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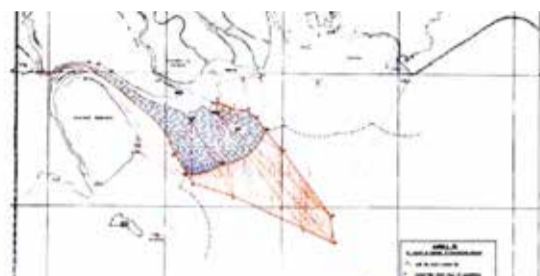
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MPs slam Khor Abdullah ruling

Lawmakers urge international support for maritime agreement after Iraqi annulment

Amir invited to Qatar ACD summit



KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received from Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani on Wednesday an invitation to HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to participate in 3rd Asian Cooperation Dialogue Summit in Doha on Oct 18-19 under the theme "Sport Diplomacy". The invitation was delivered by Qatari Ambassador to Kuwait Ali bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud to HH the Crown Prince. — KUNA

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Thirty-two MPs on Wednesday issued a statement in which they criticized a ruling by Iraq's supreme federal court in declaring as unconstitutional a navigation agreement between Iraq and Kuwait on Khor Abdullah waterway. The Kuwaiti lawmakers also called on parliaments of friendly and sisterly countries to support Kuwait and its rights in the Khor Abdullah agreement.

"The aggressive behavior that led to the Khor Abdullah agreement being annulled by the Iraqi federal court puts all agreements at risk. It contradicts international laws, conventions and international organizations that seek to resolve conflicts," the statement said. Kuwait and Iraq signed the agreement in 2012 regulating navigation in the narrow waterway which is located between Kuwait's Boubiyan and Warba islands and Iraq's Faw Island. The agreement was signed under a United Nations resolution calling to divide the waterway equally between the two countries.

The agreement was ratified by Kuwaiti and Iraqi parliaments in 2013, but in September the Iraqi federal court ruled that the ratification by Iraqi parliament was unconstitutional because it was not done with a two-third majority as required by

the constitution. Kuwait responded angrily at the Iraqi action, insisting that the ruling defied international law and risked other agreements between the two countries.

The statement of the Kuwaiti lawmakers insisted that the Khor Abdullah agreement was signed more than 10 years ago, ratified by the Iraqi parliament and later confirmed by the Iraqi federal court and was placed at the United Nations. "Challenges of foreign issues are addressed through government-parliament coordination and harmony which succeeds in containing conflicts, as we had previously done on several issues," MP Marzouq Al-Ghanem said on his X account.

In his speech at the 78th session of the UN General Assembly on Sept 21, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah affirmed that Kuwait considered the agreement to regulate navigation in Khor Abdullah waterway valid and in full force. "Kuwait will consider the agreement to regulate navigation in Khor Abdullah waterway and the security swap protocol effective because of their importance in maintaining security and safety of navigation," he said. Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah had also denounced in the strongest terms the Iraqi ruling.

2030 World Cup in six countries on three continents

LAUSANNE: Morocco, Portugal and Spain will be joint hosts for the 2030 World Cup but games will also be played in Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay as the footballing showpiece celebrates its centenary. FIFA announced on Wednesday. FIFA said in a statement that the matches in South America, one each in Montevideo, Buenos Aires and Asuncion, were part of the celebration to mark 100 years since the first World Cup in Uruguay. The bulk of games will be played in the three host countries.

The announcement puts an end to competition between two major bids, one led by Spain and Portugal and the other from Argentina, Uruguay, Chile and Paraguay. Once the technical criteria have been validated, the governing body of world football will make official the award of its flagship event in 2024. But, following the "unanimous" approval by the FIFA Council, the way seems clear for this unprecedented intercontinental format, which promises complex political and logistical challenges and raises further questions about the environmental impact of major sporting events.

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Kuwaiti Asiad medalists get hero's welcome

KUWAIT: Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Aiban on Wednesday expressed pride on the good results by Kuwaiti athletes participating in the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou. Aiban, also Minister of Commerce and Industry, was speaking to reporters during his reception of athletes who won medals in track-and-field competitions upon their return home.

He underscored their strenuous efforts that led to earning the medals, affirming that they had followed instructions by HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to do their best and raise aloft the name of Kuwait. He also praised



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti medalists at the Asian Games are welcomed after they returned home on Oct 4, 2023. — KUNA

efforts exerted by President of Kuwaiti Shooting Federation Duaij Al-Otaibi, who thanked the minister for his support.

Meanwhile, athlete Yaqoub Al-Youha, who won a gold medal in the 110m hur-

dles, said he was overwhelmed with joy with this great triumph. His fellow citizen, shooter Talal Al-Rashidi, who won two silver medals, affirmed that the good results will stimulate the Kuwaiti champions

in forthcoming tournaments. The other winning athletes included shooters Khaled Al-Mudhaf and Abdulrahman Al-Faihan, who bagged silver medals in the skeet competition. — KUNA

Kuwait supports OPEC+ decision to maintain cuts

KUWAIT/VIENNA: The global oil market is heading in the right direction towards balanced supply and demand, Kuwaiti Oil Minister Dr Saad Al-Barrak said on Wednesday. Barrak, also Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs, made the statement at the 50th meeting of the OPEC+ Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMJC), which took place via videoconference. Also attending were Kuwaiti Governor at OPEC Moham-

mad Al-Shatti and national representative at the organization Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah.

The OPEC+ panel recommended on Wednesday that the oil cartel keep its current output reduction strategy unchanged after heavyweights Saudi Arabia and Russia vowed to maintain their cuts to prop up prices. Oil prices recovered in recent months and approached \$100 per barrel last week as top producers Saudi Arabia and Russia have taken millions of barrels off the market.

"The world is required to increase investment in all types of energy sources, including oil, to ensure meeting growing demand, recovery of the global economy and energy security. The OPEC+ cuts are necessary to stabilize the market," Barrak said in a statement issued by the oil ministry, praising the bloc's precautionary measures to confront the challenges facing the global oil market.

The minister also praised the Saudi and Russian decision to "continue the voluntary reduction and extending it until the end of 2023, and its positive impact on the balance and stability of the oil market". Barrak stressed Kuwait is committed to the OPEC+ decision to reduce production, in addition to the voluntary reduction, and that Kuwait



Saad Al-Barrak

Continued on Page 6

GOP hardliners oust speaker in historic vote

WASHINGTON: Kevin McCarthy was axed Tuesday as speaker of the US House of Representatives in a brutal, historic rebellion by far-right Republicans accusing him of a string of broken promises and furious at his cooperation with Democrats. The maneuver laid bare the chaotic levels of infight-

ing among Republicans heading into the 2024 presidential election, with its likely candidate Donald Trump making history of his own as the only former or sitting president to face criminal indictment.

The first ouster of a speaker in the House's 234-year history was supported by only a handful of right-wing Republican hardliners. However, the House is almost evenly divided and with Democrats joining eight rebel Republicans rather than riding to McCarthy's rescue, he had no way to survive. "I ended up being the 55th

Continued on Page 6



WASHINGTON: US Republican Representative Kevin McCarthy walks from the House chamber after he was ousted as speaker at the US Capitol on Oct 3, 2023. — AFP



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Zain holds insightful session on heart's health for staff

Presented by renowned Cardiologist Dr Ibrahim Al Rashdan

In my view

Environment and economy in harmony



By Abdulaziz Nawaf Al-Sabah

With the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties, commonly known as COP28, convening in Dubai at the end of November, the world has its best chance to agree on a just and equitable energy transition. And my generation has its best chance to ensure we inherit a livable world.

To combat climate change, the Paris Agreement of 2015 mandated that "the increase in the global average temperature [remains] well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels" and that the world should pursue efforts "to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C". The focus was on cutting emissions. Yet five years after the Paris Agreement, according to the World Meteorological Organization, atmospheric CO2 increased by 3.25 percent. Today, according to the International Energy Agency, the world is burning more coal, which produces almost double the amount of CO2 per unit of energy as natural gas, than at any time before in human history.

One of the main components of the Paris Agreement was the promise by developed nations to support developing countries to achieve climate goals, but the annual \$100 billion allocated was never fully funded and is woefully insufficient. In the UNFCCC's recent analysis, developing countries require financing of up to \$6 trillion by 2030 to meet not even half of their required climate mitigation actions. Even if that annual \$100 billion were to be fully funded and fairly distributed, it would create only a small dent in the funding requirements for these countries.

To be fair, we have seen some progress toward reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. For example, the United States' Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 allocated over \$400 billion to incubate clean energy programs such as carbon capture and sequestration, a process by which CO2 is captured from factories and stored permanently underground. But the cost for the world to transition to clean energy by 2050 is estimated between \$130 trillion to \$200 trillion. With the world's largest economy able to allocate only \$400 billion, it is unclear how the rest of the costs will be funded. And just last month, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak walked away from the UK's ambitious climate goals due to "unacceptable costs" on ordinary people.

With COP 28 meeting in our region for the first time since the Paris Agreement, we in Kuwait, as a principal producer of hydrocarbons, have an important chance to help direct the debate. We should frame our argument to satisfy the demands of what is called the Energy Trilemma: Energy must be sustainable, secure and affordable.

So how can COP 28 fulfill those expectations? First, for the energy transition to be smooth, inputs from all producers and environmental groups should be included in COP 28's outcomes. The COP 28 presidency promised to "mobilize for the most inclusive COP" ever. But the Paris Agreement's emphasis on immediate phase-out of fossil fuel production ignored that renewables are not yet prevalent enough to power the world's needs. As Pulitzer-Prize-winning energy historian Dr Daniel Yergin stated: "Today's \$100 trillion world economy depends on hydrocarbons for over 80 percent of its energy, and nothing as massive and complex as the global energy system can be transformed easily."

Second, this COP must provide justice and equity to the Global South. The energy transition will have a heavy economic impact on the Global South, the world's developing and usually impoverished countries. The Global South have not contributed vastly to climate change, but they are bearing the disproportionate brunt of the climate destruction caused by the industrialized world's centuries of fossil fuel consumption. Asking them to commit economic suicide by paying for the North's pollutive past is asking for a failed energy transition.

Third, the most inclusive COP must also incorporate my generation's aspirations for a world environment and a world economy that are in harmony. The current generation will leave my generation a world dirtier and more scarred by climate change than ever before. Therefore, we demand action to contain climate change, reduce carbon emissions and ensure continued economic development.

Last year, during COP 27 in Egypt, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah affirmed Kuwait's commitment to achieving carbon neutrality in its oil sector by 2050. Next month, my generation looks to Dubai for news of an agreement on an inclusive and workable climate deal that balances environmental as well as economic sustainability.



Bader Al-Kharafi honors Dr Ibrahim Al Rashdan.



Dr Al Rashdan offered invaluable advice on heart health.

KUWAIT: In continuation of its informative sessions for employees, Zain recently hosted at its Innovation Campus (ZINC) a special session on cardiology and the heart's health, presented by renowned Consultant Interventional Cardiologist Dr Ibrahim Al Rashdan. The session was attended by Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, the executive management team, and many of the company's employees.

This initiative came under the umbrella of Zain's internal communications strategy that closely focuses on catering to all aspects of employees' personal and professional lives. The company continuously enriches its direct relationship with staff in and out of the workplace environment, catering to their most important needs by hosting the best experts in their fields from Kuwait and the region to share their expertise with them.

During the insightful session, Dr Al Rashdan introduced Zain employees to cardiology and the basics of the cardiovascular system by sharing medical facts about the heart and how it works. The renowned cardiologist stressed on the importance of following a healthy lifestyle by eating balanced, healthy food and exercising periodically to lessen the effects of heart disease risk factors. At the end of the session, Dr Al Rashdan welcomed questions from Zain employees, who hugely benefited from interacting with one of the nation's top medical professionals.

Zain regularly hosts health-related sessions and programs to cater to its employees' wellbeing, giving them the chance to check up on their overall health while at the office. Such activities include routine checkups for blood pressure and sugar



Many Zain employees attended the informative session.

levels, as well as winter vaccinations for seasonal flu, pneumonia, and others. The company partners with various medical institutions from both the private and public sectors to launch health programs and conduct awareness campaigns, informative sessions, vaccination campaigns, blood drives, mental health programs, and more to help employees maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Dr Ibrahim Al Rashdan is one of Kuwait and the region's top cardiologists. The late Amir, HH Sheikh

Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, awarded him the First-Class Kuwait Medal with a Ribbon in recognition of his role in innovating the first Kuwaiti invention of its kind for cardiac catheterization. The invention, which received European accreditation and was awarded at the EuroPCR Conference 2014 in Paris, was supported by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) and Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SAGCG).

Can CAD patient live a normal life?

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Coronary artery disease (CAD) affects many people worldwide. This disease occurs due to the blockage or narrowing of vessels responsible for supplying blood to the heart, depriving the heart muscle of necessary oxygen and other nutrients that the heart benefits from due to blood flow. To treat CAD, cardiologists use different methods depending on the case. However, people suffering from this disease may panic about the possibility of living a normal life ever again. To better understand the risk factors, treatments and the possibility of living a normal and healthy life with CAD, Kuwait Times interviewed cardiologist Dr Abdullah Esmail.

Kuwait Times: Can patients live a normal life with coronary artery disease?

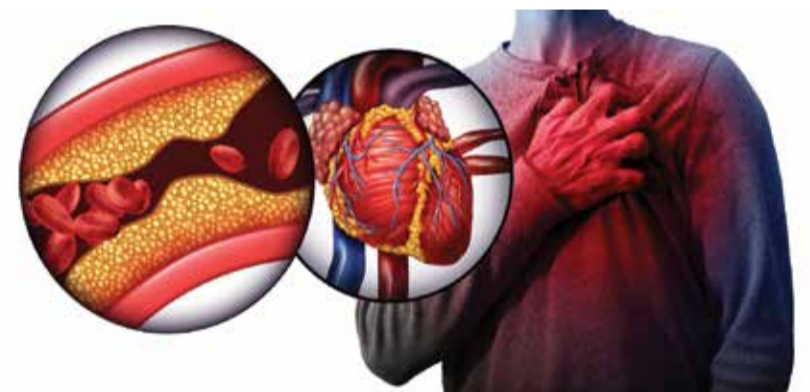
Dr Esmail: Yes, in most cases. The most important aspect of having a normal life is early detection and treatment of the disease, along with medication and lifestyle changes.

Kuwait Times: Can the patient stop taking medications?

Dr Esmail: No, the patient cannot abandon medication. Medication is essential and cannot be discontinued. The idea, however, is that the person can lead a normal life in terms of their ability



Dr Abdullah Esmail



to work, engage in physical activity, travel, get married and other practical matters. But they need to continue taking the prescribed medications for their health condition.

Kuwait Times: When do patients need coronary artery bypass 'open heart' surgery?

Dr Esmail: Most cases of coronary artery disease can be treated with stent placement and medications. 'Open heart surgery' is only needed for selected cases. It is used to treat patients with multiple 'blocked arteries', where medication and stents are insufficient. It works by creating a new path for blood to flow to the heart. A healthy blood vessel from another part of the body is used to redirect blood around a blocked area of an artery.

Kuwait Times: What are the treatment options?

Dr Esmail: Treatment for coronary artery disease usually involves lifestyle changes (such as not

smoking, eating healthy, exercising and managing stress) and medications, while sometimes procedures are needed. The medications are mainly to thin the blood (eg, aspirin), reduce cholesterol and control the heart rate and blood pressure. There are procedures to treat coronary artery disease like coronary artery stent placement or coronary artery bypass surgery.

Kuwait Times: What are the risk factors of developing CAD?

Dr Esmail: A buildup of fatty plaques in the arteries (atherosclerosis) is the most common cause of coronary artery disease. This is most commonly caused by multiple risk factors, such as diabetes (high blood sugar), hypertension (high blood pressure), high cholesterol, smoking, lack of exercise and obesity, psychological stress, age and family history of coronary artery disease.

Kuwait Oil Company participates in Qatar Expo 2023

DOHA: Kuwait Oil Company participated on Wednesday in the International Horticultural Expo 2023 in Doha to showcase its environmental efforts and diversity of productions to maintain natural resources in Kuwait. In a statement for KUNA, Director of the Public Relations and Media Group Mohammad Al-Basry said that the company's participation comes from its responsibility to highlight the bright side of Kuwait in maintaining the environment and sustainable development. Al-Basry said the exhibition is a chance to exchange expertise and knowledge in the oil field and to achieve Kuwait's vision. The exhibition kicked off on Monday under the theme "a green desert and a better environment, with sponsorship by Qatari Amir Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani. It will proceed until March 2024.

Reviewing oil output

Meanwhile, the committee for monitoring the oil

market, an offshoot of OPEC+, is due to hold a virtual meeting later on Wednesday to review crude output. The ministerial commission, co-chaired by Saudi Arabia and Russia, includes officials and representatives of oil-producing countries from OPEC and non-OPEC states. Insiders have ruled out the prospect of changing the oil output amid concerns that the supply shortage and demand rise might lead to further price increases—recently hitting \$90 pb.

The OPEC+ producers agreed in August to extend "the cooperation declaration" until the end of 2024, to hold the ministerial meeting every six months, and to hold a session for the commission every two months for monitoring market conditions. They had also agreed to call for an extraordinary meeting if warranted. The coalition member countries agreed last June to lower production by 1.4 million barrels per day in 2024. OPEC+ provides 40 percent of the whole global output of crude oil.

Crude oil drop

Meanwhile, Kuwait crude oil lost two dollars during Tuesday's trading to reach \$94.11 per barrel, compared with \$96.11 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said Wednesday. Benchmark Brent futures dropped 21 cents to \$90.92 pb, and West Texas Intermediate lost 41 cents to \$89.23 pb. — KUNA



KOC Director of the Public Relations and Media Group Mohammad Al-Basry

Local

A background of historical border agreements between Kuwait, Iraq

By Faisal Adel Alwazzan

The land and maritime borders between Kuwait and Iraq have been established through a series of political agreements spanning more than 90 years. These agreements have also received ratification from the United Nations and the Security Council. However, Iraq has exhibited a consistent pattern of renegeing on these agreements with Kuwait, periodically sparking border crises. These political disputes occasionally escalate into violent military confrontations. The most recent instance of Iraqi backtracking on border matters occurred on Sept 4, 2023, when an Iraqi court nullified the Kuwait-Iraq agreement on the maritime border, which was established in 2012 (known as the Khor Abdullah Agreement) and was ratified in 2013 by the Iraqi parliament. In fact, Iraqi reversals on border agreements typically coincide with domestic turmoil, with Iraqi politicians resorting to rhetorical discourse on Kuwait-related issues to divert attention away from internal problems while appearing patriotic. It is possible that another regional player may have played a role in this latest incident. In this article, I provide a synopsis of the history of these border agreements. In 1920, the Ottoman Empire signed the Treaty of Sevres with the Allies of World War I, ceding numerous territories to the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Greece



Faisal Adel Alwazzan

and other nations. However, this treaty was never finalized. In 1923, the Republic of Turkey, the successor to the Ottoman Empire, signed the Treaty of Lausanne with several European countries and Japan. Article 16 of this treaty states: "Turkey hereby renounces all rights and titles whatsoever over or respecting the territories situated outside the frontier laid down in the present Treaty and the islands other than those which her sovereignty is recognized by the said Treaty, the future of these territories and islands being settled or to be settled by the parties concerned. The provisions of the present Article do not prejudice any special arrangements arising from neighboring relations which have been or may be concluded between Turkey and any limitrophe countries".

As a consequence, Iraq ceased to be a part of the Ottoman Empire, making it a new state that had yet to resolve its administrative structures and borders independently of its former Ottoman affiliation. The establishment of the new Iraqi state was orchestrated by the British Empire, which installed a Hashemite king in 1921. Conversely, Kuwait, prior to the formation of the Iraqi kingdom, had no ties to Iraq; it functioned as an independent state under British protection since 1899.

In 1932, eleven years after the establishment of the Kingdom of Iraq, it sought to become a member of the League of Nations. To fulfill the requirements for admission, it needed to define its borders with neighboring countries. Consequently, Prime Minister of Iraq Nouri Said wrote a letter to the British Ambassador in Baghdad Sir F. Humphrys, in which he officially acknowledged the land borders with Kuwait. Said stated:

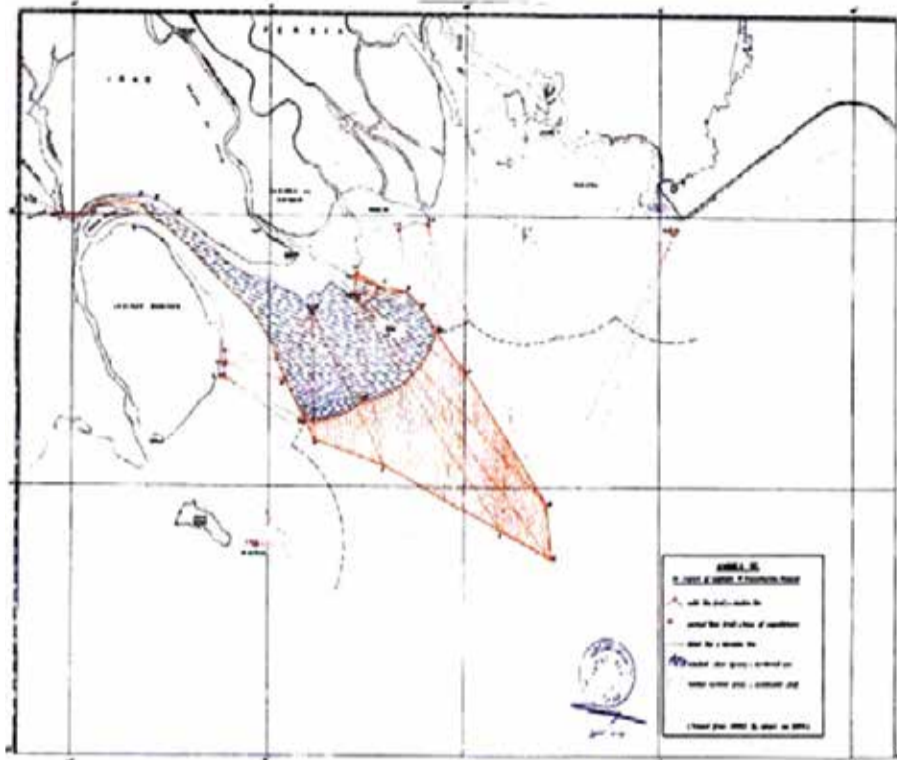
"From the intersection of the Wadi-el-Audja with the Batin and thence northwards along the Batin to a point just south of the latitude of Safwan; thence eastwards passing south of Safwan Wells, Jebel Sanam and Um Qasr leaving them to Iraq and so on to the junction of Khor Zobeir with Khor Abdullah. The islands of Warbah, Bubiyan, Maskan (or Mashjan), Failaka, Auhah, Kubbar, Qaru and Umm-el-Maradin appertain to Kuwait." The letter, dated 21 July 1932 and agreed upon by Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on August 10, 1932, served as the foundation for subsequent agreements.

In 1938, Iraq's foreign minister Tawfiq Al-Suwaidi renounced his country's agreement and expressed a desire to annex Kuwait. He based his position on a misunderstanding of the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and Kuwait from 1870 to 1899, mistakenly believing that Kuwait was a part of the Ottoman Empire. However, the British Ambassador in Baghdad Maurice Peterson refuted his claim in a legal response. Peterson pointed out that according to Article 16 of the Treaty of Lausanne, Turkey's rights and titles, which it had relinquished in 1923, could not be reclaimed by another country through heredity.

In 1963, the Baath Party, which had toppled Abdulkarim Qassem, the leader who had threatened to invade Kuwait and had refused to acknowledge the independence of the state of Kuwait, reacknowledged Kuwait's sovereignty and its borders as outlined in the 1932 letters. Prime Minister Ahmad Hasan Al-Baker signed an agreement with Kuwait's head of delegation Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. In 1994, following the failed Iraqi attempt to reinstate Kuwait, the Saddam Hussein regime agreed to acknowledge the sovereignty of Kuwait and its borders. Iraq sent letters to the United Nations to substantiate and authenticate its position before the international community.

The Maritime Borders

In 1959, Iraq sought to appoint a Norwegian hydrographer and maritime border expert to assist the Iraqi government in demarcating its maritime borders with Kuwait and Iran. Consequent-



Reproduced from the "Memorandum on Iraqi territorial sea and continental shelf with lateral boundaries and on the methods used in their construction" by Captain W. Coucheron-Aamot, B. L., Royal Norwegian Navy, Baghdad, 5 December 1959.



الخاتم الرسمي لوزارة النفط العراقية

وردت هذه الخريطة ضمن مذكرة بشأن تحديد المياه الإقليمية العراقية والجرف القاري والتي أعدها الكابتن النرويجي كوشيرون. أقرت في ديسمبر 1959 بناء على طلب وزارة النفط العراقية، ووضع من الخريطة للخدمة بنظام الجمهورية العراقية. وزارة النفط أن خط الوسط هو الحد السياسي الذي بين دولة الكويت وجمهورية العراق، وهذا اعتراف صريح بهذا الترسيم البحري المحدود بين الدولتين.

This map is from the memorandum on Iraqi territorial area and continental shelf and on the methods used in the construction - By Captain W A Coucheron-Aamot, Royal Norwegian Navy in Baghdad, December, 5, 1959.

ly, Captain Coucheron-Aamot accepted the position and authored a report that established a median line as the boundary in the Khor Abdullah. This report received authentication from the Iraqi ministry of petroleum.

In 1967, the sea borders were specified by a decree issued on Dec 17, 1967, and were updated on Oct 19, 2014. This decree was in compliance with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982. In 1993, the sea boundary was meticulously demarcated by a commission appointed by the United Nations. The report provided geographic coordinates in terms of latitude and longitude, in accordance with Security Council Resolution 833.

Despite numerous agreements, the complete demarcation of sea territories has not yet been finalized, with delimitation efforts coming to a halt at point 162. The ongoing construction of two major ports in close proximity—the Kuwaiti Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port and the Iraqi Faw Port—coupled with the development of the Kuwait-Saudi Durra gas field, continues to fuel tensions and aspirations, not only for Iraq, but potentially for other nations as well.

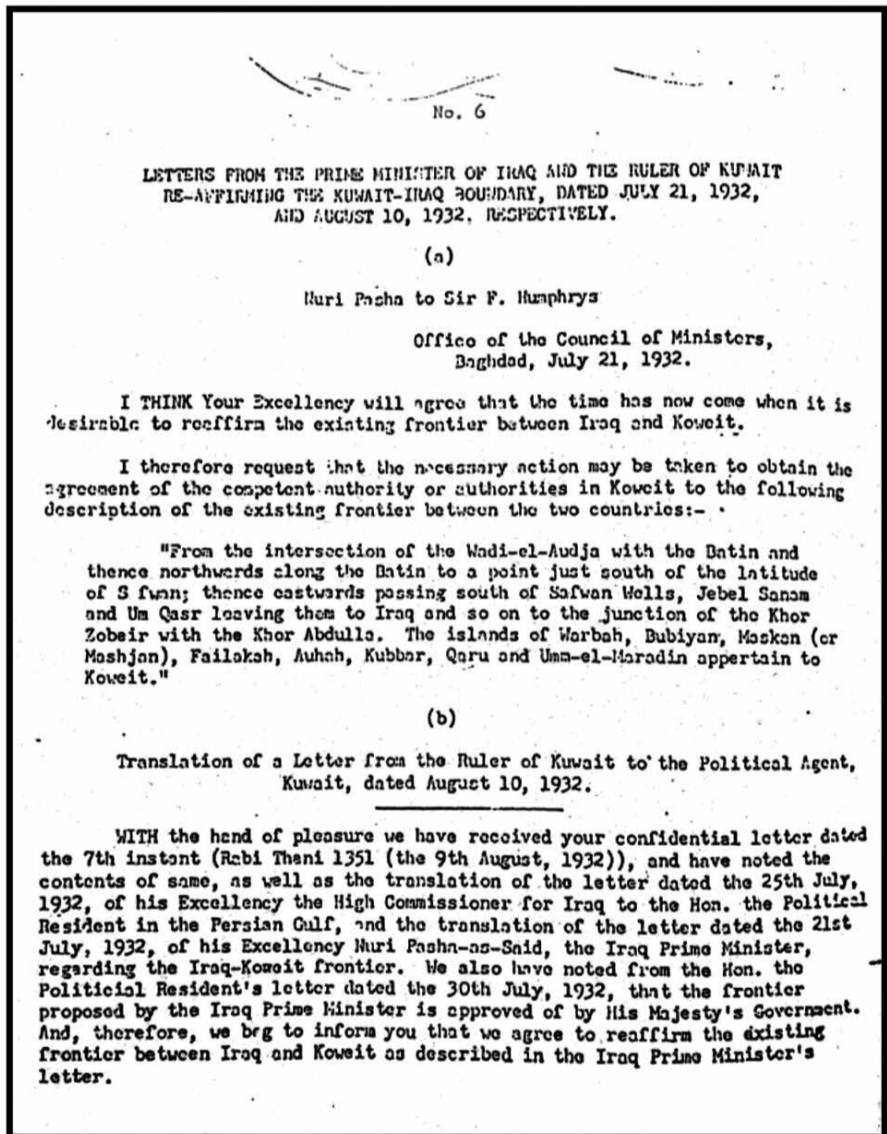
In 2012, Kuwait and Iraq entered into a joint agreement concerning the regulation of maritime navigation in Khor Abdullah. This accord received ratification from both the Iraqi parliament and the Kuwaiti parliament in 2013, and it was subsequently submitted to the United

Nations. However, to our surprise, on Sept 4, 2023, roughly a decade later, the Iraqi federal supreme court declared the Khor Abdullah agreement unconstitutional. This ruling, in fact, runs counter to established international law governing bilateral agreements.

What is even more noteworthy is that the court's decision extends beyond the technical aspects of the agreement. It delves into longstanding and recurring Iraqi claims, particularly the assertion of Kuwait as part of Iraq. This stance disregards all the previously mentioned agreements between the two nations dating back to 1932, including Security Council Resolution 833.

The Iraqi court's ruling not only demonstrated its immaturity and irresponsibility, but also jeopardizes the recently improving relationship between the two countries. This situation threatens to reset the progress made between them. On the international stage, Iraq is displaying a lack of seriousness and dishonesty in its commitment to respecting and adhering to international law, political agreements, and treaties. Lastly, it has always been said that true Arabs honor their word.

Faisal Adel Alwazzan is Assistant Professor of History at Kuwait University and Advisor to the Centre for Research and Studies on Kuwait.



A letter from the Prime minister of Iraq and the Ruler of Kuwait re-affirming the Kuwait-Iraq boundary, dated July 21, 1932, and Augst 10, 1932.

Women 'play vital role in societal development'

NEW YORK: Kuwaiti women have played an important role in building the modern state and societal development as a crucial element of national development, said a Kuwaiti diplomat. The state can't implement its future vision unless women are allowed to make an effective and principal contribution. Third Secretary of Kuwait's Permanent Mission at the UN, Wafeeqa Al-Mulla, said during the third social, humanitarian, and cultural committee of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, held late Tuesday.

She reiterated Kuwait's commitment to the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action

regarding gender equality and women's empowerment, just out of its constitution, which states that people are equal in rights and duties without any discrimination. She boasted that her country had adopted several measures and legislation pertinent to gender equality, which ensure women's rights to education, work, economic independence, personal status, social security, housing, and health care. Al-Mulla pointed out that Kuwaiti women make up 80 percent of Kuwait University students, and females constitute 47 percent of university graduates.

Politically, Kuwaiti women have contributed to political decision-making over the years by taking up several leading posts, mainly ministerial and parliamentary positions, the Kuwaiti diplomat boasted. She concluded by underscoring the necessity of having a strong political will and an innovative approach to wipe out all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls everywhere. — KUNA



Third Secretary of Kuwait's Permanent Mission at the UN Wafeeqa Al-Mulla

Households in Kuwait spent \$236 million on coffee in 2022

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Recent figures published by Statista, a market data provider, reveal households in Kuwait spent approximately \$236 million on purchasing coffee from supermarkets in 2022, making Kuwait the 8th highest spender among Arab countries and the 4th among the GCC nations. According to the data, Saudi Arabia topped the list, with its population spending a whopping \$995.5 million on supermarket coffee purchases. Algeria secured the 2nd position with \$800 million spent in 2022, followed

by Qatar in 3rd place with \$443.2 million. The United Arab Emirates ranked 7th, just ahead of Kuwait, with expenditures totaling \$282.7 million.

In 2020, coffee enthusiasts worldwide consumed a total of 169.6 million 60-kg bags of coffee, as reported by the International Coffee Organization. Despite rising global temperatures posing challenges to coffee production, the proliferation of cafes worldwide has led to a steady rise in coffee consumption.

Visual Capitalist, an American website specializing in data and statistics, emphasizes the importance of developing newer hybrid coffee bean blends. Coffee holds the position of the third most consumed beverage globally, following water and tea. The demand for coffee beans continues to surge globally, as per various global reports. The Visual Capitalist report highlights that the 10 largest coffee-producing countries accounted for 87 percent of market share in 2020. More than 70 countries worldwide engage in coffee production.



Kuwait's ties growing steadily: German envoy

KUWAIT: Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Kuwait Hans-Christian Freiherr Von Reibnitz said Tuesday that historical relations between both countries gained strength and resilience over time. Both countries share the desire to take bilateral ties to a new height, he said in a speech to a reception hosted by his embassy to mark German Unity Day (October 3).

The ceremony was attended by Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister, Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Noting that both countries will mark the 60th anniversary of their diplomatic relations in May, the German diplomat said Kuwait has become a respectable international partner. Both countries maintain fruitful cooperation on a lot of urgent and important issues. Kuwait is one of the main investors in Germany; the latter is the biggest European source of high-quality commodities for Kuwait, Reibnitz pointed out. He welcomed the growing numbers of Kuwaiti visitors to Germany, saying that his country has become a favorite tourist destination for Kuwaitis, at least in the summer. — KUNA



Hans-Christian Freiherr Von Reibnitz

Local

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Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.comNational Library of
Kuwait celebrates
Translation Day

KUWAIT: The National Library of Kuwait held, in collaboration with the Translation Diwan, a symposium on Tuesday to mark International Translation Day, observed globally on September 30. The symposium, themed "experiences and personalities in the world of translation," selected former president of the Kuwait Association of Translators and head of translation Diwan Dr Tareq Fakhr-Eddin as personality of the year.

The event, which gathered a number of Kuwaiti translators, aimed to explore and foster the talents of translators. Dr Fakhr-Eddin said in statements to KUNA. He thanked the organizers of the event for honoring him along with Sara Al-Sheikh, an author. In a speech to the gathering, Dr Fakhr-Eddin reviewed his experiment in the world of translation, including the detection of common mistakes in this field.

Another speaker at the event was Mod-Allah Al-Shimmeri, a veteran translator of Chinese literature, who detailed the linguistic differences in translations from English into Arabic and from Chinese into Arabic. On his part, Bader Al-Otaibi spoke about his love for story translation and the impact of the environment on the writer's life. Dr Khalil Kamal spoke about the relationship between translation and science and the launch of his electronic encyclopedia of scientific and technical idioms.— KUNA

Kuwaiti-Canadian business
forum opens new horizon

Strengthening Arab-Canadian relations

WASHINGTON: Chairman of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mohammed Jassem Al-Sager, said on Tuesday that the Kuwait-Canada business forum aims to open new horizons to strengthen trade and economic relations between the two countries. This came in a speech delivered by Al-Sager during the forum, which began on Monday in the Canadian city of Montreal and continues until the 5th of this October. A high-level Kuwaiti economic delegation is in Canada.

Al-Sager expressed his pleasure and gratitude for holding this meeting, which confirms the growing investment and trade relations between the two countries, pointing to the high-level participation of the Kuwaiti delegation, which includes representatives from companies in the insurance sector, banking, investment, industry, oil, gas and renewable energy sectors, in addition to representatives from the Ministry of Health, the Investment Promotion Authority, the General Organization for Social Insurance, and the National Fund for the support and development of small and medium enterprises.

He added that the forum provides an important opportunity to strengthen bilateral ties in the fields of hydrocarbon discoveries and production, logistics, agricultural and food trade, and also aims to attract broad Canadian expertise and knowledge in the fields of finance and industrial technology. He

explained that these goals and ambitions are based on the strong foundations on which both countries are based, considering that Kuwait is a major investor and a long-term trading partner of Canada. The total Kuwaiti direct investment in Canada has reached \$7.1 billion. In 2022, Kuwait ranked first on the list of the top 10 countries in Asia.

He pointed out that the bilateral trade amounted to 600 million US dollars in 2022, with the possibility of a more upward increase. Al-Sager stressed that the strength of the relationship between the two countries is represented by their agreement on a close commitment to democracy, peace, and equality, which is evidenced by the support Kuwait received from Canada during the liberation war and joint efforts to maintain peace.

In the field of education, Al-Sager said that Canada is a major Kuwait's partner in the field of education. In 2019, about 450 Kuwaiti students were sent to Canadian universities to study medicine. In 2015, Algonquin College became the first Canadian college in Kuwait. He pointed to the important role played by the Arab presence in Canada in the process of social and cultural rapprochement and the strengthening of Arab-Canadian relations in general.

In his speech, he stressed the historical importance of the city of Montreal as an important center of the fur trade during the XVII-XVIII centuries

and was instrumental in the exploration and expansion of Canada, the opening of vast territories, and the creation of economic opportunities that laid the foundation for Canada's future prosperity. He considered that the city of Montreal remains a "beacon of opportunities" and builds on its flexibility, innovation, and unity.

The meeting was attended by the Ambassador of Kuwait to Canada, Reem Al-Khaled; the Canadian Ambassador to Kuwait, Alia Mwani; the director of Asia and the Middle East of the Quebec Investment Corporation, Claire Yu; and the vice president of the Arab Business Council. It was also attended by about 100 people from the Canadian business sector. The forum's program included showcasing opportunities for cooperation and investment in the fields of oil and gas, food, transportation, education, health, logistics, artificial intelligence and innovation, as well as addressing the areas of banking, finance and insurance.

During the forum, members of the Kuwaiti delegation presented several working papers and discussion sessions aimed at presenting investment opportunities in Kuwait, in which Mutlaq Al-Zayed, CEO of Kuwaiti flour mills and bakeries, Hanadi Al-Saleh, Chairman of Agility Public Stores Company and Qasim Al-Majadi, Chairman of the Offshore Petroleum Exploration Company, participated.— KUNA

KU, Dutch Embassy
hold 'Hydrogen
Valley' workshop

KUWAIT: The scientific workshop "Hydrogen Valley in Kuwait" was opened under the patronage of Acting Director of Kuwait University, Dr Fayez Al-Dhafiri, and in the presence of the Dutch Ambassador to Kuwait, Lawrence Westhoff. It was organized and sponsored by Kuwait University, Netherland Enterprises Agency and the Dutch Embassy in Kuwait.

During the opening ceremony, acting head of the Environmental Sciences Department at the College of Life Sciences, Dr Muhammad Al-Shawwaf, thanked the host and sponsors of the workshop (Dutch Projects Agency, Kuwait University and Brunel), indicating that "a team of experts from the Netherlands is participating in the workshop. They include Hydrogen Architects, GGNI, and Brunel. Also, the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, Equate Petrochemical Company and the United Arab Petroleum Organization will take part in the workshop.

"The workshop aims to discuss Kuwait's roadmap with regards to alternative energy, the launch of the hydrogen market, the reduction of carbon emissions, and



KUWAIT: Participants take a group photo after the scientific workshop 'Hydrogen Valley in Kuwait'. It was organized and sponsored by Kuwait University, Netherland Enterprises Agency and the Dutch Embassy in Kuwait.

to explore opportunities for cooperation in the sustainable hydrogen value chain through research, development, and other initiatives," Al-Shawwaf explained.

Dutch Ambassador Lawrence Westhoff expressed his happiness to be part of the program and cited real-life examples that indicate the rapid changes the companies are undertaking. "The reason for discussing Hydrogen Valley in this workshop is the dependence of current refining and petrochemical operations on hydrogen as a primary source and the production of hydrogen today for a commercial purpose, to be used as an intermediate material in the main industries in Kuwait, including the petrochemical industry, chemical industries, refineries and cement production, he said.

He pointed out that hydrogen production (in Kuwait and around the world) is currently unsustainable due to its production from fossil fuels, but the production of clean hydrogen is expected to play a crucial role in decarbonizing hard-to-mitigate sectors such as petrochemicals, heavy industry and long-distance



transportation, where basic electrical energy such as solar and wind energy cannot be used. "By 2050, global demand for hydrogen is expected to range between 600 and 660 million tons, according to estimates by the Hydrogen Council, BP, Barclays Capital and Bank of America," he added.



KUNA officials take a group photo with participants in summer training program. — KUNA photos

KUNA honors
graduates of summer
training course

KUWAIT: KUNA's Center for Media Development honored on Tuesday Kuwait University students who completed the agency's summer journalism training course and offered them certificates and cash rewards. Deputy Director General of KUNA's Editorial Sector, Essam Al-Ghanim, said the course was organized by KUNA as part of its social responsibility role to help prepare students for working in media and journalism.

Al-Ghanim also mentioned the course has been consistent throughout the years since it began in 2014, except during the COVID-19 epoch, and pointed to this year's eighth edition as being a more technologi-

cally derived program. On behalf of the Director General and the agency staff, he gratified the new graduates and wished them thriving and successful careers.

Present at the ceremony, Head of the Development Center Abrrar Al-Ghanim said the course was organized from the 6th of August to the 14th of September, with upgraded training approaches in collaboration with Kuwait University, encompassing two languages (English and French), and a graphics design program made available for all students from all universities.

Adding to that, it also involved editorial field work, aiding in applying the skills needed, and included field visits to a number of institutions to learn the foundations of writing press news. Graduate Sarah Ramadan said a lot of knowledge was presented to the trainees during the course, mainly with the aim of developing their writing skills. She also thanked KUNA for such a course that helps prepare students for today's media labor market.— KUNA



Honoring of KU graduates who participated in summer training program.

KUNA Deputy Director General for Editorial Sector Essam Al-Ghanim

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5 killed, 23 soldiers missing in India glacial lake burst flood

Thai mall shooting reignites gun control questions

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MESTRE: Firefighters work on the site of the bus accident on Oct 3, 2023 near Venice, (right) Rescuers work on the site where a bus plunged off a bridge causing at least 20 deaths. — AFP photos

Venice bus crash: 'A tragedy foretold'

Fatal flyover fuels criticism of Italy's road safety

VENICE: Venice authorities declared three days of mourning Wednesday after a bus crash killed 21 people including a toddler, sparking debate over the state of Italy's crumbling infrastructure. Fifteen people remain in hospital following Tuesday evening's crash, officials said, at least five of them in a serious condition.

Road safety campaigners said that this was an accident waiting to happen, because of a lack of investment in road safety equipment. The bus broke through a guardrail on an overpass, landing upside down next to a railway line below and catching fire. "The bus flipped upside down," said Mauro Luongo, Venice's fire brigade commander. "The impact was terrible because it fell from over 10 meters (32 feet)."

Emergency workers spent hours removing bodies from the charred, crushed wreckage. Investigators were still trying to identify the dead Wednesday. They have turned to DNA samples to confirm their identities, as the bus was carrying around 40 tourists from

Venice's historic center to a camping site, and many passengers did not have documents. Venice Mayor Luigi Brugnaro described the accident site as "an apocalyptic scene". He declared three days of mourning, with flags on official buildings to be flown at half-mast and books of condolences opened for well-wishers.

'All young'

Boubacar Toure, a 27-year-old from Gambia who had been working at a building site near the accident, told journalists he had been called over by the fire brigade to help with the rescue. "I pulled three or four people out, including a little girl and a dog. The driver was already dead," Toure said. Officials confirmed the death toll was 21, including a one-year-old child and a teenager.

The victims include five Ukrainians, a German, and the Italian driver, Venice Prefect Michele di Bari told journalists. Ukraine's foreign ministry told AFP, how-

ever, that four of its citizens were among the dead. The injured include four Ukrainians, a German, a Croatian, and two Spaniards, di Bari said. Doctor Federica Stella said the injured passengers transported to the nearby hospital in Mestre were "all young" and all foreign. Family members were "arriving little by little" from their home countries, she told AFP.

'Tragedy foretold'

Firefighters said the bus fell from an overpass straddling a railway line and linking the mainland Mestre and Marghera districts of Venice in northern Italy. Footage from a roadside camera, passed to journalists by local sources, showed it travelling in the far-right lane. Another bus obscures it from view for a few seconds before it is seen again, toppling slowly off the overpass.

"The main hypothesis at the moment is that the bus driver ... may have fallen ill," said the president

of the Veneto region, Luca Zaia. But Domenico Musico, head of an association for road accident victims, said it was "a tragedy foretold". "The guardrail was designed for a country road, whereas here we needed new-generation equipment that could have prevented the bus from falling," he told AFP. "Italian road maintenance is poor. Too little is invested in road safety. It is estimated that 30 percent of accidents are down to that," he said.

Massimo Fiorese, director of the company that was operating the bus that crashed, told ANSA news agency the bus had only been put into service last year and was in perfect condition. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni had earlier expressed her "profound condolences", while several European leaders also sent messages of support. In July 2018, a bus carrying a group of some 50 holidaymakers back to Naples fell off a viaduct near the city killing 40 people in all. — AFP

NewsClick editor arrested in India after police raids

NEW DELHI: Indian anti-terror police said Tuesday they had arrested two people linked to a news website and raided the homes of 44 others, in a case reportedly connected to alleged Chinese funding. The dawn raids in the capital New Delhi raised international concerns over the situation for media in a country where press freedom has nosedived.

Those raided are reported to be connected to NewsClick, an English-language news website that Indian authorities filed a case against in 2021 alleging it was receiving foreign funding. The New York Times in August reported that NewsClick was financed by US millionaire Neville Roy Singham, saying it "sprinkled its coverage with Chinese government talking points" -- claims Singham rejected. The report accused Singham of working closely with Beijing and of "financing its propaganda worldwide". New Delhi and Beijing are bitter rivals and have a long-running border dispute, with a deadly Himalayan clash in 2020 sending diplomatic relations into a deep freeze.

'Intimidation'

Police said that 37 men and nine women had been questioned, two of them while under arrest, and that digital devices and documents were seized, without giving further details for the reason for the raid. However, police said the raids were carried out under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), a stringent anti-terror law which makes it virtually impossible to get bail. "The proceedings are still ongoing," police said. "So far, two accused, Prabir Purkayastha and Amit Chakravarty have been arrested."

Purkayastha is the editor of NewsClick, while Chakravarty is the site's head of human resources, local media reported. NewsClick journalist Arity Das posted on social media that police "barged into my home" at dawn, questioned her about her reporting and seized her laptop, phone and computer hard disks.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists called the raids "an act of sheer harassment and intimidation". The United States, which has a growing relationship with India despite concerns about democratic backsliding, called for respect for media but declined to weigh in on reports of NewsClick's relationship with China. On Tuesday evening, journalist Abhisar Sharma said he was back home after a "day-long interrogation" by police. — AFP

In 'dysfunctional' world, who will win Nobel Peace Prize?

OSLO: With war in Ukraine, coups in Africa and flaring geopolitical tensions, who in our "dysfunctional" global family, to use the words of the UN secretary general, could win this year's Nobel Peace Prize? The much-anticipated prize, the highlight of the Nobel season, will be announced on Friday in Oslo.

But the bleak state of world affairs has made it unusually difficult to speculate on possible contenders this year. "The sad truth is that not a lot of peace is being made in the world in 2023," Dan Smith, the head of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), told AFP. "There are now almost twice as many wars as there were in 2010, for example. So I don't think there is a peacemaker to be found for the Nobel Peace Prize this year."

Last year, against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine, the prize went to a symbolic trio -- Russian human rights group Memorial, Ukraine's Center for Civil Liberties and jailed Belarusian rights advocate Ales Bialiatski. All three represent the nations at the center of the war in Ukraine, which they oppose.

Sunak kickstarts election campaign promising 'change'

MANCHESTER: Britain Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Wednesday rallied his ruling Conservatives for the next general election, positioning them as a force for change, even after 13 years in power and increasing disaffection among voters. In a speech lasting more than an hour to the party's annual conference, he promised that the Tories -- on course for defeat at the next vote, according to opinion polls -- would break the mold of the last 30 years of government.

"We will be bold, we will be radical. We will face resistance and we will meet it," he told delegates. "We will give the country what it sorely needs and yet too often has been denied." He added: "It's time for change and we are it." Sunak's speech -- peppered with major policy announcements including the widely expected scrapping of part of a high-speed rail project -- effectively fires the starting gun on the election campaign.

The conference, which began on Sunday, has seen the Conservatives try to put clear water between themselves and the main opposition Labour party. That has included stoking "culture war" issues such as the environment and trans rights. But the latest opinion polls indicate that the Tories have a mountain to climb if they are to secure a sixth term of office.

A new Savanta poll published before Sunak took to the stage put Labour out in front by 20 percentage points, with Sunak trailing Labour's Keir Starmer in the personal popularity stakes by 12 points. Sunak, a former finance minister who was only voted in as Tory leader last October by party members, has to call an election by January 2025

After honoring another Kremlin critic the previous year -- Russian journalist Dmitry Muratov, who shared the prize with his Philippine colleague Maria Ressa -- the Nobel committee could decide to turn its spotlight on another geographical region. Some experts point to the Iranian women demonstrating their anger -- some dropping their hijabs -- over the death in custody of Mahsa Amini in Tehran a year ago.

Or those fighting for women's rights, in particular education, in countries where these are being trampled. The head of the Peace Research Institute of Oslo, Henrik Urdal, said he would like to see the prize awarded jointly to jailed Iranian women's rights campaigner Narges Mohammadi and her Afghan counterpart Mahbouba Seraj. Both are fighting for women's "access to politics and access to society".

Urdal's colleague at SIPRI, Dan Smith, said he wanted to see the prize highlight the climate emergency. He suggested it could go jointly to the Fridays for Future movement, founded by Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, and to Brazilian tribal chief Raoni Metuktire, who campaigns against deforestation and for Indigenous rights.

No winner

Others, discouraged by the current geopolitical situation, think the Nobel Committee should not award the prize at all this year. But the committee is not fond of the idea -- the last time it happened

was in 1972 -- and would consider it an admission of failure, especially given the large number (351) of nominations this year. The list is sealed for 50 years, making the guessing game even more tricky.

Thousands of people worldwide are eligible to nominate candidates before the January 31 deadline, including members of parliament and cabinet ministers of all countries, former laureates and some university professors. The five Nobel Committee members can also submit nominations at their first meeting of the year.

Among other possible contenders mentioned are the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR, or courts like the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. A choice that is likely to call attention to the issue of war crimes in Ukraine. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is the favorite on betting sites but experts say it is unlikely the Nobel would be awarded to the leader of a country at war.

Nobel historian Asle Sveen has meanwhile suggested the laurels could go to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, who last month lamented that the "global family" was "a rather dysfunctional one". Sveen said that awarding him the prize would be a welcome boost for multilateralism, peace efforts, human rights, and climate and environment work, at a time when all of these causes are struggling to make progress. The Nobel Committee in Oslo will announce its pick on Friday at 11:00 am (0900 GMT). — AFP



MANCHESTER: Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak shakes hands with delegates after his speech at the annual Conservative Party Conference on Oct 4, 2023. — AFP

at the latest. Speculation is rife about when he might seek to confirm his party's mandate with the wider electorate, as he tries to bring down sky-high inflation that has caused a cost-of-living crisis and industrial unrest.

Out of time?

Sunak was unexpectedly introduced on stage by his wife, Akshata Murty, who praised his qualities, making his speech -- his first as prime minister -- more like a wider leadership pitch to the public. Convincing voters to stick with the Tories is an ominous task, given voter apathy with a party in power since 2010 and damaging

periods of turmoil under his predecessors Liz Truss and Boris Johnson. Three imminent by-elections could lay bare the scale of the task ahead, with the Conservatives at risk of losing each one despite having won two of them in 2019. Sunak's speech appeared well received among the party faithful, with rapturous applause and a sustained standing ovation from members.

But experts said it was outside the hall that counted. "The reality is that they've (the Conservatives) have run out of room," Richard Carr, an associate professor in public policy and strategy at Anglia Ruskin University, told AFP. — AFP

International

Thai mall shooting reignites gun control questions

Roughly 1 in 7 Thais own a firearm, highest in region

BANGKOK: A deadly shooting in a Bangkok mall allegedly by a 14-year-old has again exposed Thailand's gun violence problems, with police selling firearms onto the black market and a youth culture that celebrates weapons among the driving factors. Two people were killed and five others wounded on Tuesday when a shooter opened fire at the upmarket Siam Paragon mall in the heart of the Thai capital, sending terrified shoppers fleeing into the streets.

Friday marks a year since a former policeman murdered 24 children and 12 adults at a nursery in northern Thailand using a knife and legally owned handgun bought under a government scheme. That incident prompted shock around the world and government promises on gun control, but the kingdom is still awash with firearms and deadly shootings are reported in Thai media almost every week.

New interior minister Anutin Charnvirakul had promised "tougher restrictions" on firearm licenses even before the mall shooting, and National Police Chief Torsak Sukwimol called Tuesday for increased mental health checks. But similar promises have been made in the past to little avail, and experts are skeptical effective action will be taken.

Thailand has one of the highest rates of gun ownership in the region, with 10 million firearms in circulation according to the GunPolicy.org website — roughly one for every seven Thais. The result is brutal: Thailand recorded almost 1,300-gun deaths in 2019, the latest year data is available — compared to around 130 in neighboring Vietnam, where the population is around 40 percent higher.

Boonwara Sumano of the Thailand Development Research Institute pointed to cultural norms that valorize guns from a young age. "It's very common among students of vocational education institutes to build their

own guns," she told AFP. Police said the Bangkok mall shooter appears to have used a blank-firing pistol modified to shoot live rounds. "The underpinning factor in Thai society is the norm that you need to look strong, look powerful, and guns are the way of showing that," Boonwara said.

Cheap gun scheme

Thailand strictly controls arms imports, with merchants restricted to small annual quotas and hobbled by high prices. To legally purchase a gun, buyers must be older than 20, undergo a background check and give a reason for ownership, such as self-defense or hunting. But a government-run so-called gun welfare program has seen hundreds of thousands of firearms flow into the kingdom — mainly from the United States. "The real issue was the gun welfare program," Michael Picard, an independent researcher who focuses on small arms proliferation and corruption, told AFP.

Under the scheme, government personnel are given discounts on personal guns and buy them directly through their agencies, rather than through the civilian licensing process. And while there are restrictions on the number of guns and ammunition a private individual can buy, there are no limits under the welfare program. "This leads to a dangerous status quo in which some cops sell their discounted guns onto the black market for profit," Picard said.

After the nursery massacre, the police announced the indefinite suspension of the program, telling reporters that unscrupulous officers were reselling firearms. But a police source told AFP the scheme remained alive and well. "Junior and low-ranking policemen could not afford the guns," they said.

Privately bought firearms would set them back 100,000 baht (\$2,700),



BANGKOK: A child handles a machine gun on top of a tank at a Royal Thai Army base during celebrations for National Children's Day on Jan 14, 2023. — AFP

they said, while guns bought via the welfare program were only 30,000-40,000 baht. And many officers use their own weapons to avoid heavy fines if an official firearm is damaged or lost. "Policemen who want guns can bring their own cash or loan money from police cooperatives," the source added.

'Guns win'

Promised changes in the wake of the nursery shooting—including regular mental health

evaluations and stricter license restrictions — have not materialized. Officers undergo mental health assessments before joining, but checks afterwards are sporadic. "During (their) service it is up to their superior who can request their own men to check from time to time, or policemen can do it individually by themselves," the source said. Police officials did not respond to multiple requests for comment. Academic and former police lieutenant Kritsanapong Phutrakul told AFP it was rare for

any officer to have his firearm taken away.

Nursery attacker Panya Khamrab carried out part of his assault with a legally purchased weapon, police said at the time. The weapon was not confiscated — despite him having been fired for drug abuse. Researcher Boonwara said that in a country undermined by repeated military overthrows of democratically elected governments, citizens have turned elsewhere for security, legal or illegal. "It's like guns win in the end," she said. — AFP

Iran tightens grip on international schools

TEHRAN: It's the start of a new term in Iran but this year it has been "heartbreaking" for students at international schools after a government decision to bar their Iranian classmates. The surprise move announced in September comes amid efforts in Iran to fight "Westernization" which conservatives view as undermining core values in place since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

International schools have been struggling to adjust, however, as the newly imposed rules have deprived them of most of their current crop of pupils. Now, only 60 students are attending the French school in northern Tehran compared with the 359 who had registered at the start of the academic year.

The German school, among those most affected by the decision, was only able to accept 50 out of 380 students. "It's a very difficult situation," said a father of two Iranian students who have only ever been to French schools. "We don't know what to do with our children who have suddenly found themselves without a school."

Iran has a dozen international schools, including eight in Tehran, attended by more than 2,000 students before the new measures came into force, according to Tasnim news agency. But only 10 percent fit the criteria to be allowed entry to international schools under the Iranian regulations, the news

agency reported in August.

Under the rules laid out by Iran's Supreme Council of Education, only foreigners living in Iran and Iranian students who completed part of their education abroad, among other exceptions, are allowed to enroll in international schools. The rules affect Iranian students who also hold other passports, as the Islamic republic does not recognize dual nationality.

'Clear violation'

Tasnim said international schools had been in "clear violation" of the Iranian regulations. "None of the official textbooks approved by the education ministry are taught in these schools," it said. As attempts to reverse Iran's decision have faltered, the French embassy has set up a crisis unit to support parents scrambling to quickly find schools for their children.

Some parents opted to send their children to English schools following the Iranian curriculum while others decided to homeschool. Only a few decided to leave Iran for Europe. "It is traumatic for the children who lose their bearings and their friends," a mother of two students at the German school said. "It's heartbreaking for them."

Tensions have grown between Tehran and Washington and its allies since the United States reimposed sanctions on Iran after withdrawing from a landmark nuclear deal in 2018. Criticism of Western countries has escalated in Iran since it was gripped by mass protests last year after the death of 22-year-



TEHRAN: People ride bicycles in front of the French school in northern Tehran on Oct 3, 2023. — AFP

old Iranian Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini. Her death in police custody in September 2022 triggered months-long demonstrations which authorities in Iran labelled as "riots" fomented by foreign governments. "We are paying a high price for political reasons that are beyond us," the mother said.

Others say Iran's decision is narrowing the opportunities of cultural exchange with other countries. The "space for dialogue between Iran and France is disappearing," said a parent of children at the French school. "It's a real shame because the two countries have a lot to share." — AFP

Kuwait supports OPEC+ decision...

Continued from Page 1

recognizes its international role. He pointed out that Kuwait would continue to invest in expanding oil production to reach 3.2 million barrels per day by 2024.

Crude prices have eased in more recent days, however, as markets worry over a slowing economy and interest rates remaining high for longer in the United States and Europe. In a statement following the virtual meeting, OPEC+ said its JMMC "reaffirmed the commitment of its member countries" to maintain its production reduction strategy valid until the end of 2024. The panel added that it stands "ready to take additional measures at any time" depending on market conditions.

2030 World Cup in six countries...

Continued from Page 1

At one stage, Spain and Portugal had included Ukraine in their bid, saying they wanted to send "a message of solidarity and hope" and pay tribute to the "tenacity and resilience" of a country invaded by Russia in February 2022. Morocco, a five-time unsuccessful candidate to host the tournament, joined them in mid-March. The agreement between European body UEFA and its African (CAF) and South American (CONMEBOL) counterparts confirms the withdrawal of Ukraine and also that of the South American countries, in exchange for a symbolic concession.

The JMMC also praised the "efforts... of Saudi Arabia" to voluntarily reduce its production by one million barrels per day (bpd) since July.

The Saudi Ministry of Energy confirmed that the voluntary cut would continue until the end of 2023. It added that the kingdom's production would amount to about nine million bpd in November and December. Russia will maintain its export cuts of about 300,000 bpd until December, Russian deputy prime minister Alexander Novak said in the government's Telegram channel.

Both Riyadh and Moscow stressed that they would review their cuts next month to decide whether to deepen them or increase production. The next JMMC meeting is set for Nov 26 ahead of the ministerial meeting, according to a statement from the group. The JMMC has no decision-making power but discusses market conditions and makes recommendations, which are then formally discussed and decided at the organization's ministerial meetings. — Agencies

"In a divided world, FIFA and football are uniting," said FIFA President Gianni Infantino. "The FIFA Council, representing the entire world of football, unanimously agreed to celebrate the centenary of the FIFA World Cup, whose first edition was played in Uruguay in 1930, in the most appropriate way." The statement said a "centenary ceremony" will be held "at the stadium where it all began", in Montevideo's Estadio Centenario in 1930, when the event brought together 13 teams in a single host city — compared with 32 for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar and 48 from the 2026 World Cup in North America onwards.

FIFA also said it was inviting bids from the Asian and Oceanian continental confederations for the 2034 World Cup. It also said it was lifting its ban on Russian under-17 teams competing internationally. This follows UEFA's decision last week to lift a ban on Russia's youth sides. — AFP

GOP hardliners oust speaker...

Continued from Page 1

speaker of the House — one of the greatest honors. I loved every minute," a circumspect McCarthy told reporters after the vote, making clear he did not plan to stand again.

"And the one thing I will tell you is doing the right thing isn't always easy, but it is necessary. I don't regret standing up for choosing governance over grievance." The 58-year-old former entrepreneur had sparked fury among conservatives when he passed a bipartisan stopgap funding measure at the weekend backed by the White House to avert a government shutdown.

Florida conservative Matt Gaetz, who forced the removal vote, gambled that he could oust McCarthy with just a few Republicans, helped by Democrats loath to bail out a speaker who only recently opened a highly politicized impeachment inquiry into President Joe Biden. "The reason Kevin McCarthy went down today is because nobody trusts Kevin McCarthy," Gaetz said. "Kevin McCarthy has made multiple contradictory promises, and when they all came due, he lost."

South Carolina Republican Nancy Mace revealed she, too, had soured on McCarthy over promises to put legislation up for a vote that were never honored. Democrats pointed to his decision to renege on a deal with Biden on spending limits agreed earlier this year in high-stakes talks over the federal budget. Biden issued a statement through his press secretary after McCarthy's overthrow urging the House to quickly choose a replacement, arguing that the urgent challenges facing the country "will not wait".

The New Democrat Coalition, a bloc of pro-busi-

ness Democratic lawmakers, described McCarthy as "simply not trustworthy". And Congressional Progressive Caucus chairwoman Pramila Jayapal, a leading leftist, vowed to let Republicans "wallow in their pigsty of incompetence" rather than rescue McCarthy. The tussle came just days after the House and Senate passed a measure to avert a costly government shutdown — both with big bipartisan majorities — by extending federal funding through mid-November.

Conservatives were furious, seeing their chances dashed for forcing massive budget cuts. They accused McCarthy of a flip-flop, saying he'd promised an end to hastily prepared stopgap legislation, hammered out with the support of the opposition, and a return to budgeting through the committee process. With McCarthy out, a temporary speaker put the House into recess as Republicans gathered to discuss picking a replacement. The ousted speaker, who got the gavel in a marathon 15 rounds of balloting in January, didn't immediately endorse a successor.

His decision not to run again sets up a potential showdown among McCarthy's lieutenants — most likely House Majority Leader Steve Scalise and House Majority Whip Tom Emmer. Gaetz and fellow anti-McCarthy dissident Bob Good told CNN after the meeting the House was leaving town until a "candidate forum" on Tuesday next week, which Good expected to be followed by the first round of votes the following day.

But Republican hopefuls may shy from taking on what looks like a poisoned chalice in which the hard-right faction will continue to exercise control from the sidelines. Trump — who is facing 91 felony charges and was in court Tuesday in New York as a defendant in a civil fraud trial — berated Republicans on his social media platform for "always fighting among themselves". Tellingly, though, he offered no support for McCarthy. — AFP

International

5 killed, 23 soldiers missing in India glacial lake burst flood

Climate change blamed as lake shrinks by nearly two-thirds

GUWAHATI: At least five people have been killed and dozens including 23 soldiers are missing in India after intense rains burst a glacial lake and triggered a torrential flash flood, officials said Wednesday. Violent flooding from glacier lakes dammed by loose rock has become more frequent as global temperatures rise and ice melts, with scientists on Wednesday warning the deadly flood was a taste of further extreme weather events to come. A video released by an Indian army spokesman showed a thick torrent of raging brown water sweeping down a densely forested valley in mountainous north-east Sikkim state, with roads washed away and power lines ripped down. "Due to sudden cloud burst over Lhonak Lake in North Sikkim, a flash flood occurred in the Teesta River ... 23 personnel have been reported missing and some vehicles are reported submerged under the slush," the army said in a statement. "Search operations are underway."

The Sikkim state government said at least five people had been reported killed, with three bodies recovered. As well as the 23 soldiers, more than a dozen civilians are missing, it said. Sikkim is close to India's border with Nepal and China and boasts a sizeable military presence. India has been wary of China's growing military assertiveness and their 3,500-kilometre (2,200-mile) shared frontier has been a perennial source of tension, with parts of Sikkim claimed by Beijing.

'Catastrophic'

The water surge was caused by a burst of the high-altitude Lhonak Lake — which sits

at the base of a glacier in peaks surrounding the world's third-highest mountain, Kangchenjunga. A wall of water powered downstream, adding to a river already swollen by monsoon rains, damaging a dam and sweeping houses and bridges in its path and causing "serious destruction", the government said.

Lhonak Lake had shrunk by nearly two-thirds in size overnight, an area roughly equivalent to about 150 football pitches (105 hectares), satellite photographs released by the Indian Space Research Organisation showed. Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang said emergency services were working to support those impacted by the ferocious floods and urged people to "remain vigilant".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he "assured all possible support" for those impacted. "Intense rain has led to this catastrophic situation in Sikkim where the rain has triggered a glacial lake outburst flood and damaged a dam, and caused loss of life", said Miriam Jackson, a scientist specializing in ice who monitors Himalayan regions. "We observe that such extreme events increase in frequency as the climate continues to warm and takes us into unknown territory", Jackson added, in a statement from the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) research group.

Himalayan glaciers are melting faster than ever due to climate change, exposing communities to unpredictable and costly disasters, according to the Nepal-based ICIMOD. Earth's average surface



This handout photo from the Indian Army shows a flooded street in Lachen Valley, in India's Sikkim state following a flash flood caused by intense rainfall on Oct 4, 2023. — AFP

temperature has risen nearly 1.2 degrees Celsius since preindustrial times, but high-mountain regions around the world have warmed at twice that pace, climate scientists say.

The Sikkim region is also hit annually by flash floods during the monsoon rains, which begin in

June and normally withdraw from the Indian sub-continent by the end of September. By October, the heaviest of the monsoon rains are usually over. Melting glaciers add to the volume of water while unregulated construction in flood-prone areas exacerbates the damage. — AFP

Living in fear on Italy's Campi Flegrei volcano

POZZUOLI: As a child, Alfredo Colato cooked eggs on this southern Italian volcano. Today, he is poised to flee Campi Flegrei, as experts warn earthquakes rocking his hometown could herald an eruption. Growing tremors, including a 4.2 magnitude quake last week — the biggest in 40 years — have spooked the half-a-million inhabitants living in the danger zone.

Colato sleeps with an emergency bag packed by the door. He lives at the heart of the Campi Flegrei (Phlegraean Fields) region, where houses are bordered on one side by flat, volcanic terrain, and on the other by the picturesque bay of Pozzuoli. As children, he and his friends would wrap eggs in foil and bury them to cook in the Solfatara field, among the plumes of volcanic gases that rise from the soil.

From the ridge, where the smell of sulfur is strong, they would look across to Monte Nuovo (New Mountain), created in the last eruption in 1538. "If Campi Flegrei erupts again, Pozzuoli will fall into the sea," said Colato, now 62 and a parking attendant for the municipality. "We live in a constant state of anxiety. People cannot sleep, the slightest tremor and they run," he told AFP.



Cracks are seen on the road near Campi Flegrei.

Trust in God

The volcano west of Naples measures some 12 by 15 kilometers (7.4 by 9.3 miles). It is an active caldera — the hollow left after an eruption — the largest in Europe, stretching from the outskirts of Naples into the sea. Italy's Campania region is better known for nearby Vesuvius, which wiped out Pompeii in 79 AD.

While Campi Flegrei does not have such a distinctive volcanic cone, it should not be underestimated. Its eruption 40,000 years ago was the Mediterranean's most powerful affecting the climate worldwide. Despite this, the area has been densely populated for thousands of years due to its mild climate,

fertile land and hot springs, which once attracted holidaying Roman emperors. Their party town, Baiae, is these days underwater, a victim of "bradyseism", when hydrothermal activity causes an area to gradually lift or descend. The little Pozzuoli marina where Colato swam as a child has also been transformed into a mud flat, the stone steps that once led to fishing boats now ending in mid-air. Colato, whose black-and-white dog Dylan barks just before each quake, says there has been a big increase in people taking anti-anxiety drugs. But some fear the threatened evacuation more than the magma pool underneath their houses. "It will be chaos, we will entrust ourselves to God," said 78-year-old Felice Galloro.

'Ghost town'

The region's emergency plan in case of the predicted eruption allows three days for people to leave the area themselves or with assistance. But Galloro fears immediate deadlock in the town's narrow streets. He knows locals whose houses have been damaged in the recent quakes, but who are not reporting it for fear of being moved out.

A resurgence of seismic activity in the early 1980s led to the evacuation of 40,000 inhabitants, and many in Pozzuoli still bear the psychological scars. "It was a ghost town," said Armando Follera, 61, who was evacuated along with his mother and spent three years in temporary accommodation.

Under today's plan, the red zone is divided into segments, each of which has been paired with another region in Italy ready to host evacuees. Pozzuoli residents are destined for Lombardy, a wealthy, land-locked region in northern Italy home to the metropolis of Milan. Galloro said he would be "proud to die" in the area, and Colato insisted that moving him north from his homeland "would kill me twice". Not everyone feels the same, however. Caterina Anastasio, a 37-year-old waitress, said she and her parents "would leave tomorrow if we could", but they cannot afford it.

Eruption unlikely

At the National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology's observatory, clusters of red dots on a digital map show the tremors shaking the area, including a 4.0 magnitude quake on Monday. Volcanologist Sandro De Vita, 63, said the quakes would likely continue for a while as gas from the magma expands upwards, fracturing the ground. Locals are comparing the current activity to the early 1980s, when there were up to 500 tremors a day, but De Vita says the quakes are less numerous, less intense.

He does not expect tremors greater than 5.0 magnitude, although these are still potentially dangerous. Quakes caused by volcanoes are notoriously shallow and could damage buildings. The biggest fear — that Campi Flegrei might start spewing lava, ashes and rocks — is unlikely in the near future, he said.

The monitoring team is "reasonably confident that we will not have an eruption in the short term", while changes will be picked up by the system, "allowing us to give advance notice of an eruption", De Vita said. "People should not be afraid. Or rather, they should be, but only when we say so," he said. — AFP



PARIS: Bikers ride on a bicycle path at Rivoli street, in Paris, on Feb 23, 2023. — AFP

Forget company car, France embraces the company bike

LYON: As the popularity of cycling soars in France, a growing number of companies are giving employees the chance to ditch driving in favor of a greener, healthier alternative: the company bike. The number of cycling commutes rose by 15 percent in 2022, thanks in part to electric bikes, the COVID pandemic and schemes designed to make cycling more accessible to employees.

For Remi Tricaud, 44, who works for an IT company near the southeastern city of Lyon, the prospect was so enticing that he decided to give up his car altogether. He said his old commute would often take him 40 minutes, "whereas now, even when it's raining, I'm 20 minutes away all the time." "When you know the way, you can go via nice places," he added.

The company he works for, Coexya, currently has a fleet of 120 bikes available to its employees across France, an increase from 75 in 2021. Tricaud pays 35 euros (\$37) a month to hire a bike, which includes insurance and anti-theft protection. He also receives a 120 euros allowance spread over three years for related equipment such as panniers. The bikes are all electric models which are leased long-term from the distributor Cyclable and serviced every three months at the Coexya site. Tricaud said the fact that he didn't have to carry out his own maintenance was a big incentive to get behind the handlebars. Coexya's administrative and financial director, Leila Julien, said the company was using the cycle-to-work scheme to try to attract new recruits. "Our employees are young and either don't have a driving license or don't have a car. Our area is poorly served by public transport. And as we're in a very tight job market, we've sought to be more attractive," she said. "We want our employees to work on fulfilling projects, and if we can make life easier for them on the side, we have to do it," she added.

Niche market

The example of organizations such as Coexya, however, should not obscure the fact that company bikes are still a relatively niche market in France, said Louis Duthoit from the Federation of Bicycle Users (FUB). While Germany has one million bikes in circulation, France only has "10 to 20,000, according to estimates by service providers," he said, referring to "velos de fonction" — bikes employees rent from their companies to travel to work.

But a number of start-ups have seized the moment, such as Tandem, which manages 1,000 bikes for 80 companies and has seen sales more than double every year since 2020. The Paris-based provider acts as an intermediary — buying the bikes from manufacturers or distributors and renting them to client companies, while negotiating local delivery and maintenance. "The employee gains access to a bike worth an average of 2,000 to 2,500 euros, which he or she would not necessarily be able to afford," said Tandem CEO Arthur de Jerphanion. As well as renting company bikes, many in France have been inspired to buy their own, attracted by the physical and environmental benefits. "For more than 10 years now, cycling has been enjoying double-digit growth," said Sophie Rapinel, from the Velo et Territoires network. — AFP



HILLTOP: New South Wales Rural Fire Service volunteers Mark Davis (left) and Andy Hain inspect bushland after a hazard reduction burn at Hilltop, located south of Sydney on Sept 15, 2023. — AFP

Firefighters in Australia face worst season

SYDNEY: Warm winds fanned multiple blazes on Wednesday in an unusually early start to Australia's annual fire season, prompting a state leader to warn of a "horror" summer of bushfires ahead. Firefighters said they had been fighting 18 out-of-control bushfires in the morning in the eastern state of New South Wales, some in the Bega Valley region of the state's southeastern coast. At least three homes were lost in the flames, said New South Wales firefighters. One person was taken to hospital after a tree fell on a car, the state's police said. "Be prepared for a horror summer," New South Wales Premier Chris Minns told a news conference in Bega. "We are one week into October and we are experiencing mid-summer conditions," he said, citing various hot days above 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit). "Bushfires love this environment and it is devastating for regional communities in particular."

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese echoed the sentiment that the fire season had started early — just one month into the Australian spring. "We are standing here. We can see, we can smell the impact that these fires are having," he told the news conference. On Tuesday, people in various rural areas of Victoria were told to evacuate or take shelter as gusty winds fanned "very challenging" bushfires. About 650 firefighters battled fires across 17,000 hectares (42,000 acres), officials in Victoria said, although rains later in the day dampened the flames.

Unsustainable scale

In September, volunteer firefighters had been scorching Australia's forest undergrowth, reducing fuel for what is expected to be the fiercest fire season since the monster "Black Summer" blazes. Deadly wildfires have devastated forests in Canada, Greece, Hawaii and elsewhere around the world this year but unlike many other countries, Australia heavily relies on a 190,000-strong volunteer cohort to battle the flames. Their courage was on display during the "Black Summer" fires of 2019-2020 that killed 33 people and millions of animals, as well as destroying thousands of homes and razing vast swathes of eucalyptus forest.

But some of them fear their brigades may not be able to cope in the future should global warming make fires even more intense and frequent. "It's terrifying but, if 2019-20 became the norm, I don't know how you sustain that year on year. I don't think that's sustainable," said Andy Hain, a 41-year-old volunteer with the NSW Rural Fire Service, who is married with two young sons. Faced with repeated fires on the scale of the "Black Summer", Australia and other countries would have to share personnel and resources more than they do already, said Hain, who has volunteered for nearly 10 years in Picton, a rural town southwest of Sydney with a population of about 5,000. Because of wet conditions since "Black Summer", the RFS warns that the threat of grass fires is the highest it has been in two decades. — AFP



A general view shows smoke from the "solfatara" at Campi Flegrei. — AFP photos

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2023

Global growth to slow down to 2.4% in 2023: UN report

UN downplays doom and gloom over Chinese economy

GENEVA: World economic growth is forecast to decelerate to 2.4 percent this year – marking recession in the global economy – from 3 percent in 2022 as deepening inequalities, mounting debt and uneven post-COVID recovery take hold, the United Nations' trade and development chief said on Wednesday. All regions, except for east and central Asia, are expected to post slower growth this year compared to 2022, with Europe registering the largest drop, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) said in its report.

Concerns about China's economic troubles are being exaggerated and Beijing still has plenty of fiscal headroom, China's ballooning property-sector crisis has seen several high-profile firms engulfed in debt, fuelling fears about the country's wider economy and a possible spillover globally.

"We don't share the very pessimistic projections about China," said Rebeca Grynspan, head of the UN Conference on Trade and Development. UNCTAD lowered its 2024 China growth estimates from five percent to 4.8 percent, citing weak domestic demand. "It's a slowdown but it's not something like the very pessimistic reviews that we have

seen in some of the publications," Grynspan told a press conference for UNCTAD's flagship annual economic forecasts.

"We think that there is a slowdown of growth in China, but not a dramatic crisis," Grynspan, a former vice president of Costa Rica, added that China "has a lot of fiscal space, unlike other countries", so Beijing still has the means in hand "to be able to rebound and to support the economy". China's property sector has long been a pillar of growth—along with construction it accounts for about a quarter of GDP—and it experienced a dazzling boom in recent decades.

But the massive debt accrued by its biggest players has been seen by Beijing as an unacceptable risk for China's financial system and overall economic health. Authorities have gradually tightened developers' access to credit since 2020, and a wave of defaults has followed—notably that of property giant Evergrande.

Richard Kozul-Wright, the director of UNCTAD's Globalization and Development Strategies division, was even more critical of the prevailing pessimism than Grynspan.

"You could have expected a faster recovery in China this year, and that hasn't happened because of a number of strong headwinds in the real estate market," he said. Furthermore, consumer demand in China has been much weaker than expected, Kozul-Wright added. "But we certainly don't agree with the almost hysterical reaction some of the Western press has adopted towards China."

UNCTAD's report forecasts that China will grow 10 to 12 times faster than the eurozone this year, and "it continues to be a major contributor to global growth", Kozul-Wright said. In addition to the slowdown linked to weak domestic demand, China's economic partners are also worried about upheavals shaking the property sector, which seems to many analysts to be reaching the limits of its economic model. Chinese policymakers have come under intense pressure in recent months to unveil measures to support the property sector.

However, they are not keen on the type of bonanza unveiled in 2008 during the global financial crisis, meaning the government could struggle to hit its growth target of around five percent for this year.

Kozul-Wright said there were problems that



Rebeca Grynspan

China's policymakers would have to address, because the five percent target "will be difficult to reach, unless they do employ fiscal instruments to boost growth". "So there are challenges—but not of the order of magnitude that we often read in the Western press."—AFP

US jobseekers face tougher search despite robust market

WASHINGTON: For the past year, Taylor Simpson has been searching for a stable job while working part-time, but she is struggling to find a position she likes even though companies are hiring.

As hiring in the United States cools, jobseekers like 24-year-old Simpson have a harder time finding suitable work, even as data suggests the labor market remains strong.

The number of applications per job posting surged by around 40 percent from a year ago on employment platform ZipRecruiter in the second quarter, said the company's chief economist Julia Pollak. The numbers have remained elevated in the months since, due to an increase in applicants and a drop in jobs advertised, she added.

"No one could have expected the sort of labor shortage re-hiring frenzy in 2021 to 2022 to last," she told AFP. Yet, despite the cooling, the share of openings is relatively high compared with before the pandemic, noted economist Jadrian Wooten of jobs platform Monster.

"At this very moment, we're kind of exactly at the midpoint threshold," Pollak told AFP. Workers are quitting jobs at around the pre-pandemic rate and job growth hovers at 2019 levels.

But the market could be weaker than it seems. Official job growth figures have been revised downwards—on average by 47,000—for the past eight months consecutively.

One factor is the rapid pace of Federal Reserve interest rate hikes, which lift borrowing costs and can dampen the hiring associated with business expansion. As it takes time for policy changes to affect the economy, companies and analysts flag uncertainty in the outlook.

If indicators like the employment of temporary workers and manufacturing overtime hours continue to fall, this could bode ill for the world's top economy. A job market slump can trigger a cycle where Americans cut back on spending, in turn reducing demand for goods and services.

Simpson, who works part-time at a general goods store to make ends meet, said she is "on edge." Supervisors are pushing for staff to take fuller lunch breaks, she said, requiring them to clock out from their shift and eating into hourly pay. "I've had in the



WASHINGTON: The number of applications per job posting surged by around 40 percent in US from a year ago on employment platform ZipRecruiter in the second quarter.

past where my hours are just reduced without my wanting to," she said of the past two years. "And then eventually I'm just not on the schedule at all."

Such situations nudge her to look harder for another job, and she is trying to land one that allows remote work. "In this market, everybody wants to work from home," she said, adding that such roles are "very competitive." The job market has changed from the last two decades, said Wooten of Monster. People previously had trouble changing jobs during slowdowns—such as in a recession—where fewer roles were available.

"Now it's a little bit more challenging just because it's so easy to apply for jobs," he added. "With remote work becoming an option in a lot of different industries, that allows more people to apply for jobs that they wouldn't have applied for before," Wooten told AFP. Jobseekers could get some reprieve if policymakers signal they will start reducing interest rates. This could boost investment and hiring, said Pollak. Employers have been expecting a recession for over a year, "being very cautious and targeted and conservative when it comes to capital expenditures," she added. "They have very high pent-up demand for labor," she said.

Meanwhile, hiring in the US private sector slowed sharply in September, hitting its lowest rate of growth since early 2021 according to payroll firm ADP on

Wednesday. Employment in the private sector rose by 89,000 jobs, well below the 150,000 figure analysts expected and significantly lower than August's number as well, ADP data showed.

The US jobs market has shown resilience despite efforts by policymakers to cool the economy and rein in stubborn inflation. But notable easing in the labor market could bring relief to officials as they mull the need for further policy action. "Large establishments drove the slowdown, losing 83,000 jobs and wiping out gains they made in August," according to the ADP report. Apart from a "steepening decline in jobs this month," ADP chief economist Nela Richardson noted: "Additionally, we are seeing a steady decline in wages in the past 12 months."

Most of the September job gains in the world's largest economy were driven by service-providing industries such as leisure and hospitality, but other areas like professional and business services slumped. Pay growth was 5.9 percent from a year ago in September, the 12th consecutive month of slowing growth, said ADP. "Overall, job growth remains positive. But the pace should continue to moderate on the lagged and cumulative effects of restrictive monetary policy," said Rubeela Farooqi, chief US economist at High Frequency Economics. Looking ahead, analysts are keeping an eye on government payrolls figures, which can diverge from the ADP data. — AFP

Marcos lifts cap on Philippines' rice prices

MANILA: Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos lifted a price ceiling on rice Wednesday, weeks after capping the cost of the staple to support poor households. In early September, Marcos set the maximum retail price of regular milled rice at 41 pesos (\$0.72) per kilogram (2.2 pounds) and 45 pesos for the higher-quality "well-milled" rice.

The measure was criticized by some economists, who warned it could distort the market and lead to shortages. A member of Marcos's economic team was sacked after she appeared to mock the plan on social media.

"As of today, we are lifting the price caps on rice, both for the regular milled rice and for the well-milled rice," Marcos said, at an event in Manila where a thousand sacks of "smuggled" rice seized in a raid were distributed to poor families.

Marcos, who is also the agriculture minister, said

it was the "appropriate time" to remove the cap since the government was "giving away rice". Government assistance for farmers and the poor would continue, he said, noting "we still need to fix our agriculture sector".

Rice is a staple in the country of 110 million people, but the nation cannot produce enough and is one of the world's top importers of the grain. Marcos's government has been struggling to rein in consumer prices, with the year-on-year inflation rate hitting 5.3 percent in August, up from 4.7 percent in July. Marcos's approval rating has fallen to 65 percent, according to a Pulse Asia Research survey conducted in September after the price ceiling was imposed. That compares with 80 percent in June.

A separate poll showed inflation was the top concern among those surveyed. Marcos has insisted supply is not a problem and instead blamed hoarders and opportunistic traders for high prices, as well as a ban on rice exports by major producer India and the war in Ukraine. Political analyst Richard Heydarian said the price cap was "just not working" and the government realized more drastic measures were needed to bring down prices of basic commodities and staple foods.

Economist Victor Abola said the recent start of



MANILA: In early September, Marcos set the maximum retail price of regular milled rice at 41 pesos (\$0.72) per kilogram (2.2 pounds) and 45 pesos for the higher-quality "well-milled" rice.

the rice harvest meant there was "no more need for the price cap". The Philippines should now be "importing rice so that in the lean months there is rice to take care of the demand or else (prices) will go up again", said Abola, an assistant professor at Manila's University of Asia and the Pacific. — AFP

UK axes key leg of costly high speed railway

MANCHESTER: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Wednesday axed a key section of England's new high-speed railway, diverting billions of pounds instead into improving existing transport routes in the north. Addressing his Conservative party's annual conference in Manchester, Sunak said HS2 would no longer run on high speed rails to the city in northwest England, with the government spending the £36 billion (\$44 billion) saved on improving current train and road networks.

HS2, Britain's second high-speed train line, has suffered massive delays and ballooning costs but will still run between London and the nation's second biggest city, Birmingham, from around the end of the decade. "I am ending this long-running saga," Sunak said Wednesday.

"I am cancelling the rest of the HS2 project and in its place, we will reinvest every single penny, £36 billion, in hundreds of new transport projects in the North and the Midlands, across the country." The project's costs had almost trebled to more than an estimated £100 billion from £37.5 billion in 2013, even before taking into account the recent surge in inflation, making it one of the world's most expensive lines. Faced with mounting costs, a big chunk of the project had been derailed already before Wednesday's announcement.

The government in 2021 pulled the plug on the route linking Birmingham to the city of Leeds in northern England. HS2, aimed at faster journey times and taking capacity off existing busy routes, was at the forefront of the government's grand scheme to "level up" the economy by providing better infrastructure to the north. — AFP

Inflation battle will take time: Top ECB official

FRANKFURT: Efforts to bring down inflation will take time, a senior European Central Bank official said Wednesday, warning that the eurozone had yet to fully feel the impact of higher interest rates. "While inflation continues to decline, it is still expected to remain too high for too long," ECB vice-president Luis de Guindos said at a conference in Cyprus.

The ECB last month raised interest rates for a 10th consecutive time in a bid to cool consumer prices, taking its benchmark deposit rate to a record high of four percent. Eurozone inflation eased to 4.3 percent in September, its lowest level in almost two years, fuelling hopes that ECB's aggressive hiking cycle has come to an end. De Guindos reiterated that the bank's next moves would be "data-dependent" and said the impact of the ECB's monetary policy tightening was still trickling down to the real economy. "A substantial share of the transmission from financing conditions to the real economy is expected to still be in the pipeline," he said.

Real estate activity has slowed for example as credit becomes more expensive, he said. But for the economy as a whole, "the bulk of the impact of our tightening is expected to materialize only in the course of this year and thereafter." According to the ECB, its key interest rates have now reached levels that, "maintained for a sufficiently long duration", will make "a substantial contribution" to returning inflation to the bank's two percent target. — AFP

Business

Farmers turn to solar power in Syria's former breadbasket

Electricity shortages plague in Syria's war-ravaged region

AL-HADDADIYA, Syria: At his farm in Syria's northeast, Abdullah Al-Mohammed adjusts a large solar panel, one of hundreds that have cropped up over the years as farmers seek to stave off electricity shortages in the war-ravaged region. Solar energy has offered a lifeline for the farmers amid drought and power shortages, but some warn the boom also has environmental costs in the once-fertile region. "We are trying to revive our land," despite dwindling groundwater reserves, said Mohammed, 38, as he oriented the panel towards the sun near his cotton fields.

In his village of Al-Haddadiya in Hasakeh province, farmers are using solar energy to power irrigation systems for all kinds of crops, from vegetables to wheat, barley and cotton. The father of three said he needs a reliable power supply to pump groundwater around 60 meters deep (nearly 200 feet) now—compared to just 30 meters a few years back. Northeast Syria is about 0.8 degrees Celsius (two degrees Fahrenheit) hotter today than it was 100 years ago and likely to experience drought every three years, according to a report last year by iMAP, a Washington-based, data-focused non-profit.

The area was the country's breadbasket before 2011, when the government repressed peaceful protests, triggering a conflict that has killed more than 500,000 people and displaced millions.

The war has battered the country's infrastructure and industry, and the state barely supplies a few hours of electricity per day.

Farmers in the now Kurdish-held region used to rely on state electricity and subsidized generator fuel for water pumps and irrigation, but power outages and rising fuel costs have compounded the

climate-related challenges. "Solar energy has saved agriculture and farmers from extinction," Mohammed said, near a patch of waist-high plants and sunflowers swaying gently in the wind.

From the rebel-held northwest to government-controlled areas, solar panels have become common in Syria, providing power for homes, public institutions and even camps for the displaced.

Between 2011 and 2021, Syria's state electricity production "dropped significantly to almost 57 percent" and power generation capacity plunged to 65 percent, according to a 2022 United Nations report. Across Hasakeh province, solar panels have become indispensable for agriculture. Around 10 kilometers (six miles) from Al-Haddadiya, farmer Hamid Al-Awda began using solar power six years ago. He has now installed 272 solar panels across his vast farmlands. "Most people started selling their generators and replacing them with solar energy," said Awda, 60. "Farmers who cannot afford solar energy and generators have seen their crops wither and dry out," he said, sweat trickling down his face.

Downsides

Further north near the city of Qamishli, farmer Mohammed Ali Al-Hussein said shortages of generator fuel once kept him from irrigating his crops for days. "But now, we can water the lands from sunrise to sunset thanks to solar panels," said the 22-year-old, using a massive hose.

However, the iMAP report also warned of a downside of the area's solar boom. "Water pumps working on solar power... are also blamed for increased extraction and resulting in declining water table," the report said. The rising use of groundwater



HASAKEH, Syria: Syrian farmer Mohamed Ali Al-Hussein, 22, stands near solar panels used to power field irrigation at a farm on the outskirts of Syria's northeastern city of Hasakeh, on September 24, 2023. — AFP

also results in increased salinity, it added. Dardar Hasan from Wanlan, a local company involved in solar energy, said demand has boomed in northeast Syria in recent years amid power outages lasting up to 20 hours a day.

Demand will keep rising and "people will continue to rely heavily on solar energy, not because it is renewable... but because they need electricity," he told AFP. While solar power has kept many farmers from abandoning their land and moving to the city, it comes

with a future environmental cost, he warned. Much of people's solar infrastructure is either "used, worn-out panels, imported from Europe where they are deemed electronic waste" or low-grade solar systems mostly made in China, he said.

Such materials have a lifespan of just a few years, Hasan added. "After that, we will be left with tens of thousands of unusable solar panels—essentially waste"—in an area with no adequate facilities to process it, he said. — AFP



SOLNA, Sweden: Chairman of the board of SAS (Scandinavian Airlines) Carsten Dilling (right) speaks as President and CEO of SAS Anko van der Werff listens during a press conference at SAS headquarters in Solna near Stockholm, Sweden, on October 3, 2023. — AFP

Air France-KLM to buy nearly 20% stake in SAS

PARIS: Air France-KLM said Tuesday that it had joined an investment consortium to buy nearly 20 percent of Scandinavian Airlines (SAS), which has been seeking investors in order to exit bankruptcy protection. The group, along with the Danish state, will invest \$1.175 billion in the airline, with Air France-KLM investing \$144.5 million to buy the 19.9 percent holding. SAS filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in the United States, an option available because of its operations there, in July 2022 as it reeled from COVID travel bans and a costly pilots strike.

It also embarked on a cost-cutting plan and a hunt for new investors, saying in September that some had shown "substantial" interest in coming aboard. "This cooperation will allow Air France-KLM to enhance its position in the Nordics and improve connectivity for Scandinavian and European travelers," Air France-KLM chief Ben Smith said in a statement.

"Air France-KLM is determined to play an active role in the consolidation of European aviation," he added. In July, Smith also reiterated his interest in buying a stake in Portugal's flag carrier TAP, which is being privatized after a rescue by the government. — AFP

UK supermarket Tesco profits surge as costs drop

LONDON: Britain's largest retailer Tesco on Wednesday said half-year net profit soared on slashed costs, and forecast a further slowdown in food price inflation.

Profit after tax soared to £929 million (\$1.1 billion) in the six months to late August, the supermarket giant said in a statement. That compared with £252 million a year earlier when Tesco's performance was skewed by a large impairment charge. The company reduced costs by £290 million in the first half and aims to slash them by £600 million over the full year.

Revenue advanced five percent to £34.1 billion in the first half, aided by price cutbacks as shoppers sought deals to save cash in a cost-of-living crisis.

Tesco said food price inflation fell across the first half—and it expects this to continue for the rest of the year. Shoppers remain cost-conscious, however, as overall UK annual inflation remains stubbornly high despite slowing to an 18-month low of 6.7 percent in August. "We know how challenging it is for many households across the country, as they continue to grapple with ongoing cost of living pressures," Tesco chief executive Ken Murphy said in the earnings release. "We are committed to doing everything we can to drive down food bills." The group's share price rallied 2.7 percent to 266.60 pence in morning deals on London's benchmark FTSE 100 index, which fell overall. —AFP

Storms ravage famed Greek apple harvest

ZAGORA, Greece: Engine revving, Greek apple farmer Thymios Economou strains to drive a pickup truck through a rock-strewn dirt road and reach his flood-stricken orchard. After a while, the vehicle becomes stuck. Economou points to the hillside above, 500 meters (yards) high, eaten into by Storm Daniel that struck central Greece this month. "There used to be an apple orchard there. All the trees were carried away by the flood," the 53-year-old tells AFP.

"Some people will not be able to reach their fields at all. They will get zero income this year," Economou adds. The deluge caused by Storm Daniel three weeks ago, unleashing months' worth of rain in just hours, destroyed roads and bridges, drowned tens of thousands of farm animals and left 17 people dead.

"I lost 100 trees at one of my farms," says Antonis Laskos, 62. "They were uprooted and ended up in the sea." Zagora is Greece's apple powerhouse, with a farm cooperative that dates to 1916. Some 800 families have built their lives on the fruit.

The area's Zagorin apples—a Starking Delicious variety introduced from California in the early 1950s—have since 1996 carried a protected European designation of origin label. The villagers of Zagora, the area which produces some of Greece's finest apples, say up to 80 percent of the local road network has been knocked out and will not be easy to replace. And even the surviving crop is hard to bring



ZAGORA, Greece: A worker carries apples in a field, in Zagora, northern Greece on September 25, 2023. — AFP

GM reports higher Q3 sales as strike tests outlook

NEW YORK: General Motors reported higher third-quarter US auto sales Tuesday behind robust consumer demand, notching a strong performance that will be tested by an ongoing labor strike.

The big US automaker scored a 21 percent jump in auto deliveries to 674,336 behind strong gains in models such as the popular Silverado pickup line and the GMC truck brand. The impressive sales come as GM—along with Detroit rivals Ford and Stellantis—faces a widening United Auto Workers strike as the union seeks hefty wage increases and a fortification of benefits.

in, as the only bridge left standing in the area cannot sustain the 45-ton trucks normally used for transport, according to cooperative head Yiannis Kravvaris. "Smaller trucks will have to be used, and this will push up costs significantly," he notes.

Impossible to fix everything

"There are rebuilding efforts but the damage is so extensive that it's impossible to fix everything," says Ioulia Papoulia, an agronomist in charge of quality control at the Zagorin farm co-operative. "Last year we had 18.5 million apples. This year we'll be lucky to get five million kilos," she says.

The Athens Observatory put Zagora at the epicenter of the storm. From September 4-8, the observatory recorded 1,096 millimeters of rain—including over 750 millimeters on September 5.

The average rainfall in the area is 150 millimeters. The previous maximum in Zagora was 231 millimeters in 2018. This week, another storm named Elias dumped an additional 96 millimeters of water. Harvester Costas Zervas, 50, says this year's apple crop was already problematic owing to climate change.

"We had frequent rain in June that caused disease.

"And the winter was mild. Apple trees need the cold, from 800 to 1,600 hours of frost annually," Zervas explains. Facing a barrage of criticism at a perceived failure in cooperation between the army and civil protection in the hours following the disaster, the government has pledged over two billion euros (\$2.1 billion) in reconstruction funds.

Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, who comfortably won re-election and a second four-year term in June, has warned Greece is facing a "climate war". "Over a two-week period, we experienced the worst wildfire and the worst floods in our history," Mitsotakis said this month. —AFP

EU starts probe into Chinese electric cars subsidies

BRUSSELS: The European Union said Wednesday that it had "sufficient evidence" of illegal Chinese electric car subsidies as it officially launched an inquiry that has enraged Beijing. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen raised hackles in China when she announced last month that Brussels would start an anti-subsidy investigation.

Some fear the European Union's action could lead to a trade war after Beijing warned the probe would harm trade relations between the two sides.

"The Commission is in possession of sufficient evidence tending to show the existence of subsidization, threat of injury and causal link required for the initiation of an anti-subsidy investigation," the notice of initiation published in the EU's official journal said Wednesday.

The notice included details about how the commission found evidence of loans at favorable rates, tax exemptions and components bought very cheaply. The clock formally starts ticking now and the probe must be completed within 13 months – though the EU can impose provisional anti-subsidy duties nine months from Wednesday. If the EU concludes there are unfair practices, it could impose tariffs on Chinese car manufacturers above the standard 10 percent EU rate. But Brussels could also decide to do nothing.

"Should the existence of subsidization and injury caused thereby be established... the investigation will examine whether the imposition of measures would not be against the Union interest," the notice read. Von der Leyen vowed Wednesday that the probe would be "fair".

"Wherever we find evidence that their (EU car manufacturers') efforts are being impeded by market distortions and unfair competition, we will act decisively," she said in a statement. "We will do this in full respect of our EU and international obligations—because Europe plays by the rules, within its borders and globally." The automotive sector is the jewel in Europe's industrial crown, providing direct and indirect jobs to around 14 million Europeans, or 6.1 percent of all EU employment.

When she announced the probe on September 13, von der Leyen said the cost of Chinese electric cars were "kept artificially low by huge state subsidies". The notice also said the commission decided to open the investigation "without having received a written complaint by or on behalf of the Union industry". — AFP

ter-ending inventories of 442,586 autos represents the highest level since late 2020. But that figure is far below pre-pandemic levels. At the end of 2018, GM had 755,000 available units. A presentation from Cox Automotive said GM brands Chevrolet and Cadillac had lower-than-average US inventories, while Ford and Stellantis brands Jeep and Ram had supplies above the national average.

"The strike could not have come at a worse time given their recent momentum," Cox economist Charlie Chesbrough said of GM last week on a webcast.

Jonathan Smoke, another Cox economist, described the strike's impact as "muted" thus far. But Smoke characterized a long-running stoppage as a threat given that automakers have only recently improved their vehicle availability. "If the strike lasts beyond Thanksgiving (in late November), the industry is likely to see a setback and a repeat of much of the dynamics we saw in 2021," when inventories were cramped due to supply chain issues, he said. — AFP

Later on Tuesday, Chrysler owner Stellantis posted a decline in its third quarter sales in the United States. Stellantis North America reported sales of 380,563 vehicles in the July-to-September period, down one percent on the same quarter last year.

"We've gained traction over the summer and we're starting to see some momentum at the end of this third quarter," the company's US head of sales, Jeff Kommar, said in a statement published alongside the results.

Some analysts have said GM is the worst-positioned of the three companies because of its more modest vehicle inventory levels. All four of GM's main brands scored sales gains, with three of the four seeing double-digit increases, reflecting improved vehicle availability after supply chain difficulties cramped inventories in the year-ago period. "Customer demand for our vehicles continues to be strong, and that's the biggest aspect you see in our results and will drive us going forward," said a GM spokesman. They pointed out that GM's quar-

Business

EU moves to protect sensitive technology from rivals, China

Brussels building a trade policy armory after supply chain shocks

STRASBOURG: The EU unveiled Tuesday a list of sensitive technologies that should be kept out of the hands of rivals, as the bloc takes further measures to confront China's aggressive trade policies. Brussels is building a trade policy armory to protect the bloc from actions by rival nations, after supply chain shocks rocked European economies during the COVID pandemic, and the energy crisis that followed Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

It includes a tool approved by the European Parliament Tuesday that aims to punish nations that seek to put pressure on one of its member states. The European Commission published a list of four of the most critical technologies it believes Europe must monitor more carefully since they have the potential to harm the bloc's security in the wrong hands.

They are advanced semi-conductors used for many of the electrical goods people use daily; artificial intelligence including cloud computing; quantum technologies; and biotechnologies including genetic modification techniques. The commission will carry out risk assessments with member states by the end of the year to determine what follow-up measures to take, which could include export controls.

"We need to continuously monitor our critical technologies, assess our risk exposure and—as and when necessary—take measures to preserve our

strategic interests and our security," EU internal market commissioner Thierry Breton said. Europe is "putting an end to the era of naivety", Breton added in a statement. There was no direct mention of China or Russia, but the targets of the list are clear. The United States has taken several measures in recent years to curb Beijing's access to technology, including limiting the sale of advanced computer chips to China.

Although the European Union says it seeks to maintain dialogue with Beijing, Brussels has stepped up its efforts to curtail critical trade with China.

Stand up for EU jobs

It is part of a strategy of "de-risking" but not "decoupling" from China, pioneered by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. She has repeatedly emphasized the need for Europe to produce more on the continent and work with friendlier nations to ensure "economic security", a phrase often used since Russia's assault on Ukraine began last year.

Von der Leyen unveiled the security strategy doctrine in June to better protect the EU's interests and tasked the commission with preparing a proposal on outbound investment that could restrict overseas funding by European companies. The parliament

also gave final approval to a mechanism that would allow the bloc to impose tariffs, restrict investment and limit access to public contracts for nations seen as engaging in economic blackmail.

It is a response to a dispute with China over trade restrictions imposed on EU member Lithuania after it strengthened ties with Taiwan. "It is a necessary tool which will help to protect the interests of the EU and its member states from economic coercion," the EU's trade commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis said during a parliamentary debate in Strasbourg on Monday. "The new instrument gives us the means to stand up for EU jobs and industry," he said.

MEPs were quizzing Dombrovskis on Tuesday about the EU's relations with Beijing following his visit to China last month. During the trip he raised the issue of Europe's ballooning trade deficit with China, which he said had reached 400 billion euros (\$420 billion).

The EU is already preparing a law to cut its dependence on China for critical raw materials, used in products like electric cars and smartphones. China already moved in July to curb access to two rare metals—gallium and germanium—vital for making semi-conductors. In the latest salvo against China, Brussels opened a probe last month into Chinese electric car subsidies after claims they lead to un-



STRASBOURG: European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen speaks during a debate in this file photo.— AFP

fair competition in the EU market. The investigation triggered fears of a trade war with Beijing, since the EU could decide to impose tariffs on Chinese electric cars above the standard 10 percent EU rate if it concludes there are unfair practices. — AFP

New Zealand holds key rate steady

WELLINGTON: New Zealand's central bank left its key interest rate unchanged Wednesday, in its last decision before the country's election.

The rate of 5.5 percent is "constraining economic activity and reducing inflationary pressure as required", the bank said in its policy statement. Inflation stands at six percent, with the bank's target range being between one and three percent.

"Globally, economic growth remains below trend and headline inflation has eased for most of our trading partners," the bank said. "Core inflation has also eased, but to a lesser extent." New Zealanders cast their vote on October 14, with opinion polls showing the ruling centre-left Labor Party lagging behind the conservative National Party. — AFP

EBRD aims to double Ukraine fund

LONDON: The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development wants to double its post-war Ukraine reconstruction fund to at least 3.0 billion euros (\$3.1 billion) per year, its president Odile Renaud-Basso told AFP. The EBRD chief, speaking before her attendance at the International Monetary Fund/World Bank autumn meetings in Marrakesh next week, painted a hopeful outlook for a nation torn apart by Russia's invasion that began in February 2022. The bank was founded in 1991 to help former Soviet bloc countries switch to free-market economies but has since extended its reach to Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa.

Ukraine's war-ravaged economy shrank by almost a third last year, but the EBRD forecast last week that it will grow by a modest one percent in 2023.

"We now have stabilization. Outside of conflict zones and occupied territories, economic activity continues to function, banks to finance and businesses have reorganized themselves," Renaud-Basso said in an interview at the EBRD's London headquarters. The lender, which invests alongside the private sector, has "substantially increased funding" for Ukraine since Russia's invasion. Before the war, EBRD investments in Ukraine stood at between 800 million euros and 1.0 billion euros.

The bank's Ukraine funding hit 1.7 billion euros in 2022 and will moderate to some 1.5 billion euros this year. "For the reconstruction phase, we should double our investments... to about three billion euros per year, with a focus on the private sector and on large infrastructure projects," Renaud-Basso said.

The World Bank has previously put an estimate of \$14 billion on Ukraine's immediate needs to repair the damage caused by the bitter fighting. Turning to Russia, the EBRD boss conceded that the nation has coped better than expected with Western sanctions. The EBRD forecast last week that Russia's economy will grow in 2023 thanks to high oil revenues, having initially forecast a contraction.

"This shows a certain resilience, in the short term at least, of the Russian economy which has managed to reorganize trade flows," noted its president. "For some time, Russia managed to benefit from significant export revenues for its fossil fuels," she added in reference to the nation's plentiful gas and oil supplies. The lender expects Russian GDP growth of 1.5 percent, after predicting contraction of 1.5 percent in a prior estimate made in May. "Oil revenues have been supported by rising oil prices and Russia's ability to offset the impact of the cap by exporting to new markets," the EBRD said last week. And it named such markets as China and India, adding that Russia's economy remained robust particularly for household consumption and government spending on the war. — AFP

stc secures Uptime Institute's approval for its data centers

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced that its Data Center Team has successfully received the Management & Operations Stamp of Approval award from the esteemed Uptime Institute. The Institute is an advisory organization focused on improving business critical infrastructure through innovation, collaboration, and independent performance certificates.

stc indicated in a statement that the M&O Stamp of Approval award showcases the company's diligent efforts in delivering exceptional services to its customers. The company completed a rigorous process where it fulfilled the criterion and requirements set by Uptime in order to receive the award. Now, stc has shown that its data centers are in line with the highest international standards within the industry. Additionally, the Company can utilize the M&O Stamp of Approval award to participate in both private and government tenders that require providers to hold a valid and reputable certification.

Receiving the award also aligns with stc's pioneering position as an enabler of digital transformation in Kuwait. As the digital ecosystem continues to expand and evolve, businesses are keen on finding data centers that ensure optimal uptime, security, and efficiency. With the Uptime Institute award, stc further solidifies its position as a trustworthy partner in this rapidly evolving digital era. This comes in continuation of the various initiatives launched by stc to support organizations, of all sizes, in pursuing their digital transformation strategies.

The Management & Operations Stamp of Approval Program by Uptime Institute is a prestigious award that is comprised of a holistic assessment of



CEO Mazayad bin Nasser Al-Harbi, the executive management and the Data Center team with the award.

staffing and organization practices, maintenance and operations activities, as well as management and planning. The program helps data center owners and operators introduce consistency, reduce risk, and build a culture of continuous improvement in their critical facilities. Obtaining the award proves to stakeholders, insurers, and management that the data center facility excels in this demanding industry.

stc thanked, in its statement, Uptime Institute for its collaborative efforts and assessment of the Company's data centers. The company also highlighted that the award will serve as a testament to the key objectives stc aims to achieve for its customers throughout their digital transformation journeys. Moreover, stc emphasized that the data center's M&O Stamp of Approval aligns with Kuwait's 2035 vision, underscoring the Company's commitment to bolstering government initiatives and enriching the community.



Aligning with its digital transformation strategy and Kuwait's 2035 vision

stc secures Uptime Institute's

"Management & Operations" Stamp of Approval for its Data Centers

stc

Ukraine's frontline steel industry fights to 'survive'

ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine: Wearing a heat-protective coat with hood and a visor, Sergiy peered down into a glowing orange stream of searing liquid metal at Ukraine's Zaporizhstal steel plant.

The blast furnace worker was as usual testing a stream of molten crude iron at around 1,400 degrees centigrade (2,552 Fahrenheit) for impurities. Yet just 40 kilometers away, some of the fiercest fighting of Russia's invasion was playing out in Ukraine's high-stakes counteroffensive.

Since the war started, Ukraine's metal industry, located mainly in frontline regions, has lost factories, staff, suppliers and access to vital export hubs. Those setbacks help explain World Bank estimates that Ukraine's economy suffered losses of \$41 billion in the war's first year. Zaporizhstal is part of the Metinvest steel and mining group controlled by Rinat Akhmetov, reportedly Ukraine's richest man.

"We have a basic task—to save the company, to save our assets, to survive," Oleksandr Myronenko, chief operating officer of Metinvest, told AFP. Steel plants such as Zaporizhstal are key to Ukraine's economy, and maintaining production—even at lower levels—points to the sector's resilience.

But they have also become symbols of Ukraine's military resistance: the Azov battalion resisted Russian forces while holed up in Metinvest's Azovstal steel works during the ultimately unsuccessful defence of the port city of Mariupol. The Zaporizhstal plant is a sprawling network of pipes, roads, rail and warehouses, in the southern region of Zaporizhzhia, which Russia claims to have annexed.

In one building, a Soviet-era sign hails production records. On a blackboard, someone has written: "Putin is a dickhead!"

The plant's furnaces have cooled only twice in its history, a spokeswoman said—during World War II and when Russia invaded. Despite the fighting nearby, Myronenko said Zaporizhstal was producing around 70 percent of pre-war volumes with most



ZAPORIZHZHIA: An employee works at a blast furnace shop at the steel maker plant company of Zaporizhstal in Zaporizhzhia, eastern Ukraine on Sept 21, 2023, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

production headed for the United States or Europe.

"I expect us to produce more steel than in 2022," he said. "This can be called a good result". But exports have been hampered, he said, by Russia's blockade of Black Sea ports and shelling of the Danube port of Izmail, whose staff are afraid to work in Moscow's crosshairs. Metinvest last month managed to send out cargo on three ships that had been stranded in Black Sea ports but Myronenko said ship owners were afraid to send in more vessels.

He said he had placed his hopes on an alternative Black Sea route Ukraine is testing. Like the ports, the Zaporizhzhia plant is threatened by Russian strikes. It has bomb shelters, but some workers can't leave their posts during air raids. "It's not possible to stop the process," Sergiy, 30, said. "It's scary but what can you do? You have to feed your family," he said, throwing up cascades of sparks as he tested the metal. "There's only one alternative: go to fight".

About eight thousand Metinvest workers have been mobilized or volunteered to fight. At Ukraine's largest steel plant about 130 kilometers west in Kryvyi Rig, 2,600 staff have gone to the front and over a hundred have been killed. The ArcelorMittal

Kryvyi Rig plant—owned by a Luxembourg-based holding company—had 26,000 workers before the war but now employs about 12,000 full-time. Zaporizhstal has lost around one third of its 10,500 workforce since the invasion.

Due to production cuts, some staff have gone on compulsory downtime on 2/3 wages while others are fighting or have moved away. A billboard at the plant's entrance reads: "Together to victory".

The plant idled its furnaces after Russia's invasion and paused water-cooled equipment this summer after a major dam breach blamed on Russian forces. The Dnipro river is about 55 kilometers away, with Russian forces entrenched on the opposite bank. "War dictates its own terms," said Vladislav Tyurin, a 39-year-old senior foreman.

Of around 350 people in his section, 65 went to fight and four have been killed, he said. One employee and three were wounded last December when Russian missiles slammed onto the plant's territory, Tyurin said. Asked what happens when air raid siren sounds mingle with the roar of machinery and clang of metal on the continuous casting line, he said simply: "We are afraid". — AFP

Lifestyle



A tourist looks at a stone rosette at Hisham's Palace an Ummayad-era (built between 724-743) archaeological site which includes the remains of a palace, an ornate bath complex, and an agricultural estate, lying north of the Palestinian city of Jericho in Palestine. — AFP photos



A man tests a perfume sold in a bottle shaped like a locally made Qassam rocket, in front of a shop in Gaza City.

Palestine pins tourism hopes on UNESCO listing

In the ancient city of Jericho in Palestine, a prehistoric site has raised Palestinian hopes of a tourism boom after UNESCO declared it a World Heritage site. Just a few dozen visitors braved the midday sun to stroll around Tell Al-Sultan, where archaeologists have unearthed evidence of community life dating back about 10,000 years. Passersby may not spot the inconspicuous mound tucked away on the edge of Jericho, but it drew international attention in September when it was added to UNESCO's World Heritage List.

Residents celebrated with fireworks, well aware that such recognition could change their fortunes. "For the first time, I felt that there was justice in the world," said Jericho mayor Abdulkareem Sider. "Hopefully it will have a significant positive impact on the number of tourists," he added at his office in city hall, where paintings of Jericho's heritage adorn the walls.

Jericho boasts a wealth of ancient sites, including the extensive mosaics of Hisham's Palace, an early Islamic site which Palestinian officials hope will be next to get a UNESCO listing.



An employee fills perfume bottles shaped like locally made Qassam rockets, sold in a shop in Gaza City.

A monastery clings to the Mount of Temptation, where Christians believe Jesus struggled with Satan for 40 days, while other biblical sites are dotted across the landscape.

But despite such cultural treasures, visitor numbers remain relatively low. In the first half of this year, there were 32,535 hotel guests in the Jericho area, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. That compares to 221,377 in Bethlehem, the West Bank

town celebrated by Christians as the birthplace of Jesus. A Chinese tourist outside Tell Al-Sultan admitted she had no idea about the ancient site, telling AFP she was only brought to the adjacent restaurant as part of a bus tour.

Inadequate labeling

Despite the fanfare surrounding the UNESCO announcement, just a few signs at Tell Al-Sultan explain the historical significance of the site where a permanent settlement had emerged by the 9th to 8th millennium BC. Maddie Oto, a 22-year-old American student on an educational tour, suggested the site needs better labeling to make it accessible. "You have to come here with a guide, to learn the things that we're learning," she said at Tell Al-Sultan, while a cable car overhead carried visitors to the Mount of Temptation.

Mohammed Mansour, in charge of developing Jericho's archaeological sites, is mindful of the shortcomings but says improvements are on the way thanks to funding from Italy. "We will make a new museum with a new entrance, with a walkway for visitors, and

also to protect the site, putting some shelters in some areas," he said.

Mansour's face lit up as he talked about the 29 cultural layers found at Tell Al-Sultan, where thousands of years ago residents were able to build steps up a tower and begin community living and a belief system. But while domestic and international funding will go some way towards promoting tourism in the city, Palestinians have no actual capacity to issue tourist visas.

Neighboring Jordan can be seen from Tell Al-Sultan but the nearby crossing is controlled by Zionist entity, which has occupied the West Bank since the Six-Day War of 1967. Both Mansour and the mayor lamented that many tourists come to Jericho as a stop on a broader tour led by guides with Zionist licenses and, as a result, visitors often believe they are in the Zionist entity rather than the Palestinian territories.

'Unbelievably beautiful'

The city also draws visits by Arab holders of Zionist entity passports, descendants of Palestinians who stayed on their land after Zionist entity's cre-

ation in 1948. Shadia Dahamshi, from Kafr Kanna in northern Zionist entity, was wowed by the "unbelievably beautiful" Hisham's Palace which was recently restored with Japanese funding. "The place is really, really marvelous," said the 55-year-old, amazed by the skill of the eighth-century craftsmen who built the fortified residence.

Her relative, however, pointed to the lack of air conditioning in a region where summer temperatures regularly top 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit). The mayor aspires to improve the visitor experience by lighting up the ancient sites so that they can be toured after dark, as well as encouraging tourists to explore more of the Jordan Valley.

"One day is not enough!" said Sider, who wants to develop tours of the date palms surrounding the city and walking trails through the valley. Tourists can travel to the Jordan River, the Dead Sea or discover local cuisine, he added. "Jericho is the oldest city in the world, so it's the right for all people" to visit, said the mayor. —AFP



Warming beaches threaten Yemen sea turtles' future

A picture shows a turtle nest on a beach in Yemen's Mahra province, near the border with Oman.

On a Yemeni beach, a sea turtle clambers ashore to lay eggs, which will likely be born female due to rising temperatures, creating a gender imbalance that brings the threat of local extinction. With sands made hotter by climate change, eggs are rarely yielding male turtles, which require cooler temperatures during the incubation period.

Studies in several coastal regions of southern Yemen "have shown that there are 90 percent more female sea turtles than males", said Jamal Baouzir, director of the biodiversity department at the University of Aden. The severe gender imbalance will continue until it brings about the complete extinction of sea turtles in Yemen "in the years to come", Baouzir said. Environmental activist Hafiz Kelshat said the proportion of males had "decreased considerably" in recent years.

"Most baby turtles are female due to the change in temperature," he told AFP on a nesting beach in Mahra province, near the border with Oman. This is especially the case in summer, when temperatures often top 31 degrees Celsius (88 degrees Fahrenheit) -- the point at which sea turtle eggs begin yielding females.



A turtle lays its eggs on a beach in Yemen's Mahra province, near the border with Oman.

The gender imbalance is getting worse each year as longer periods of extreme heat hit the Arabian Peninsula, one of the world's hottest regions. The problem is not unique to Yemen, wracked for nearly a decade by a devastating civil war which has created one of the world's worst humanitarian tragedies. From the US state of Florida to Australia's Great Barrier Reef, male sea turtle numbers are dwindling due to climate change. In 2018, US researchers found that rising temperatures meant most of the 200,000 green turtles in the northern Great Barrier Reef are female, compounding the threat of extinction.



A turtle arrives to nest on a beach in Yemen's Mahra province, near the border with Oman. — AFP photos

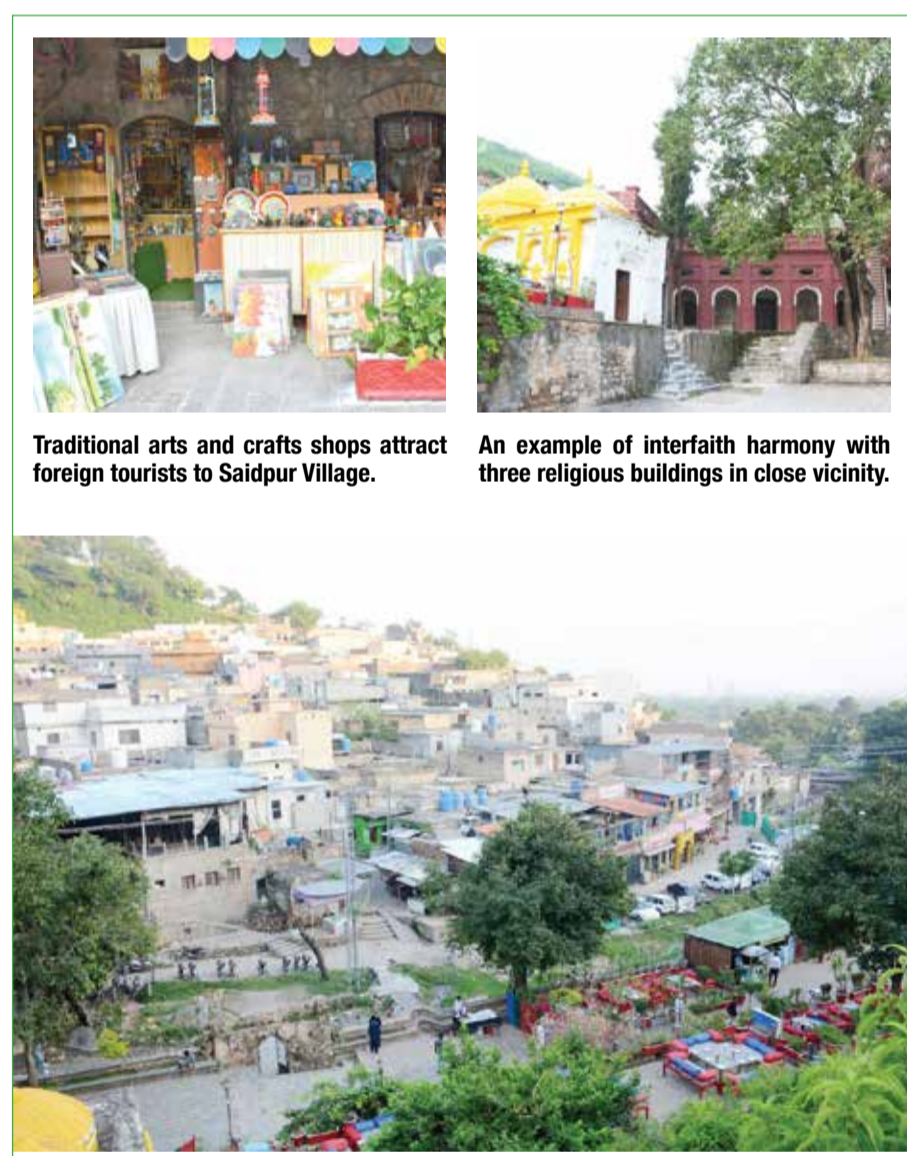
'Busy with war'

Yemen, wedged between the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, boasts a rich variety of natural habitats and species, many of them found nowhere else in the world. But its genetic diversity, and the potential for future tourism development it represents, are increasingly threatened by global warming. Yemen ranks as one of the region's most climate-vulnerable countries, according to the Global Adaptation Initiative of the University of Notre Dame in the US state of Indiana.

Extreme heat and increasing rainfall variability leading to both drought and flash floods are among the challenges forecast for the Arabian Peninsula's poorest country. Baouzir said that to tackle the deepening gender imbalance, authorities should create "a specialized technical team to monitor the turtles in their nesting places and place the eggs in appropriate incubators" to produce male offspring. The provision of sun shields on beaches could also help reduce sand temperatures and boost the number of male hatchlings.

But environmental conservation has inevitably taken a back seat to the grinding civil war, which has killed hundreds of thousands of people and left the country's infrastructure in tatters. "The current circumstances, of course, make it difficult to carry out" protection operations, Baouzir said. An environment ministry official in the internationally-recognized government, which controls Mahra province along with much of the south, acknowledged that conservation efforts had suffered during the war with Iran-backed Houthi rebels.

"The authorities have worked on various plans including the creation of several reserves," Naif Ali bin Masaad said. But they are "busy with the war against the Huthis and terrorist groups... so they do not assume their responsibilities" towards environmental protection, the official said. —AFP



Traditional arts and crafts shops attract tourists to Saidpur Village.

An example of interfaith harmony with three religious buildings in close vicinity.

A scenic view of Saidpur Village in Islamabad at the bottom of Margalla Hills.

Saidpur Village: Model village in heart of Islamabad

The Saidpur Village is a 500-year-old town in the base of Margalla Hills of Pakistani capital Islamabad that was remodeled into a cultural tourist attraction and heritage site to preserve traditional Pakistani rural life and attract tourists. Once a thriving center of trade and fine artisans, Saidpur Village lies in the heart of Islamabad with a scenic view to the Margalla Hills.

The area around Saidpur, which advocates peaceful co-existence and

harmony among faiths, has been a part of several civilizations including, the Buddhists, the Greeks, Ashoka of the Maurya Empire, the Mughal Empire, and the British Rule. The village offers visitors a scenic view of Margalla Hills, arts and crafts, traditional food and religious sites making it an ideal destination for tourists looking for traces of fading history and culture. —KUNA



Saidpur Village showcasing traditional colors to attract tourists.



Traditional food serving for tourists with scenic Margalla Hills view.



Italian model Vittoria Ceretti walks the runway to present a creation by Chanel as part of the Paris Fashion Week Womenswear Spring/Summer 2024 at the Grand Palais Ephemere in Paris. — AFP photos

CHANEL shows mismatched hems and flip-flops at PARIS FASHION WEEK

Chanel designer Virginie Viard unveiled a breezy, warm-weather collection in Paris on a drizzly Tuesday, showcasing a colorful lineup of asymmetric styles, paraded by models in flip-flops and thick-framed glasses. The audience,

including actress Penelope Cruz, singer Usher and Blackpink singer Jennie Kim, sat in box-like rooms with large windows looking out on life-size photographs of the scrub-filled hills of the French Riviera.

The models cut through the centre

of the sprawling space of the Grand Palais Ephemere exhibit hall in central Paris, parading tweed skirt sets with uneven hems, patchwork ensembles and lightweight dresses that trailed down in the back. Adding to the collection's nonchalant air, a swimsuit was

worn with a cape, relaxed jeans were dressed up with a slender, rhinestone belt and a tweed jacket, and sleeves on dresses were sliced open to cover shoulders in a cape-like fashion.

The show took place on the last day of Paris Fashion Week, which has

drawn crowds of industry press and celebrities to the French capital, topping off a season of runway presentations that also took place in New York, London and Milan.



US Model Gigi Hadid walks the runway to present a creation by Chanel during the Paris Fashion Week.

CHANEL



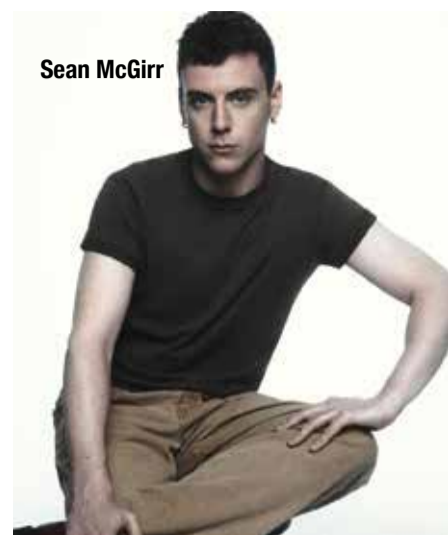
Models walk the runway to present a creation by Chanel.



Spanish actress Penelope Cruz poses during a photocall prior to the Chanel show.



Lifestyle



Sean McGirr

Alexander McQueen appoints new designer Sean McGirr

British fashion house Alexander McQueen on Thursday announced the appointment of a new head designer, Sean McGirr, replacing Sarah Burton who had led the label since the death of its founder. The Irish-born McGirr is not a household name in the fashion world, but was head of ready-to-wear at JW Anderson until recently, and also had stints at Dries Van Noten and Burberry.

parent group Kering, said: "Alexander McQueen is a house we are passionate about. We are confident that Sean McGirr will be able to pursue its journey with a new creative impetus." McGirr replaces Burton, who held her final show for the brand at the just-concluded Paris Fashion Week, with a notable starring role from Naomi Campbell on the catwalk.

Business of Fashion called it a "typically fearless final flourish from Bur-

ton", adding that it would be a tough act to follow. She joined the label in 1996, just four years after it was founded, and became head of women's collections in 2000. Burton took over as creative director after the suicide of its founder, Lee Alexander McQueen, in 2010, and distinguished herself the following year by designing the wedding dress of Kate Middleton for her marriage to Prince William.—AFP



Beyoncé's 'Renaissance' film to hit theaters in Dec

Beyoncé over the weekend wrapped her much-touted Renaissance World Tour, a 56-show performance epic promoting her lauded album that pays homage to dance and disco. And it's on to the next one for the 42-year-old megastar, with her latest project "Renaissance: A Film by Beyoncé" now slated for release December 1. It's not the first time Beyoncé has released elaborate visual companions to her music. She called both her 2013 self-titled album and 2016's "Lemonade" visual albums.

She's also released concert films, documentaries, and 2019's "Homecoming," which chronicled her headliner sets at Coachella. But this time she's shifting away from DVD or streaming-only releases, opting for a theatrical release a la Taylor Swift, whose Eras Tour concert film is poised to rule the box office when it is released later this month.

Based on surveys conducted by the company QuestionPro, by the time both Swift and Beyoncé have finished their blockbuster tours, they're expected to have generated a combined \$9 billion in economic activity just in North America. According to a statement from concert promoter Live Nation, Beyoncé's global run earned \$579 million.

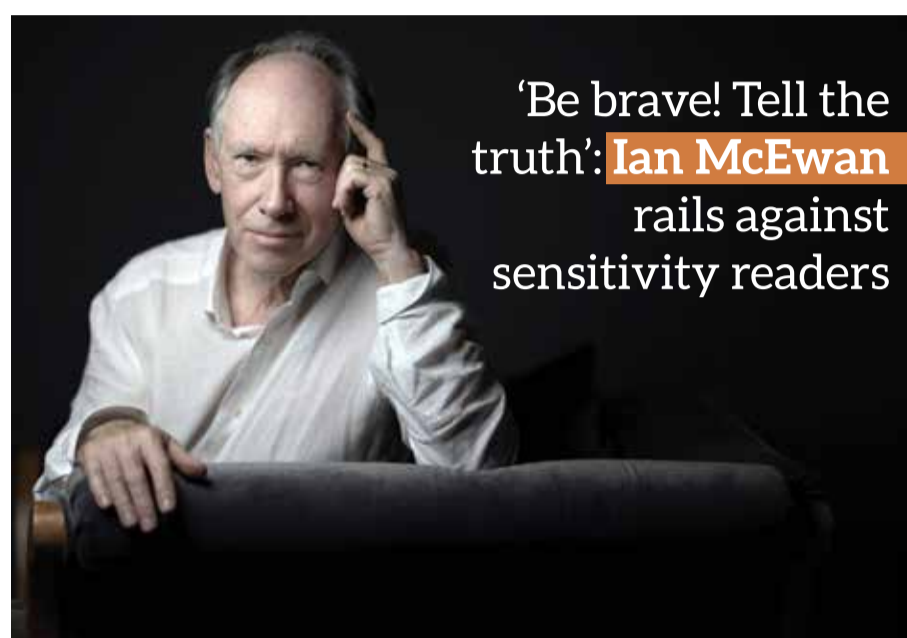
Beyoncé's film tracks her artistic journey over the course of her tour and is also expected to include behind-the-scenes footage of her and her family, including husband Jay-Z and their three children. "When I am performing, I am nothing but free," Beyoncé says in the trailer for her film. "My goal for this tour was to create a place where everyone is free, and no one is judged."—AFP

The acclaimed British novelist Ian McEwan is baffled by the current obsession with sensitivity in the publishing world. "Be brave," he urged young writers. "I don't know what's happening," said the Booker-winning writer of "Atonement", "Saturday" and "Amsterdam", when asked about "sensitivity readers" combing through books to remove anything that might be deemed offensive. "It's happening among very young people who are living in societies that are relatively free, and they seem to want to bind their arms and legs in ways that are just trivial," he told AFP.

He said he heard a young male writer talk about his fear of writing about male desire. "I thought, 'Poor guy!' Because you've lost the desire of half the world," he said. His advice: "Be brave! Screw the lot of them. You've got to write what you feel. You must tell the truth. 'These mass hysterias, moral panics, sweep through populations every now and then. And I think this is one of them.'"

McEwan, 75, insisted the trend does not apply to all young people—just "a weird thing that happens in some universities, which we got from the United States". He strongly supports young people fighting to combat climate change—a problem "that is going to affect every last one of us".

And he draws a line between the world of "trigger warnings" and "safe spaces" from calls for racial and post-colonial reckoning, saying he backed the students who tore down a slaver's statue in Bristol, England in 2020. "Demanding a little more accounting of our colonial imperial past is a perfectly good demand. But saying we can't read Nabokov or Conrad or whatever, seems beyond contempt," he said.



'Be brave! Tell the truth': Ian McEwan rails against sensitivity readers

"Stupid, shameful episodes" McEwan spoke to AFP during a trip to Paris just before the announcement of the Nobel Literature Prize, for which he has long been held up as a possible winner. He dismissed his chances. "You know, there are about 50 of us whose names come up every year," he said. "I think my son (a medical researcher) will get the Nobel Prize before me," he added with a laugh.

McEwan's novels have explored a wide range of complex moral topics from memory and trauma, the ethical implications of scientific progress to the darker side of love and relationships—usually with a sharply ironic humor. Many have been adapted into films, including "On Chesil Beach", "Enduring Love" and the highly acclaimed war romance "Atonement". Already halfway through his next book, he was

visiting Paris for the French release of "Lessons", which tracks a man's life alongside the major political events of McEwan's own lifetime, from the Suez and Cuban Missile crises right up to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is Brexit that has taken the greatest toll, he said. He sees it as symbolic of the defeat of an older version of Britain—of "teachers, doctors, librarians... people working in the public service (who) no longer count because Britain is really ruled by people who have made vast amounts of money in financial services and the social good is not of interest." "I think they'll be back," he added. "The wheel will turn again. We've seen too many of the stupid, shameful episodes of the populist right in our country."—AFP

SOUTH KOREAN MIGRANT'S TALE TO OPEN ASIA'S BIGGEST FILM FESTIVAL

The world premiere of Jang Kun-jae's "Because I Hate Korea" opened Asia's largest film festival Wednesday night as it looks to rally from a year marked by scandal and budget cutbacks. The South Korean director's tale of a disillusioned young woman who relocates to New Zealand is among 209 official entries from 69 countries set to unspool at the Busan International Film Festival (BIFF), which runs until October 13. Eighty will be making their world premieres in the southern port city.

This year's edition comes as organizers grapple with the fallout from former festival director Huh Moon-yung's resignation in May amid accusations of sexual misconduct. The scandal saw BIFF's 2023 budget reduced by about 10 percent as sponsors withdrew in the wake of the allegations, according to organizers. Kang Seung-ah, now serving as acting deputy director, acknowledged they had endured a "difficult phase" before assembling a lineup she said was "more substantial than ever before".

Opening night director Jang, who noted he'd attended BIFF far more as an audience member than a filmmaker, told a late afternoon news conference he had sought to address serious questions



South Korean producer Youn Hee-young, actor Meaningful Stone, actor Kim Woo-kyum, actor Joo Jong-hyuk and director Jang Kun-jae arrive on the red carpet for the 28th Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) before the screening of their opening film 'Because I hate Korea', at the Busan Cinema Center in Busan.— AFP photos

with his film. "I believe it's necessary to pay attention to the fact that many young people are finding it difficult to navigate through Korean society. I started questioning whether our society is providing a fair and equitable foundation for young people to pursue their dreams," he told reporters after a preview screening.

Based on the best-selling Chang Kang-myoung novel, "Because I Hate Korea" received support from BIFF's Asia Project Market back in 2016. South Korea has transformed itself into a cultural powerhouse since then thanks to the explosive success of the Oscar-winning "Parasite" and the Net-

flix series "Squid Game". "Many people are now showing great interest in Korean content such as K-pop, K-movies, and K-dramas. Living in such an era, they might develop a certain fantasy about South Korea, I think," Nam Dong-chul, the festival's acting interim director, told reporters.

But "I thought it might be good to consider these views from the perspective of people living in Korea and especially the youth in South Korea", he said of the opening night choice. "They might have different thoughts and experiences." Frequent Bong Joon-ho collaborator Go Ah-sung, who delivered a memorable performance as the protagonist of "Because I Hate Korea", was unable to attend the festival due to a back injury.

'Dear Jinri'

Despite Go's absence, the festival will still feature serious star power, with acclaimed Hong Kong actor Chow Yun Fat scheduled to receive the Asian Filmmaker of the Year award. Three of Chow's films—"A Better Tomorrow" (1986), "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" (2000) and 2023's "One More Chance"—will be screened in his honor.

Other highly anticipated screenings include "Dear Jinri", a documentary that features late K-pop star Sulli's last and incomplete project. Sulli, born Choi Jin-ri, took her own life in 2019 after a long struggle with online bullying. The film includes her final media interview, which has not been disclosed previously.

Korea's filmmaking diaspora will also be showcased with a special series of screenings that includes "Searching" (2018), starring John Cho, and director Celine Song's Sundance favorite "Past Lives". Netflix's highly anticipated "Yellow Door: 90s Lo-fi Film Club" will also have its world premiere at BIFF.

The documentary spotlights South Korea's renowned cinephile generation of the 1990s, acclaimed "Parasite" director Bong among them. "The Movie Emperor", director Ning Hao's satirical take on the Chinese film industry starring Hong Kong actor Andy Lau, is set to close the festival. Ning's comedy "deftly captures the fine line between the film industries in Hong Kong and mainland China", as well as the "delicate relationship between Western film festivals and Asian filmmakers", according to the program notes.—AFP



South Korean actor Han Ye-ri arrives on the red carpet for the 28th Busan International Film Festival (BIFF).



Chinese actress Fan Bing-Bing arrives on the red carpet for the 28th Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) at the Busan Cinema Center in Busan.



South Korean actor Park Eun-bin arrives on the red carpet for the 28th Busan International Film Festival (BIFF).

Sports

Pakistan eye easier ride on WCup tournament rollercoaster

'There is no room for complacency and we will be on the ball from the first match'

HYDERABAD: Pakistan tackle outsiders Netherlands in their opening match of the World Cup on Friday desperate to avoid a repeat of the disastrous start of four years ago which undermined their campaign. In 2019, Pakistan lost to the West Indies first up in Nottingham. Shot out for a paltry 105 in 21.4 overs, Pakistan went down by seven wickets. They eventually missed out on a semi-final spot on net run-rate. Four years on and Pakistan are already riding a familiar tournament rollercoaster.

They crashed out of last month's Asia Cup after a big defeat against arch-rivals India before being ousted by Sri Lanka in the Super Four stage. They also lost both their recent World Cup warm-ups against New Zealand and Australia.

Despite the sketchy form, captain Babar Azam insists his team are ready for the World Cup in a country which only two of the squad have ever visited. Pakistan last played in India in 2016 at the Twenty20 World Cup. "We had good practice in the last week since our arrival and two useful workouts in the warm-up games," said Azam. The captain is the top-ranked batsman in ODI cricket and reinforced his credentials with knocks of 80 and 90 in the two warm-ups, returning to form after a dismal Asia Cup. "The first match of a tournament is always very important so we are definitely looking forward to a winning start," he said.

Six out of six

Babar insisted 1992 champions Pakistan will not underestimate the Dutch, a team they have defeated six times in six meetings. The Netherlands, ranked 14 in the world, had to come through the qualifying tournament in Zimbabwe earlier this year and made it to the World Cup alongside Sri Lanka.

"I want to congratulate the Netherlands for playing in this World Cup. They played some good cricket in the qualifiers and that is why they are here," added Babar. "There is no room for complacency and we will be on the ball from the first match."



AHMEDABAD: (L to R) Bangladesh's captain Shakib Al Hasan with his counterparts South Africa's Temba Bavuma, New Zealand's Kane Williamson, India's Rohit Sharma, Pakistan's Babar Azam, England's Jos Buttler, Australia's Pat Cummins, Afghanistan's Hashmatullah Shahidi and Netherlands' Scott Edwards pose for photograph during the Captains' Day event, an interaction session with the media at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. — AFP

Pakistan will hope their spin trio of Shadab Khan, Usama Mir and Mohammad Nawaz, backed by part-timers Iftikhar Ahmed and Agha Salman, expose opponents' weaknesses against slow bowling at the tournament.

Although they are without the injured Naseem Shah, spearhead Shaheen Shah Afridi and Haris Rauf will pose a formidable new ball threat. The Netherlands have only ever won two matches at the World Cup since their maiden appearance in 1996.

Spinners Colin Ackermann and Roelof van der

Merwe, and pacer Paul van Meekeren are back after missing the qualifiers. Wesley Barresi, the only surviving member of the 2011 World Cup on the sub-continent, lends experience to the batting which also boasts prime run-getters Max O'Dowd, Vikramjit Singh, Teja Nidamanuru and skipper Scott Edwards.

But their hopes will rest largely on all-rounders Bas de Leede and Logan van Beek, key performers at the qualifiers. De Leede scored 285 runs and picked up 15 wickets in Zimbabwe while Van Beek

smashed 30 runs and took two wickets in the knife-edge Super Over win against the West Indies.

"The opportunity to play in a World Cup is something that a lot of these guys have dreamt of," said Tonga-born Edwards. Despite their status as rank outsiders, the Dutch do not lack confidence. "We hold high hopes going into this World Cup that we can put in a couple of really big performances and those can result in wins," coach Ryan Cook told AFP. "We'll be putting everything that we can in to getting five or six wins to take us into the semi-finals." — AFP

In my view

Abdullah Al-Rashidi: A fine example



By Abdellatif Sharaa

Local@kuwaittimes.com

Around 30 years ago, I was asked to visit the Kuwait Shooting Sport Club by a friend to handle some paperwork. I wasn't quite sure what the game was all about back then. However, I consider myself fortunate to have become a part of the media committee of the club. It was here that I swiftly gained insights into the sport, and before long, the inaugural Gulf Brotherhood tournament was organized. This event brought me closer to Kuwaiti shooters, including the exceptional Abdullah Al-Turqi Al-Rashidi.

Abdullah Al-Rashidi is a unique individual. As I observed him closely, I learned a great deal from and about him. Born in 1963, Bu Talal, as he is affectionately known, provided me with an unforgettable response to a common question: "When do you plan to retire?" He responded with unwavering determination, saying, "Gold is awaiting me in Paris."

Since the conclusion of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, he has tirelessly devoted himself to training day and night. This relentless effort extends to local, regional and international tournaments, which he regards as crucial preparations for the upcoming Olympics.

Abdullah's passion for standing atop the award podium ignited early in his career. He successfully qualified for the Olympics, starting with the 2000 Sydney Olympics, followed by appearances in Athens in 2004, Beijing in 2008, London in 2012 and Rio de Janeiro in 2016. It was in Rio de Janeiro that he secured the bronze medal as an independent shooter, when the Kuwait Olympic Committee was banned. He repeated his success in Tokyo 2020, once again clinching the bronze, after which he declared, "Gold awaits me in Paris."

Abdullah's impressive participation in world championships is widely recognized. He earned the gold medal at the Nicosia championships in 1995, Lima in 1997 and Barcelona in 1998. In addition, he secured the bronze at Belgrade in 2011, with several other tournament victories in between. Notably, he triumphed at the 8th Asian Championship held in October 1995 in Jakarta and won the masters championship in Brno, Czechia in 2004.

Bu Talal is known for his relentless work ethic. When he sets a goal, he pursues it tirelessly, regardless of the weather conditions. His commitment to maintaining peak physical condition is unwavering, and he adheres to a healthy diet. Equally important, he limits his time on his smartphone, as he believes it can affect his sharp vision and concentration.

Let our younger generation adopt such a dedicated attitude, and let us support and nurture them so that Kuwait continues to achieve success today, tomorrow and in the years to come.

Afghanistan dump holders Sri Lanka out of Asian Games

HANGZHOU: Afghanistan skipper Gulbadin Naib hailed his "superstar" side Wednesday after they beat defending champions Sri Lanka by eight runs to book an Asian Games semi-final against Pakistan. Bangladesh will meet India in the last four, also on Friday, after scraping home by two runs in a massive fright against Malaysia. After being sent in to bat, the Afghans were dismissed for just 116 in the 19th over on a Hangzhou pitch offering pace, sharp turn and fierce bounce. Seamer Nuwan Thushara bagged 4-17 with Noor Ali Zadran's 51 the only resistance.

Sri Lanka's target looked gettable, but they blew the run chase with experienced quick Naib's 3-28 and young leg-spinner Qais Ahmad's 3-16 doing the damage as they were bundled out for 108. "Every guy in the team is like a superstar in Afghanistan. A lot of our players are playing franchise league cricket (around the world) so they have a lot of experience now," said Naib.

"We didn't put a good total on the board, but the guys on the field out there were brilliant and have really shown their class." Twenty20 cricket has been played at the Asian Games twice before, at Guangzhou 2010 and Incheon 2014, with Afghanistan runners-up both times, to Bangladesh and then Sri Lanka. Bangladesh stayed on track for a second title, but only just, after managing a miserly 116-5. They were on the brink of defeat with Malaysia needing five runs off the final over, after Virandeep Singh's sumptuous 52 put the Malaysians within reach of a major upset.

But Bangladesh held on thanks to a tight last over from Afif Hossain, who called on all his experience from 63 T20Is to keep his country alive. "One good thing was we didn't lose hope, we didn't give up the game until the last ball," said Bangladesh skipper Saif Hasan after Malaysia were restricted to 114-8. "Everyone, especially Afif, held their nerve." Afghanistan have brought a host of top-flight players to China, including hard-hitting wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Shahzad and all-rounder Naib. They met their match in a young Sri Lanka attack. —AFP

Team 5.30 wins KBC 2023 in style

KUWAIT: Defending IBAK Kuwait Badminton League (KBL) champions, Team 5.30, a team owned by a set of badminton enthusiasts, won their maiden Kuwait Badminton Challenge (KBC) trophy in a recently concluded, prestigious, international badminton tournament. The annual tournament, conducted by Indian Badminton Association - Kuwait (IBAK) under the leadership of its chairman, Dr Manimaran Chozhan, set the courts on fire in terms of high quality badminton for three days, from Sept 27 to Sept 29, 2023. Top class players from different countries like India, Malaysia, Kuwait and the Middle East region, participated in this badminton extravaganza. Six top class teams were put in two groups, with top two qualifying for the semi finals.

Team 5.30, after reaching the semi finals, defeated ex-champions, All Stars comprehensively by a margin of 3-0. In the finals, which was fought with high intensity, Team 5.30 defeated Challengers 3-1 to win the KBC. This was Team 5.30's second shut at KBC after reaching semi finals in 2019. Team was led by five times national doubles champion, Markose Bristow who was ably supported by leading doubles player



Kuwait eyes top spot in world bowling tourney

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Bowling team begins its competitions at the world championship, hosted by Kuwait from October 4th until October 15th, with hopes of making achievements of ending in top places despite the strong competitions.

Participating teams completed their final training yesterday (Wednesday) at the Bowling Complex hall under enthusiastic atmosphere promising tough competitions in quest of the title be it for men or women.

Head of the African Federation and member of the executive bureau at the International Bowling Federation Farouq Haridi said he was happy to be in Kuwait, that has become an attraction of world players. He said Kuwait's hosting of the championship confirms its status and ability to organize such championships in which elite players seek to participate in.

He said competition will not be easy due to the high level of players who arrived in Kuwait for one goal which is to compete for the title.

Haridi lauded the efforts the International Federation is exerting under the presidency of Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and his continued keenness on removing all obstacles in the way of development of the game in all continents.



Jaison Xavier. Other players included exciting national level players from India, Maneesha Kukkapalli, Nithin H V, Akshan Shetty and Bhargav S. Top level players from Malaysia, Goh Kang Zuang and Nur Akmal Rumani, Noufal K V from Qatar and Amritha Anai Kumar

from Kuwait completed the line-up. The tournament was inaugurated by Indian Ambassador Dr Adarsh Swaika. The event witnessed some high octane badminton displayed by more than 40 international badminton players from across the world.



Sports

Man Utd, Arsenal rocked in Champions League as Real Madrid edge Napoli

Bellingham continues his sensational start to his Madrid career

PARIS: Manchester United crashed to a second successive Champions League defeat on Tuesday, losing 3-2 at home to Galatasaray, while Lens stunned Arsenal and Jude Bellingham once again inspired Real Madrid. Mauro Icardi made amends for a missed penalty by scoring the winner for Galatasaray as the Turkish club twice came from behind at Old Trafford to pile more misery onto a deeply troubled United side.

United have lost their first two games of a Champions League group for the first time, leaving Erik ten Hag's men in danger of an early exit. "The mental errors we make, you cannot allow them at this level. You get punished. This is difficult to control," Ten Hag told TNT Sports. "We are all in this together. We were twice up and in control of the game. We expect more together."

Rasmus Hojlund was one of the rare bright spots for United, scoring two well-taken goals, but Galatasaray responded both times as Wilfried Zaha netted against his old side before Kerem Akturkoglu struck. Icardi dragged a penalty wide after Casemiro was sent off for a desperate lunge following a dreadful ball out from goalkeeper Andre Onana, but the Argentine had the last laugh when he chipped home on 81 minutes.

United are bottom of Group A, six points adrift of Bayern Munich who came from behind to beat FC Copenhagen 2-1 in Denmark. Lukas Lerager fired the Danes ahead early in the second half, but Jamal Musiala bagged a superb individual goal to haul Bayern level before teenage substitute Mathys Tel lashed in a fine strike late on.

Arsenal lose Saka

Arsenal slumped to a first defeat of the season as

Lens hit back to win 2-1 in northern France. Gabriel Jesus gave Mikel Arteta's side an ideal start when he opened the scoring in the 14th minute to silence a raucous Stade Bollaert. Adrien Thomasson soon brought last season's Ligue 1 runners-up level and the visitors saw Bukayo Saka limp off before half-time. Wahi, the 20-year-old striker who became Lens' club-record signing when he joined at the start of the campaign, then fired home in the 69th minute and his side held on for a famous victory.

"It was a big night for us. We weren't able to take the result we wanted but we were able to learn," said Arteta. Lens climbed to the top of Group B on four points, one above Arsenal. PSV Eindhoven snatched a 2-2 draw at home against Sevilla in the other game in the group courtesy of Jordan Teze's stoppage-time equaliser after a late flurry of goals in the Netherlands.

England star Bellingham continued his sensational start to his Madrid career with a goal and an assist as Carlo Ancelotti's side beat Napoli 3-2 in Group C. "What's so amazing about Bellingham is that he's only 20. He has great quality, a strong personality and character," Ancelotti told Sky Sport.

"He's a young man of 20 who's showing everything what extraordinary talent he has." Leo Ostigard headed Napoli in front but Bellingham set up Vinicius Junior to level before the England midfielder's brilliant run and finish put the Spaniards on top.

Piotr Zielinski converted a penalty to level for Napoli at the start of the second half but an unfortunate own goal from home goalkeeper Alex Meret handed Madrid victory. Federico Valverde's thunderous drive from distance crashed back off the bar and hit Meret before bouncing back into the goal.

Braga ruined Union Berlin's home debut in the



CARRINGTON: Galatasaray's Argentine forward #09 Mauro Icardi misses his penalty shot during the UEFA Champions league group A football match between Manchester United and Galatasaray at Old Trafford stadium in Manchester. — AFP

competition as Andre Castro struck a stoppage-time winner in a 3-2 victory. Union were two goals ahead after Sheraldo Becker's brace but Sikou Niakate pulled one back before Bruma curled in a brilliant equaliser from 25 metres.

Castro broke Union hearts with a low strike from

outside the area to give Braga their first points in their first Champions League appearance since 2012. Marcus Thuram struck the only goal as Inter Milan won 1-0 at home to Benfica in Group D. Inter are level on four points with Real Sociedad, who beat Salzburg 2-0 earlier in the day in Austria. — AFP

Klopp wants Spurs, Liverpool replay after VAR blunder

LIVERPOOL: Jurgen Klopp wants Liverpool's match at Tottenham to be replayed due to the VAR error that cost them the opening goal at the weekend. Spurs went on to win the Premier League game 2-1. The fallout from the VAR failure in Saturday's defeat, in which officials wrongly disallowed Luis Diaz's goal due to a misunderstanding over the on-field decision, is still being felt.

Referees body Professional Game Match Officials Ltd (PGMOL) released the audio conversation between the match officials after a request

from Liverpool, but Klopp said that had made little difference to their thinking. "The audio didn't change it at all," he told a press conference on Wednesday. "It is an obvious mistake. I think there should be solutions for that. I think the outcome should be a replay. The argument against that would be it opens the gates. It is unprecedented. It has not happened before."

"I'm used to wrong and difficult decisions, but something like this never happened and so that is why I think a replay is the right thing to do." Questioned over whether the club had asked or would formally ask the Premier League for a replay, Klopp added: "At this stage we are still going through the information we have." Liverpool also had Curtis Jones and Diogo Jota sent off as their unbeaten start to the season came to an end. PGMOL released a statement admitting a "significant human error" had led to the wrong decision being made. — AFP



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's German manager Jurgen Klopp (L) reacts during the English League Cup third round football match between Liverpool and Leicester City at Anfield in Liverpool. — AFP

Italy throw All Blacks memories into the fire

DECINES-CHARPIEU: Italy have healed their shattered confidence after last week's capitulation against New Zealand by throwing their unhappy memories "into the fire" ahead of their must-win Rugby World Cup clash with France, scrum-half Stephen Varney said on Wednesday.

Head coach Kieran Crowley has made five changes to the team that was trounced 96-17 in Lyon last week. It was the Azzurri's second largest defeat to the All Blacks and their heaviest loss in the Six Nations era. Some bruised egos needed to be healed before Friday's crunch clash against the hosts, in which victory for the Azzurri would see them qualify for the quarter-finals for the first time in their history. "We've been quite devastated by our performance," Varney told reporters.

"Going into the week, Kieran brought us in and we needed to get our confidence back. We did this thing where we chucked our thoughts into the fire to



DECINES-CHARPIEU: In this file photo France's Maxime Lucu (R) and Charles Ollivon (L) tackle Japan's Siosaia Fifita (C) during the rugby union international Test match between Japan and France at Toyota Stadium in Toyota City, Aichi. — AFP

try to forget about it and take our learnings into this week and I think we've done that well."

At the start of the week, the entire 33-man squad along with staff were given the opportunity to unburden themselves. "Basically we just wrote our thoughts on a piece of paper and just chucked it into

a fire," said Varney. "I think it's a good way of forgetting about it and moving on because I don't think that performance defined us as a team." It was a crucial part of the recovery process. "It was important as a team to mourn the All Blacks match and now we're ready to show how good we can be," said lock Federico Ruzza.

'X-factor Ange'

Crowley restored Tommaso Allan to fly-half and reverted to two midfield playmakers in his team announced on Wednesday. Paolo Garbisi switches back to inside centre having started in the No.10 jersey during last week's humiliation.

"We decided for this particular game we want the two playmakers at 10 and 12," said Crowley. Ange Capuozzo takes over at full-back with Pierre Bruno coming into the side on the right wing as veteran centre Luca Morisi drops to the bench in the only personnel change in the backline. "Ange is an X-factor player. France have a long kicking game so we'll have some opportunities to build some attack from back there," added the coach. Crowley has picked an entirely new front row with New Zealand-born Hame Faiva given the nod at hooker in place of the injured Giacomo Nicotera. — AFP

Iran plays down football spat with Saudi

TEHRAN: Iran's top diplomat on Wednesday played down a spat with Saudi Arabia that prompted the cancellation of an Asian Champions League match, insisting relations with its longtime rival were improving. The row, over a statue of assassinated Revolutionary Guards commander Qasem Soleimani in the stadium in Iran's third city Isfahan, was the first incident to mar a surprise rapprochement between the rival Middle East powers brokered by China in March.

Saudi club Al Ittihad had refused to take to the pitch for their away game against Iran's Sepahan FC in protest at the statue of Soleimani, who oversaw Iran's military operations across the Middle East until his death in a targeted US drone strike in 2020.

The Asian Football Confederation later confirmed that the fixture had been cancelled "due to unanticipated and unforeseen circumstances". "The foreign minister of Saudi Arabia and I were in direct contact with each other" after the incident on Monday, Iran's top diplomat Hossein Amir-Abdollahian told reporters.

"Relations between Tehran and Riyadh are moving in the right direction and we should not allow sports to become a political lever in the hands of either side," he said. Amir-Abdollahian urged the AFC "to think about this incident on a technical basis" and said he had reached agreement with the Saudi side for the game to be rescheduled.

Soleimani remains a revered figure in Iran but is a bugbear for Saudi Arabia as he oversaw Iran's intervention in conflicts across the region for more than a decade before his assassination. The Chinese-brokered rapprochement between the two governments has seen diplomatic relations restored, ending a seven-year rupture, and the resumption of home and away sports fixtures after playing in neutral venues since 2016.

Monday's game would have been the second time a Saudi club had played an away fixture in Iran since the thaw in relations. On September 19, Saudi club Al Nassr, who boast five-time Ballon d'Or winner Cristiano Ronaldo among their stars, beat Tehran club Persepolis 2-0 in the Iranian capital in the first. — AFP

Classifieds

Change of Name

I, SHABNAM FIROZ SHAIKH, holder of Indian Passport No. W4671252 having permanent (H.No. 48, Flat No. 302, 3rd Floor, Abdul Qadir Madoo Manzil, Bhusor Mohalla, Bhiwandi Thane, Maharashtra, INDIA Pin Code: 421302) residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as SHABNAM AHMED MUSTAFA SHAIKH. (C#4240) — 05-10-2023

I, Osman Bin Salam S/o: Salam Bin Mohammed Bin Mahfooz R/o: 23-1-915, Moghalpura, inside Dowdi Kalyan, Hyd, TS. Passport No: M9886038, do hereby announce that I have changed my name to OSMAN BIN SALAM BIN MAHFOOZ. For all future record purposes. (C#4241) — 05-10-2023

I, ALIASGAR HUSEN NALAWALA, holder of Indian Passport No. V7774084 having permanent address Gujarat, India - 389151 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name ALIASGAR HUSENI and surname NALAWALA. (C#4239) - 04-10-2023.

I, YUNUS, holder of Passport No. M5455095 do hereby change my name to YUNUS (as given name) CALCUTTAWALA (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name YUNUS CALCUTTAWALA and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#4237) 03-10-2023

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Javelin king Chopra goes big for gold

Qatar's Barshim leaps to Asian Games record



HANGZHOU: (L-R) Silver medallist sprinters of team India, gold medallist sprinters of team Bahrain and bronze medallist sprinters of team Sri Lanka celebrate on the podium during the medal ceremony for the women's 4 x 400m relay final athletics event during the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou. — AFP photos

HANGZHOU: India's javelin king Neeraj Chopra produced a giant throw to strike gold at the Asian Games on Wednesday and cap a gruelling season, with Olympic high-jump champion Mutaz Essa Barshim joining him as a winner. They were among seven titlists on day six of the track and field in Hangzhou with just the men's and women's marathons left on Thursday, concluding an event dominated by hosts China.

Reigning Olympic and world champion Chopra was under pressure after Indian teammate Kishore Kumar Jena produced a huge personal best 86.77 metres. But Chopra responded emphatically with a season-best 88.88m to retain his Asian Games crown in style.

It was a massive statement and longer than the 88.17m that won him the world title at Budapest in August and the 87.58m that earned gold at the Tokyo Olympics. "It feels great when we push each other to go farther and farther," he said of competing with Kumar Jena. His title defence opened controversially. He hurled close to the 85m line on his first

throw and pumped the air in celebration, but his score didn't register and a lengthy delay followed. Chopra eventually threw again, making 82.38m, then improved to 84.49m. But Kumar Jena, who was fifth in Budapest, then produced his all-time best to put the pressure on, before Chopra hit back.

"I had some issues in the first throw. There may have been a technical problem or they may not have measured my first throw properly," he said of the delay. "This is the first time this has happened to me in a competition. The rule is for six throws, but I threw seven times." Chopra's job was made easier after his chief rival, Pakistan ace Arshad Nadeem, pulled out on Tuesday with a knee injury.

'Greedy'

Qatar's Barshim skipped the season-ending Diamond League event at Eugene last month to prepare to add to his 2010 and 2014 Asiad titles, and it paid dividends. He entered on the fourth jump at 2.19m and it turned into a battle with South Korea's Woo

Sang-hyeok, who won the Diamond League in Eugene that Barshim skipped.

The Qatari prevailed, clearing a new Games record 2.35m with Woo unable to match it. "It feels amazing to be honest. Winning today my third gold, I should be really happy and satisfied," said Barshim, who owns the second-highest jump in history at 2.43m.

"We are very greedy as athletes and always want more, more, more. That's the nature of it and I love it. You need to push yourself to the limit." Barshim had extra motivation to get back on top after being shocked in Budapest by Italy's Gianmarco Tamperi, who denied him a fourth consecutive title.

In other action, China's Wang Chunyu was dethroned as women's 800m champion by Sri Lanka's Tharushi Karunaratna, who ran a storming 2:03.20. It was enough to edge India's Harmilan Bains with Wang taking bronze.

In contrast, Bahrain's Birhanu Balew, who was sixth at the Tokyo Olympics, was a suc-



HANGZHOU: (L-R) Silver medallist India's Kishore Jena, gold medallist India's Neeraj Chopra and bronze medallist Japan's Genki Dean celebrate after the men's javelin throw final athletics event.

cessful title defender with his 13:17.41 in the 5,000m, a new Games record. India's Avinash Sable, who won the 3,000m steeplechase, came second and fellow Bahraini Dawit Fikadu third.

Uzbekistan's Sharifa Davronova was crowned triple jump champion with a new personal best 14.09m. India won the men's 4x400m relay and Bahrain took out the women's race. — AFP

North Korea's Pang snatches gold in Asiad boxing rematch

HANGZHOU: North Korea's Pang Chol Mi exacted revenge on China's Chang Yuan in the Asian Games boxing to win the women's bantamweight (54kg) gold and silence the home fans on Wednesday. The pair met in the flyweight (51kg) final at the Jakarta Asian Games in 2018 with Chang winning a tight decision.

In a scrappy rematch in Hangzhou it was Pang who did the better work to get a deserved result, even though the judges were split 3-2. Several times the boxers wrestled each other to the canvas in an ugly contest. Chang conceded that the better fighter won.

"Keeping a long distance has always been my strength," said the Chinese fighter. "I probably should have handled it better." Last time we fought it was at a different weight so I think today was a completely new contest."

The women's middleweight (75kg) final went to plan for the vociferous home support as Li Qian was comfortable in taking a unanimous points decision over the gutsy Indian Lovlina Borgohain. It is not just medals at stake in boxing in Hangzhou, but also Olympic qualification for Paris next year with 20 women's berths and 14 men's.

Amateur boxing great Hasanboy Dusmatov eased to a 4-1 split decision against

Japan's former bantamweight world champion Tomoya Tsuboi in their flyweight (51kg) semi-final.

'I can't eat'

The Uzbek entered the ring to chants of "Hasanboy, Hasanboy" and made an immediate statement of intent by landing a big straight left flush on Tsuboi's chin. Tsuboi fought back to edge the final round but it wasn't enough against the 30-year-old, Olympic champion at Rio 2016.

Dusmatov is now one win from completing his gold medal collection in the 51kg division but Thursday's final will be his third fight in two days. He was scathing about the schedule after a bruising battle less than 24 hours after his quarter-final.

"I'm tired and aching and my face has bruises, with no time to recover," he told AFP. "I can't eat properly to refuel because I have to make weight every day. We should not have to do this." He will face Thitsan Panmot for flyweight gold after the Thai won a split decision against North Korea's So Chon Ryong.

Felix Marcial from the Philippines, a bronze medallist at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, knocked out Syria's Ahmad Ghousoun in the second round of their middleweight (80kg) semi-final. "I've always said that I have power so I just let my hand do its thing," said Marcial, who turned pro after Tokyo, and was very emotional afterwards.

"When I was in the United States doing my training for a professional fight I thought Paris was not for me because I am already focused on this," he said, voice cracking. "My wife was the one who told me that I can do it. She told me not to give up on my dreams of winning an Olympic gold. "If I win gold, it's for myself, for my wife, for my country and for my father. I would not be where I am right now if it wasn't for my father." He faces China's Tanglatihan Tuohetaerbieke in Thursday's gold medal bout. — AFP



HANGZHOU: China's Chang Yuan competes against North Korea's Pang Chol Mi (blue) in the women's 50-54kg final boxing match during the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou. — AFP

Hashimoto nails team gymnastics world title for Japan

ANTWERP: Daiki Hashimoto delivered with his final routine to ensure Japan regained the team gymnastics world title on Tuesday in Antwerp, less than 10 months ahead of the Paris Olympics. Japan, last year's silver medallists, scored 255.594 to finish 1.80 points ahead of defending champions China.

"I've competed in team event since 2019, but only got silver and bronze medals," said Hashimoto. "Finally, I got a gold medal, which is the one I really wanted. I'm very happy." China finished by putting up the best score on the rings. That put the pressure on Japan's last man Hashimoto, but he nailed his final landing on the horizontal bar to seal victory.

The United States completed the podium

UK, Ireland set to host Euro 2028 after Turkey withdraws bid

LAUSANNE: A joint bid from the United Kingdom and Ireland to host Euro 2028 now has no rivals after Turkey withdraw from the bidding process, UEFA said on Wednesday. Britain and Ireland shelved plans to bid to host the 2030 World Cup to focus on staging the European Championship and their bid was already the favourite for the 2028 tournament.

European football's governing body is due to announce the hosts of the 2028 and 2032 Euros at a meeting of its executive committee next Tuesday, October 10. Turkey, which has bid unsuccessfully to stage every Euro going back to 2008, was initially a candidate for both 2028 and 2032.

However, in July it agreed to join Italy in a bid for the 2032 edition, without saying at the time if it would pull out of the running for 2028. On Wednesday UEFA said Turkey was focusing all its efforts on the joint bid with Italy.

"As indicated by the FA of Turkey with its sub-

mission of the request for a joint bid, their bid to stage UEFA Euro 2028 is consequently withdrawn," the body confirmed. That means the decision on both editions should be a formality, with the UK and Ireland unopposed for 2028 and Italy and Turkey having no rivals for 2032.

England, which hosted the women's Euro last year, last hosted a men's major tournament at Euro 96, when it involved just 16 teams. It also hosted the final of the 24-team Euro 2020, delayed by a year due to the pandemic, at Wembley.

Between them, England and Scotland hosted 12 games during that tournament. Italy also hosted matches in Rome at Euro 2020 but has not hosted a tournament on its own since the 1990 World Cup. It hosted the final stages of the four-team Euro in 1968 and the eight-team tournament in 1980.

Turkey, which hosted this year's Champions League final in Istanbul in June, has never been awarded a major international competition. Russia initially declared an interest in hosting either the 2028 or 2032 Euro but UEFA later said it would not consider any bid from the Russian Football Union.

That was after Russian clubs and national teams were suspended from all UEFA competitions due to the war in Ukraine. The next Euro will be played in Germany next year, from June 14 to July 14. — AFP