hand to witness Judge's homer - set his single season American League record of 61 home runs in the 1961 season. That record stood as the best single season home record tally for all of Major League Baseball before it was surpassed multiple times by Sammy Sosa and Mark McGwire during baseball's notorious steroid era in the late 1990s. Barry Bonds, who was also heavily implicated in the infamous BALCO drug scandal, holds the outright single season record of 73 home runs set in 2001.

Yankees manager Aaron Boone believes that Judge's achievements this season rank above the benchmarks set by the likes of Sosa, McGwire and Bonds. "I think it puts it a notch above," Boone said of Judge's achievement last week. "It's right there with some of the best very short list of all-time seasons. I go back to the context of the season, and the more I look at it and dive into it, it's got to be an all-time great season."

Judge, meanwhile, has distanced himself from suggestions that his homer tally deserves to be recognized as the "real" all-time record given the asterisk against the steroid-era totals of Sosa, McGwire and Bonds. "73 is the record in my book," Judge said in a recent interview with Sports Illustrated. "No matter what people want to say about that era of baseball, for me, they went out there and hit 73 homers and that to me is what the record is," added Judge, who grew up in Northern California as a fan of Bonds and the Giants. —AFP



TORONTO: Aaron Judge #99 of the New York Yankees celebrates with Oswaldo Cabrera #95 after he hits his 61st home run of the season in the seventh inning against the Toronto Blue Jays at Rogers Centre on September 28, 2022. —AFP

PSG host ambitious Nice as stars return to Ligue 1 action

PARIS: Ligue 1 leaders Paris Saint-Germain welcome Nice to the Parc des Princes on Saturday as coach Christophe Galtier faces his former club for the first time since moving to the capital. PSG failed to score in three meetings with Nice last season, including during their surprise French Cup exit, but have been finding the net for fun this term. The front three of Kylian Mbappe, Neymar and Lionel Messi have 27 goals between them already this campaign and all of the trio also scored for their countries during the recent international break.

Despite a flying start to their Ligue 1 title defense with seven wins and one draw, Galtier's men only boast a two-point lead over rivals Marseille. The southerners could take top spot on Friday when they visit Angers. PSG will be hoping for a routine victory ahead of their top-of-the-table Group H clash at Benfica in the Champions League on Wednesday.

Nice, backed by British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe, were expecting to challenge for the top three this season after a transfer window which saw Kasper Schmeichel, Aaron Ramsey and Ross Barkley among the players to arrive at the Allianz Riviera. But under new coach Lucien Favre, in his second spell in charge, the ambitious club has mustered just two wins in eight matches and sit only two points clear of the relegation zone. Marseille, meanwhile, have prospered under new boss Igor Tudor and remain unbeaten.

Alexis Sanchez has scored four goals in seven league appearances since his move from Inter



DECINES-CHARPIEU: Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe (bottom) and Lyon's Argentinean defender Nicolas Tagliafico (left) fight for the ball during the French L1 football match in this file photo. —AFP

Milan and on-loan Arsenal player Nuno Tavares has netted three times from full-back. OM, without a French league title since 2010, have given themselves an outside chance of stunning PSG and going one better than last season's runner-up finish. Elsewhere this weekend, third-placed Lorient bid for a fifth successive win when they host Lille on Sunday. Lens will put their unbeaten record on the line against a Lyon side looking to avoid a fourth straight defeat following a strong start to the season.

Also going through on Wednesday were Paris Saint-Germain who claimed a 2-0 win at Swedish club Hacken in Gothenburg for a 4-1 aggregate win. Lieke Martens and Kadidiatou Diani scored second-half goals for the French side who have twice been runners-up in the competition. Both Martens and Diani had also been on the scoresheet in the first leg.

Real Madrid, who made the quarter-finals last season, booked their place with a 2-1 win over Rosenborg for a 5-1 aggregate win. Madrid fell behind on the night after just eight minutes when Emilie Nautnes scored. However, Caroline Weir, who scored twice against former club Manchester City in the previous round, pulled the Spaniards level on 48 minutes with Athenea del Castillo hitting the winner just after the hour mark.

Slavia Prague became the first Czech team to reach the group stage after edging out Valur of Iceland 1-0 after a

Polish goalkeeper Bulka was given the nod for Nice's last Ligue 1 game before the international break, a 1-0 loss to Angers, in place of summer signing Schmeichel. French media reports claimed former Leicester 'keeper Schmeichel had unsettled the dressing room since joining. The best moment of Bulka's career to date came against Saturday's opponents PSG in last season's French Cup while on loan from the capital giants. He saved two penalties in a shoot-out to help dump out the holders in the last 16. —AFP

goalless first leg. Vllaznia also broke new ground when they became the first Albanian club to reach the last 16 of any UEFA competition since the KF Tirana men's team in the 1989-90 European Cup. Gresa Berisha was the star for the Albanians with a spectacular half-volley two minutes from time ensuring a 2-1 win over Vorskla-Kharkiv of Ukraine and 3-2 victory on aggregate.

Sara Bjork Gunnarsdottir scored for her fifth different club in the competition as Juventus defeated Koge of Denmark 3-1. Benfica saw off Glasgow Rangers 2-1 after extra-time for a 5-3 aggregate triumph. Emma Watson, just 16, had pulled Rangers level in the tie with an 87th-minute strike but Cloe Lacasse and Jessica Silva sent the Portuguese side through with goals in extra-time. The draw for the group stage takes place at UEFA headquarters in Nyon, Switzerland on Monday with 16 teams divided into four pools. —AFP

Gamers to bid farewell to FIFA franchise

PARIS: One of the biggest franchises in video game history is coming to an end on Friday with the release of FIFA 23, the final installment of a football game that has entranced millions of fans for the past three decades. US game maker Electronic Arts (EA) and global football body FIFA spent months negotiating over the licensing agreement that has underpinned the game since its first edition in 1993.

But they confirmed the split in May when FIFA said it would be seeking other partners and EA said it would rebrand its game as "EA Sports FC" from next year. For the final version, EA has included women's club teams for the first time—though only from England and France—several years after it introduced women players. Australian superstar Sam Kerr, who plays in the English league, is on the game's cover along with French World Cup winner Kylian Mbappe.

"It is—and remains—one of the most popular franchises in all of gaming," said Tom Wijman of Newzoo, a firm that analyses data on the industry. The decoupling is risky for both EA and FIFA, with neither guaranteed success from their new ventures. But analysts say EA is in a stronger position after spending 30 years developing and marketing the game. The firm said last year that FIFA had sold more than 325 million copies over its three decades—reportedly generating more than \$20 billion in sales.

'Out on a high'

Gamers were less bothered about the corporate fallout and just wanted to play the latest version of the game. Professional eSports players—some of whom earn hundreds of thousands of dollars for playing the game—queued up to livestream their first attempts. "One of my favourite videos ever," tweeted Donovan Hunt, one of the most successful eSports players, linking to a YouTube video of his first try.

Swedish gamer Olle Arbin livestreamed his first attempt for 12 hours on Wednesday. Reviewers have been impressed by the game's improvements in graphics since the last edition, and praised additional features such as a "power shot" for giving gameplay another dimension. "FIFA 23 sees the series bow out on a high, and provides encouraging signs for the debut of EA Sports FC this time next year," wrote Ben Wilson on the specialist site GamesRadar. —AFP

Arsenal and PSG book Women's Champions League group stage

PARIS: Dutch international striker Vivianne Miedema scored the only goal as Arsenal reached the Women's Champions League group stages with a 1-0 win over Ajax on Wednesday. The 26-year-old Miedema found the net with a 20-yard strike in the 51st minute in the Netherlands to secure a 3-2 aggregate win after the first leg of their qualifier had ended 2-2. Arsenal, whose only Champions League title came in 2007, join already-qualified holders and eight-time winners Lyon, Barcelona, Chelsea and Wolfsburg in the group stage.

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733

CHANGE OF NAME

I, SULTHANSHA AMEEN, holder of Passport No. L3465469, issued in Kuwait, date 9/10/2013, hereby change my name to MOHAMEDAMINE ABOUBAKER for all purposes. (C# 2412) - 30-09-2022

I, SIBI THAMPI, holder of Indian Passport No. S4165484, issued at Trivandrum, on 28/08/2018, having permanent residence address Ebenezer Thekanal, Elampal, PO Punalur, 691322 Kerala,

India, residing now in Kuwait, hereby change my daughter name from HAZEL SIBI (Passport No. V7432079, issued in Kuwait on 30/05/2022) to PEARL DALIA SIBI with immediate effect. (C# 2411) - 29-09-2022.

I, Tejinder Singh S/o Manna Singh holder of Indian Passport No. M7064950 issued at Kuwait on 09/08/2015 permanent resident of Village Johal Raju Singh Tehsil and Distt. Tara Taran Punjab India and presently residing at

Block 4 Street 25 Building 101 Floor 5 Apartment 9 Area Mangaf City Kuwait do hereby change my name from Tejinder Singh to Tajinder Singh with immediate effect. All concern notes that. (C# 2407)

I, Anthony Jesino Piedade holding Passport No. N2561608 issued in Mumbai having permanent address 15/5 Mathurdas colony, opp MES colony, Kalina St. Anthony Street, Santacruz East Mumbai - 400098, Maharashtra, India would like to correct my name from Old Name: name from Old Name: Anthony Jesino Piedade to New Name: Anthony Piedade. (C# 2409)

I, Joyce Anthony Piedade holding Passport No. R8665839 issued in Mumbai having permanent address 15/5 Mathurdas colony, opp MES colony, Kalina St. Anthony Street, Santacruz East Mumbai - 400098, Maharashtra, India would like to correct my name from Old Name: Joyce Anthony Piedade to New Name: Joyce Fernandes. (C# 2410) -28-09-2022

I, Joyce Anthony Piedade holding Passport No. R8665839 issued in Mumbai having permanent address 15/5 Mathurdas colony, opp MES colony, Kalina St. Anthony Street, Santacruz East Mumbai - 400098, Maharashtra, India would like to correct my name from Old Name: Joyce Anthony Piedade to New Name: Joyce Fernandes. (C# 2410) -28-09-2022



KUWAIT: Kuwait's fans cheer their favorite team during the AFC Futsal Asian Cup Kuwait 2022 Championship.

Wins for Saudi, Iran, Vietnam in first Kuwait-hosted Futsal Cup encounter

Bahrain drew 4-4 with Turkmenistan

By Abdellatif Sharaa, Agencies

KUWAIT: Bahrain drew 4-4 with Turkmenistan on Thursday in the second round of group two of the AFC Asian Futsal Cup tournament. Bahrain's goals were scored by Ahmad Antar (9), Mohammad Abdallah (13), Falah Abbas (26, penalty) and Mohammad Al-Sindi (40). Turkmenistan's goals were scored by Shaheedov. Bahrain's coach said his team had control of the match and deserves more than (1) point.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Vietnam were triumphant in their respective AFC Futsal Asian Cup opening fixtures on Wednesday as the Kuwait-hosted event got into its second day. Saudi Arabia managed a shock 2-1 victory over 2018 runners-up and three-time title holders, Japan, in their Group D encounter, with Nasser Al-Harhi and Mohsin Faqih for the Gulf kingdom alongside Japan's Cribaldi Vinicius each getting on the scoresheet.

Meanwhile, defending champions and the tournament's most successful side, Iran, kicked off their continental campaign with a wide 5-0 victory over Indonesia in the Group C, two of which were slotted home by Saeid Ahmadabbasi. Vietnam, in Group D, were also at the receiving end of a large marginal 5-1 win over South Korea, as the Southeast Asians topped their respective group.

The tournament continued with four matches

scheduled. Group A leaders and hosts Kuwait locked horns with Thailand while Oman and Iraq looked to improve on their earlier defeats. Subsequently, Group B's respective first and second-placed Central Asian sides, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, seek to attain dominance over the other and decide the group's fate as Turkmenistan and Bahrain hope to achieve their first points of the tournament.

Kuwait replaced Turkmenistan as hosts of the event, originally scheduled for 2020, which was pushed back to this year due to the COVID pandemic. Current 2018 champions Iran have amassed the most silverware in the competition with 12 cups, while only Japan, who were runners-up that same year, trail with three Asian cups.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia are looking for their second win when they meet Vietnam on Friday in the second round of the fourth round of the AFC Futsal Asian Cup Kuwait 2022 Championship. There will also be a match between Japan and South Korea. Lebanon will meet Indonesia, while Iran will face Chinese Taipei from the third group.

Matches of the first and second group will be concluded Saturday. Kuwait will play with Iraq; Oman and Thailand will face off in the first group; Uzbekistan will battle Bahrain while Tajikistan and Turkmenistan will struggle it out in the second group.



Saudi Arabia had a good start after defeating Japan, which ended them in second place of the previous championship, but their match with Vietnam will not be easy, bearing in mind that they defeated South Korea 5-1. Vietnam's coach said the match with Saudi Arabia will be different from that of South Korea, adding that he knows the strengths

and weaknesses of the opponent.

Japan, meanwhile will seek to compensate their short comings following their sudden loss to Saudi Arabia. They are expected to beat Korea, because any other result may knock them out of the tournament. In the third group, current champions Iran are looking to qualify for the quarter finals.



DOHA: Photo shows a building complex in the shape of the year 2022, at Doha Sports City near Khalifa International Stadium in Qatar's capital Doha, ahead of the FIFA football World Cup 2022. —AFP

COVID vaccinations not compulsory for WCup fans: Qatar

DOHA: Coronavirus vaccinations will not be mandatory for the million-plus fans going to the World Cup in Qatar this year, authorities in the Gulf state said on Thursday. All visitors aged over six will have to produce negative COVID-19 tests before taking flights to Qatar for the tournament that starts November 20, the authorities said in new health guidelines.

The 29-day tournament will be the first major global sporting event with fans since the eruption of the COVID pandemic in December 2019. The Qatar organizers and world football's governing body FIFA have said they want the event to be a sign that the world is getting over the devastating pandemic.

But they have warned that health guidelines will change if the threat blows up again. Fans will have to wear masks in public transport in Qatar and anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 "will be required to isolate in accordance with Ministry of Public Health guidelines", the health ministry said. The ministry added that it may force players, referees and officials to stay in a secure "bio-bubble" if coronavirus cases take off "to allow for the safe operation and continuation of the event." — AFP

Hummel tones down logo on Denmark's Qatar World Cup kit

COPENHAGEN: Denmark will wear a "toned down" kit at this year's World Cup in protest at Qatar's human rights record, sportswear maker Hummel said on Wednesday, setting off a furious response from the Gulf state. Qatar's organizing committee accused Hummel of "trivializing" the country's efforts to improve conditions for migrant workers and called on the Danish federation to intervene.

The logo of the Danish sportswear brand and the Danish national badge are both barely visible on the shirts designed for the World Cup that starts on November 20. Several competing nations and rights groups have criticized Qatar's rights record and FIFA for allowing the event to be held in the conservative Muslim state where homosexuality is illegal.

Hummel said the new jerseys were "a protest against Qatar and its human rights record," Hummel wrote in a post on Instagram. "We don't wish to be visible during a tournament that has cost thousands of people their lives," the company said in an Instagram post that referred to reports of casualties among migrant laborers working on Qatar's mega infrastructure projects. "We support the Danish national team all the way, but that isn't the same as supporting Qatar as a host nation."

In addition to the main red strip and a second jersey in white, a black and grey third strip was a sign of "mourning", the kit company said. Denmark's training jerseys will carry "critical messages" after

the two sponsors agreed to have their logos replaced. Qatar's World Cup organizers, the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, gave a stern response that highlighted "significant reforms to the labor system" to protect workers and "ensuring improved living conditions for them."

The committee added that there has been "robust and transparent dialogue" with the Danish federation, the DBU, that had led to "a better understanding of the progress made". "We dispute Hummel's claim that this tournament has cost thousands of people their lives. Furthermore, we wholeheartedly reject the trivializing (of) our genuine commitment to protect the health and safety of the 30,000 workers who built FIFA World Cup stadiums and other tournament projects."

Qatar says that only three laborers died in work-related accidents during the construction of the eight stadiums in the Doha region. It has been accused of under reporting deaths on wider construction however. The committee said Qatar's reforms had been "recognized" by some international human rights groups "as a model that has accelerated progress and improved lives". "Like every country, progress on these issues is a journey without a finish line, and Qatar is committed to that journey," said the statement.

"We urge the DBU to accurately convey the outcome of their extensive communication and work with the Supreme Committee, and to ensure that this is accurately communicated to their partners at Hummel." England captain Harry Kane has said he will wear a "OneLove" armband during the World Cup as part of a Dutch campaign to take a stand against discrimination. France, Belgium, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Wales and Switzerland are also supporting the campaign. —AFP