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Mol warns reckless drivers

19,000 expats deported, 3,500 licenses revoked over traffic violations



KUWAIT: Acting Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah chairs a security meeting on Sept 13, 2023. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Acting Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah affirmed on Wednesday the importance of dealing with reckless drivers firmly and traffic congestions promptly to ensure everyone's safety, as the new academic year starts next week. A statement released by the ministry's public relations and media security department said Sheikh Talal headed a security meeting with Undersecretary Lt Gen Anwar Al-Barjas to follow up on the ministry's readiness to handle traffic congestions during school hours.

Sheikh Talal stressed the importance of police presence on all roads and intersections that lead to schools in residential areas to help reduce traffic jams and eliminate illegal parking in front of schools. He also ordered to boost security and traffic awareness campaigns to provide parents and drivers with all the necessary information needed to avoid bad behaviors by motorists that can affect the safety of other drivers.

Meanwhile, the traffic department has confirmed that the implementation of ministerial decision 270/2020, which calls for the revocation of expatriate driving licenses for those who do not meet the

required conditions, is still in effect. The department has been diligently monitoring compliance on a daily basis, adding 3,500 licenses were permanently revoked in the first half of 2023.

Additionally, the department said 14,000 licenses of citizens have been temporarily suspended for various reasons, including administrative issues, medical concerns, military obligations and exceeding the maximum penalty points. The department emphasized that the deportation of expatriates who violate traffic regulations and commit serious infractions is occurring at a significant rate due to ongoing enforcement campaigns and road monitoring. It stressed that there are no exceptions or leniencies in this regard.

Furthermore, the traffic department noted that nearly 19,000 expatriates were deported by the end of August for offenses such as speeding, running red lights, illegally ferrying passengers, driving in the wrong direction and driving without a valid license. It also reported that the total number of traffic violations committed by both Kuwaiti and expat motorists amounts to nearly 3 million, with two-thirds of these violations classified as indirect.

NEWS IN BRIEF

FMs discuss Kuwait map 'mishap'

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah and his Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shoukry discussed in a phone conversation late Tuesday the "map mishap" issue, when an unofficial map of the Arab World was used at a training course in Egypt attended by Kuwaiti officers without including the internationally recognized borders of Kuwait. Shoukry affirmed that this incident was unintentional, vowing a thorough investigation into the matter. Those responsible for this mishap would be held accountable, he said, adding this mistake did not reflect the strong relations linking Kuwait and Egypt. — KUNA

KU to cancel coed class: Hayef

KUWAIT: MP Mohammad Hayef announced reaching an agreement with the education ministry and Kuwait University to enforce the co-education ban and cancel a class in the Faculty of Law where male and female students were scheduled to enroll. Hayef, who chairs the alien phenomena committee at the National Assembly, said that the panel agreed with the ministry to make sure that the coeducation ban remains enforced at all Kuwait University faculties. "The morals of the Kuwaiti society and Islamic sharia have put together standards to protect our young people," the lawmaker said during a press conference on Wednesday.

Largest liquor brewery busted

KUWAIT: The interior ministry busted on Wednesday "the largest liquor factory" in Abdaly farms, run by six Asians. The ministry said officials from the Criminal Investigation Department monitored and traced the suspects and were able to apprehend them in a farm in Abdaly. It noted six Asians were apprehended and 236 barrels and manufacturing equipment were confiscated during the raid. — KUNA

Kuwait qualify for U23 Asian Cup 2024 finals

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Olympic football squad drew 2-2 with Iraq, leaders of Group F of the AFC U23 Asian Cup Qatar 2024 qualifiers on Tuesday, securing a ticket to the final round of the cup. The encounter, held at Kuwait Sports Club Stadium, saw a goalless first half before Salman Al-Awadhi scored the opener for the Blues in the 48th minute. Bander Al-Salameh doubled Kuwait's lead in the 65th minute.

Iraq, undeterred, were able to come back with goals from Dhul-Faqar Younus in the 69th minute and Mustafa Al-Korji

in the 70th minute. Kuwait ranks second in Group F after Iraq on goal difference, with seven points each. Qatar's iconic Lusail Stadium, which staged the FIFA World Cup 2022 final, will host the first match of the AFC U23 Asian Cup. The finals, which will take place from April 15 to May 3 next year, are also a qualifying event for the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris.

Saudi Arabia also secured their place at the AFC U23 Asian Cup finals with a comfortable 6-1 victory over Cambodia at the Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz Sports City Stadium in Abha on Tuesday. Striker Ahmed Al-Ghamdi scored twice, in the sixth and 17th minutes. Abdullah Radif also grabbed two for the Green Falcons, in the 26th and 56th minutes, while Musab Al-Juwair added to the tally in the 39th minute and Mohammed Abu Al-Shamat in the 87th. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti players celebrate after qualifying for the AFC U23 Asian Cup 2024 on Sept 12, 2023 at Kuwait Sports Club Stadium. — KUNA

Fears mount of rising death toll in Libya

DERNA, Libya: Libya was reeling Wednesday from a massive flood that left thousands dead and missing, wreaking havoc in the eastern city of Derna where bodies wrapped in blankets lined the ravaged streets. Relief missions gathered pace with Turkey, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates among the first nations to rush aid to the war-scarred country after the disaster that also displaced tens of thousands. A Kuwaiti flight arrived in Libya Wednesday with 40 tons of supplies.

The Mediterranean coastal city of Derna was hit by a huge flash flood late Sunday that witnesses likened to a tsunami after two upstream dams burst when torrential rains brought by Storm Daniel battered the region. Media reports

quoted an interior ministry spokesman of the eastern-based government as saying "more than 5,200" people had died in Derna.

Footage broadcast on social media by state media showed an apocalyptic landscape in the city, with debris littering streets and people lifting sheets off bodies lying on sidewalks to try to identify them. Satellite images of Derna after the surge of water showed coastal neighborhoods almost entirely submerged. The United Nations has pledged \$10 million in support for survivors, including at least 30,000 people it said had been left homeless in Derna.

The wall of water ripped away buildings, vehicles and the people inside them. Many were swept out into the sea, with bodies later washing up on beaches littered with debris and car wrecks.

Traumatized survivors have dug through the mud-caked ruins of shattered buildings to recover bodies, scores of which were lying out in the open

Continued on Page 6

Derna: flood-hit Libyan city

Affected zone analysis published on September 13



Sources: Unosat analysis, satellite image from Maxar Technologies, Sept 7

Kim meets Putin, says Russia will win 'great victory'

MOSCOW: Kim Jong Un told President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday he was sure Russia will win a "great victory" over its enemies, as Ukraine's Western allies warned of a possible Russian arms agreement with North Korea. Russia became a pariah in the West after launching full-scale hostilities in Ukraine last year and has looked to strengthen alliances with other hardline leaders ostracized by democratic countries.

"We are confident that the Russian army and people will win a great victory in the just fight to punish evil groups who pursue hegemony, expansion, and ambition," Kim told Putin, raising a toast during an official dinner following one-on-one talks. Kim also praised the "heroic" Russian army in comments that news agencies sponsored by Moscow interpreted as relating specifically to Moscow's large-scale military operation in Ukraine.

Putin meanwhile praised "the future strengthening of cooperation and friendship between our countries," while hosting Kim at a Far East spaceport, and later told reporters he saw "possibilities" for military cooperation with North Korea. He had earlier said Moscow could help Pyongyang build satellites and suggested the countries might also discuss military cooperation.

Continued on Page 6



VOSTOCHNY, Russia: Russian President Vladimir Putin shakes hands with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un during their meeting at the Vostochny Cosmodrome in Amur region on Sept 13, 2023. — AFP



Local

Kuwait ambassador and Iraq defense minister discuss ties

MP asks about Kuwait loans and investments in Iraq

By B Izzak and agencies

KUWAIT: Kuwait Ambassador to Iraq Tariq Al-Faraj on Tuesday discussed with Iraqi Minister of Defense Thabet Al-Abbasi the bilateral relations and ways to develop them. The meeting dealt with several files of common interest and the mechanisms for enhancing cooperation between the two

countries and serving the interests of the two brotherly peoples, Ambassador Al-Faraj said. The Iraqi minister asked Al-Faraj to convey an invitation to Kuwait Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Fahad Al-Sabah to visit Iraq.

Meanwhile, MP Jarrah Al-Fouzan asked the foreign minister about the total value of loans and grants offered by Kuwait to Iraq since the liberation of the

country from a seven-month Iraqi occupation in February 1991. He also inquired about the commitment of the Iraqi government to repayment of the loans. The lawmaker also demanded copies of all cooperation agreements signed by the two countries in the past three decades, especially agreements related to promotion of investments in Iraq.

In another question, MP Fouzan said

that in 2018, Kuwait hosted a conference for Iraqi reconstruction in which pledges by the international community reached \$30 billion, of which Kuwait contributed \$1 billion in the form of a loan and the other billion in the form of direct investments in Iraq. He asked if Iraq had repaid the \$1 billion loan.

He also asked the minister about the total value of Kuwaiti investments in Iraq

over the past five years. The lawmaker demanded a copy of a protocol signed by the two countries regarding joint investments in border oilfields and what happened about the agreement. Meanwhile, MP Adel Al-Damkhi called on Tuesday for the government to transfer the forensic and criminal evidence department from the interior to the justice ministry in order to avoid legal problems.



S Sudan lauds Kuwait humanitarian efforts

KUWAIT: Kuwait Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah met with Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management of South Sudan, Albino Akol Atak. During the meeting, Minister Akol Atak praised Kuwait's humanitarian efforts, stressing that these great efforts made by Kuwait at the official and civil levels are appreciated. The two sides discussed joint international efforts towards supporting humanitarian work in South Sudan and frameworks for strengthening them. — KUNA

Kuwait stresses the importance of Arab Parliaments summit

DOHA: The Secretary-General of the Kuwait National Assembly, Khalid Abu Salib, has stressed the importance of the 10th annual conference of the Association of Secretaries-General of Arab Parliaments in its 43rd meeting, as it contributes to strengthening joint Arab action and developing Arab parliamentary relations. In a statement to KUNA, Abu Salib said after the opening session that the General Secretariat of the Assembly played a pioneering role in establishing, supporting, and sponsoring the association since its founding in 1994.

The conference program includes discussing a working paper entitled "Digital Democracy, Social Media, and the Role of Councils in Promoting It", confirming that the general secretariat of the Ku-

wait National Assembly has the lead in using modern technological and electronic systems to keep pace with modern developments and serve those working in the parliamentary field.

In a similar statement, the head of the information security department at the National Assembly, Engineer Fahd Al-Hatem, said that the working paper addresses several topics, including electronic voting, publishing records electronically, and how to spread parliamentary awareness electronically.

Al-Hatem added that the Kuwait National Assembly is currently the only Arab parliament to vote for the positions of the General Secretariat and parliamentary committees electronically, pointing to the system of documenting parliamentary papers, which is one of the largest projects in the Council, as it has converted approximately 400,000 parliamentary documents into a digital copy and is available to everyone. The tenth annual conference of the Association of Working Secretaries of Arab Parliaments began Tuesday in the Qatari capital, Doha, and will continue its sessions on Wednesday. — KUNA



Secretary-General of Kuwait National Assembly Khalid Abu Salib

Landmark conference marks 20th anniversary of invasion of Iraq



Barham Salih

Safwan Masri

KUWAIT: Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q)'s three-day conference, "The Invasion of Iraq: Regional Reflections," opens on Thursday, September 14, with discussions on the multifaceted impacts of the conflict and its repercussions for global diplomacy. Former president of the Republic of Iraq, Dr Barham Salih, is set to deliver a distinguished keynote address and share further insights in a conversation with Peter Harling, founder and director of the Beirut-based Synaps Network.

The conference is convened by GU-Q's Dean, Dr Safwan Masri, in collaboration with the Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS), Dr Robert Groves, Provost of Georgetown University in Washington, DC, and Dean Masri will present opening remarks. "It's a great honor and pleasure to have Barham Salih deliver the keynote speech at the conference. A long-term Kurdish Iraqi politician, who served as the eighth president of Iraq between 2018 and 2022, he has a profound, personal understanding of the complexities involved in Iraq's multi-ethnic, multi-religious socio-political landscape.

His participation is a significant element of the conference and will add an invaluable and authoritative voice to the discussions," noted Dean Masri. The opening will also feature a high-level panel, "The Iraq War and Global Diplomacy," with senior diplomats sharing their perspectives on the role of international diplomacy during and after the 2003 invasion. The engaging discussion will be moderated by Al Jazeera's Laila Al Shaikhli.

Running until September 16 at the Four Seasons Hotel in Doha, the conference creates an inclusive space for an exchange of perspectives among top scholars including GU-Q faculty, policymakers, journalists, filmmakers, and the wider public. "At the heart of this conference lies a dedicated effort to elevate diverse voices and perspectives from within Iraq," emphasized Zahra Babar, Associate Director for Research at CIRS. "Our goal is to transcend the boundaries of scholarly discourse, and to ensure that the live experiences and personal narratives of Iraqis are an integral part of the conversation."

With a focus on Iraq's current political, social, and economic dynamics, September 15 will feature a plenary on "Regional Security Perceptions Post-US Invasion of Iraq." Discussions will probe youth and activism, relations with Iraq's key regional neighbors, as well as the view from Kuwait and Qatar. The closing day on September 16 will consider the obstacles confronting future generations such as the emergence of Da'esh, the role of women, global governance, and natural resource management, with a final plenary on "US Foreign Policy towards the Region." GU-Q's Hiwaraat Conference Series has been launched as a platform that brings together scholars, policymakers, and government officials from around the world to explore challenges and solutions for a better future.



First KRCS planeload of supplies arrives in Libya

CAIRO: Kuwait's plane arrived in Libya carrying 40 tons of equipment, food, medical supplies, power generators and tents on board, in addition to rescue boats provided by Kuwait Fire Force. In remarks to KUNA, Libyan Foreign Minister Dr Abdul Hadi Al-Hawajj expressed his thanks and appreciation for Kuwait's humanitarian efforts in relieving those afflicted by Storm Daniel, appreciating the immediate response.

The Minister said that the disaster exceeds the available capabilities,

calling for concerted humanitarian relief efforts from all parties to help Libya overcome this unprecedented ordeal. In turn, the head of the KRCS mission, Dr Musaed Al-Enezi, said that the Kuwaiti Air Force plane landed in Benghazi, northeastern Libya, carrying a shipment of various relief materials commensurate with the basic needs required by such conditions.

The Kuwait Red Crescent Society announced on Wednesday that the first planeload of relief supplies has taken off for Libya to relieve victims of

the devastating floods. The KRCS said in a statement that the plane of the Kuwait Air Force took off from Abdullah Al-Mubarak Air Base, flying to Libya. The Kuwaiti aid supplies are destined for victims of the ravaging hurricane Daniel, which caused floods on large swaths of the Libyan territories, claiming more than 5,000 lives and inflicting wide-scale destruction.

KRCS Deputy Chairperson Anwar Al-Hasawi affirmed in remarks to KUNA that the supplies were dispatched in line with instructions by the political leadership to relieve the floods' victims rapidly. The urgent flight was organized after the KRCS coordinated with the Libyan Red Crescent, the Kuwaiti ministries of defense and foreign affairs, the Kuwaiti

ambassador to Libya, and the Libyan envoy in the country. He indicated that other flights carrying identical materials would be organized for Libya.

Solidarity with Libya

The Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union expressed solidarity with Libya after the deadly flooding that ravaged the eastern region of the country. In a statement on Tuesday, the AIPU appealed for the Arab countries and the international community to join forces immediately to provide urgent aid to Libya and help alleviate the impacts of this natural disaster. The AIPU Presidency offered sincere condolences to the Libyan people and government, expressing sympathy with the families of the victims. — KUNA

Al-Saad Foundation support women and innovations

KUWAIT: The Al-Saad Foundation for Knowledge and Scientific Research confirmed on Wednesday its constant and continuous keenness to support the efforts of girls and women in the fields of science locally, regionally, and internationally and to create an interactive atmosphere to promote more inclusive innovation

systems in which women's scientific efforts flourish.

This was stated in a press statement by Sheikha Nabila Salman Al-Sabah, president of the Middle East Innovation Award and competition for inventions and innovations, following her participation as a representative of the Al-Saad Foundation in the 25th scientific conference for women, which was recently held in Iceland, and the announcement of the award winners of the World Organization for inventions and innovations.

Sheikha Nabila Al-Sabah stressed the close cooperation between the Al-Saad Foundation and other organizations to develop and deliver good performance, addressing the ongoing challenge of underrepresentation of women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), which is vital for the advancement of societies.

She said that promoting the full and meaningful participation of women in these fields promotes economic prosperity and growth all over the world, stressing the need to work towards building bases that reach the creation of a scientific society in which women are accepted to practice research and technical work.

She pointed to the role of the foundation in enhancing communication between women in the Arab world to develop their creative ideas and train them to develop their projects and hone their skills through holding scientific meetings, training courses, and workshops. She also pointed out the role of the foundation in providing outstanding models that push science and technology, in addition to supporting innovations through an innovation competition. — KUNA

Local

Zain supports academic forums and highlights role of digital transformation and emerging technologies

Company sponsors National Leadership Institute's Breaking Barriers conference

KUWAIT: Zain announced that it will sponsor the National Leadership Institute (NLI)'s Breaking Barriers conference in October. The anticipated event is set to feature a group of inspiring speakers and notable experts from local, regional, and international levels, covering key topics like digital transformation, emerging technologies, and diversity & inclusion. The conference comes under the patronage of Minister of Finance Fahad Al-Jarallah.

The announcement was made at the press conference attended by Zain Kuwait's Corporate Relations Department Manager Hamad Al Musaibeeh, General Manager of National Leaders Company Mohammad Al Khulaifi, and the event's sponsors and supporters. Announcing Zain's support, Hamad Al Musaibeeh said: "We're thrilled to collaborate once again with NLI to support the Breaking Barriers conference. We're especially excited after the amazing success we witnessed back in 2021 when we supported NLI's first conference. Zain's participation comes to affirm our strong belief in the key role played by such innovative platforms in promoting innovation and the growth of people in our community."

Al Musaibeeh added: "The event's core themes are well-aligned with our corporate goals at Zain, such as the impact of digital transformation and emerg-

ing technologies on the economy, women in leadership, diversity & inclusion in the workplace, and much more. We look forward to attending the keynotes, panels, and workshops that will surely inspire everyone." The Breaking Barriers conference is the third annual event from the National Leadership Institute and is set to offer guests invaluable opportunities to attend keynotes, panel discussions, and workshops facilitated by a unique set of notable speakers, experts, and specialists in entrepreneurship, business, innovation, and technology.

This year's conference will have a diverse set of international and local speakers. Among them are Tom Bilyeu, co-founder of Quest Nutrition; Jo Malone, a successful entrepreneur who turned a small venture into a globally recognized brand; Calum Chace, a specialist in artificial intelligence; Daniel Hulme, a leading expert in AI, emerging technologies, and the Metaverse; Sara Sabry, the first female Arab astronaut; and Graeme Codrington, who specializes in the Future of Work, and much more.

The National Leadership Institute (NLI) is an institute fully owned by the National Company for Educational Services and Training (NEST), a subsidiary of the National Technology Enterprises Company (NTEC). The NLI Conference Series was launched in 2021 to offer or-



Al Musaibeeh, Al Khulaifi, and sponsors during the press conference.

ganizations in Kuwait an innovative training solution. In 2022, the conference was attended by over 1,100 participants from various international and local industries and corporations.

By supporting this conference, Zain

aspires to reflect its growing commitment to pursue its corporate sustainability strategy and serve the community's most vibrant sectors, including entrepreneurship, innovation, and youth. The company is keen on empowering intel-

lectual growth by actively participating in academic forums and gatherings that bring about rich experiences and allow a constructive exchange of information for entrepreneurs, leaders, and community members.

Kuwait, UAE affirm depth of historical, brotherly relations

KUWAIT: Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates affirmed the depth of the historical and brotherly relations that unite the two countries and the continuous development and growth they are witnessing. This is reflected in joint efforts and continuous work in an effort to achieve a comprehensive renaissance and open prospects for cooperation, consultation, and mutual coordination.

This was stated in a press release issued by the Kuwait Ministry of Defense received by the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on the occasion of the reception by the vice president and Prime Minister of the UAE and ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid, for the deputy prime minister and Minister of Defense of Kuwait, Sheikh Ahmad Fahd Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, in Dubai.

During the meeting, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahd conveyed the greetings of the HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid and wished him good health. He wished the United Arab Emirates and its noble people continued progress and prosperity.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahd expressed sincere thanks and appreciation to Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid for the warm reception and hospitality. The meeting was attended by the chairman of the Dubai Civil Aviation Authority, the Supreme Chairman of Emirates Airline, and a number of Sheikhs, ministers, and senior officials.



DUBAI: The vice president and Prime Minister of the UAE and ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid receives the deputy prime minister and Minister of Defense of Kuwait, Sheikh Ahmad Fahd Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and his accompanying delegation.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahd arrived with his accompanying delegation to Dubai on an official visit on Wednesday, where he was received upon arrival by the Second Deputy Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Ahmed Bin Mohammed Bin Rashid. He was also received by the ambassador of Kuwait to the UAE, Jamal Al-Ghunaim,

and the ambassador of the UAE to Kuwait, Dr. Matar Al-Neyadi, in addition to the consul general of Kuwait to the UAE in Dubai, the Emirates ambassador Ali Al-Thaidi, the head of the Kuwaiti military office, Major General Mohammed Al-Kandari, and members of the diplomatic mission. — KUNA

Chinese envoy lauds Kuwait ties, embassy marks anniversary

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei described the upcoming visit of HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the opening of the Asian Games as a historic event for China that will play a crucial role in advancing their strategic partnership. During a press conference held on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative, Ambassador Zhang affirmed that HH the Crown Prince of Kuwait will attend the opening of the 19th Asian Games in the city of Hangzhou. This marks his first visit to China since assuming the role of Crown Prince.

"This year marks the fifth anniversary of the establishment of strategic partnership relations between China and Kuwait, and this visit is considered a historic one. It will effectively strengthen the traditional friendship, deepen mutual strategic trust, and enhance cooperation between the two countries in various fields within the framework of joint construction of the 'Belt and Road initiative,'" Zhang said.

The ambassador pointed out that China will continue its efforts to enhance cooperation with Kuwait, emphasizing that China has become the largest trading partner for more than 140 countries. "We believe in fostering development and stability in the region and reject the politicization of economic issues. We seek cooperation and solidarity with all countries, especially in the face of real challenges that require international cooperation," he said.

Ambassador Zhang highlighted that Kuwait was the first Gulf Arab country to establish diplomatic relations with China and the first Arab country to sign a memorandum of understanding with China regarding the joint construction of the Belt and Road Initiative. Additionally, Kuwait is the Arab country that provides China with preferential government loans.

"Kuwait is the only Gulf country to which the Chinese government has sent a Chinese medical team. Since 1976, the Chinese government has sent 23 batches of medical teams to Kuwait. These actions



Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei speaks to the press. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

reflect the development of friendly China-Kuwaiti relations and highlight the cooperation between the two countries. Kuwait is one of the friendliest countries towards China, and Chinese-Kuwaiti relations serve as a model for exchanges between countries.

In 2018, during the visit of His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to China, the two leaders announced the establishment of strategic partnership relations between China and Kuwait," he pointed out. Zhang confirmed that both countries maintain close communication and support each other in international and regional affairs. He stressed the importance of dealing with global challenges through mutual respect and finding common ground for peaceful coexistence.

"Kuwait enjoys a distinct geographical location, and in recent years it has put forward its Vision 2035, which seeks to develop a diversified and sustainable economy, which is largely consistent with the strategy of the Belt and Road initiative. China always views Kuwait as an ideal and natural partner in jointly building the Belt and Road, as they enjoy strong economic complementarity and similar development concepts," he said.

Regarding economic and trade cooperation, the ambassador noted that since 2015, China has consistently been Kuwait's largest trading partner. In 2022, the total bilateral trade volume between the two coun-

tries reached \$31.48 billion, representing an annual increase of 42.3 percent. Kuwait is also the seventh largest source of crude oil imports to China, as China imported 33.28 million tons of crude oil from Kuwait, an annual increase of 10.34 percent.

Zhang revealed that approximately 60 Chinese companies operate in Kuwait and have participated in over 80 projects, contributing significantly to infrastructure construction and economic development in Kuwait. "In recent years, the new headquarters of the Central Bank of Kuwait, Sabah Al-Salem University City, Health Assurance Hospital, infrastructure project for South Al-Mutlaa City, Seventh Ring Road project and other projects were built," Zhang said.

Chinese direct investment in Kuwait has reached approximately \$550 million, making it the second largest source of foreign investment in Kuwait. Ambassador Zhang also mentioned that the Kuwait Investment Authority established its second office abroad in Shanghai in 2018, indicating Kuwait's optimism about investment prospects in China, as the office already owns more than 97 million A-shares with a total market value of about \$280 million. Finally, he reiterated China's unwavering support for the establishment of a Palestinian state along the borders of June 4, 1967, with Jerusalem as its capital.

Media plays significant role in promoting food security: KUNA chief

SHARJAH: Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Dr. Fatima Al-Salem, stressed Wednesday the importance of the role played by news agencies and media in promoting the concept of food security and to discuss and address all challenges facing it. This came during her participation in a discussion session within the World Media Forum held on the sidelines of Expo Sharjah 2023 within the theme (Media, Food Security, Opportunities, and Challenges).

Dr. Fatima Al-Salem said that food security is a very important case to the world and to the GCC countries, especially in the wake of the CORONA pandemic, noting that these challenges and food security have become a very urgent necessity. The global reports related to food security and its challenges have imposed more tasks on the media, such as preparing distinguished cadres and specialized journalists to deliver the media message in a comprehensive manner to the reader to raise awareness and rationalization.

She pointed to the importance of media theories that simplify media messages but in a scientific and thoughtful manner, and shed light on the humanitarian aspect in media materials dealing with topics and concepts related to food security, development, and other issues in the same context. She noted that the State of Kuwait is at the top of the global rankings for achieving food security by establishing special reserves, campaigns concerned with rationalizing surplus food, and multiple official and civil national strategies concerned with that.

In this regard, she explained the importance of the role of the media message in shedding light on the concept of food security, as she believed that the most effective way to reach the recipient and public opinion lies in simplifying the media message and using advanced technological means. On the other hand, Dr. Fatima Al-Salem confirmed the importance of focusing on journalism specializing in climate change issues and launching initiatives and steps that create a new generation of journalists, as the Media Training and Development Center at KUNA is doing by holding courses in these fields.

On his part, Acting Deputy Director General of the Emirates News Agency (WAM), Ali Al-Saad, said that the media and news agencies have a very significant role to play in food security issues and concepts. "Our priority is to focus on preparing specialized materials and broadcasting awareness messages in a smooth manner that relies on simple language and methods, through different materials and stories that carry a human dimension", he explained. Al-Saad pointed out the importance of establishing effective strategic partnerships, especially in the Arab region, moving towards specialized media, and benefiting from the tremendous development in media, digital communication, and others, to shed light on this issue through awareness and rationalization.

The World Media Forum highlights the most important media topics, practices, opportunities, and challenges related to issues of sustainability and the environment, climate change, food security, concepts of the green economy, and other issues related to the various media fields of journalism, radio, television, digital, and artificial intelligence. — KUNA



Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Dr Fatima Al-Salem participates in a discussion session. — KUNA photos

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Rehabilitation center for Kuwait pensioners

KUWAIT: Social Insurance has announced that it will open a rehabilitation health treatment center for Kuwaiti retirees in the coming months on the directives of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The officials said in a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Wednesday that this initiative comes primarily as a confirmation of the support of HH the Amir, indicating that the center will be the first health center in Kuwait that specializes in the elderly with government support to enable them to assess their conditions comprehensively and provide them with appropriate treatment plans for each individual.

Officials explained that the center will include clinics, gyms, swimming pools, physiotherapy rooms, etc. It will be divided into three separate floors and also include common spaces dedicated to social interaction, such as a restaurant and cafe. She pointed out that the center will be managed by distinguished and specialized teams in various medical fields. The center will provide a special team to follow up on the cases and what happens during the treatment plan, in addition to holding educational and social activities of interest. — KUNA

GCC's Justice Ministry undersecretaries meet

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Justice participated in the 25th meeting of the undersecretaries of the Ministries of Justice of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) held in Muscat. The ministry said in a statement received by the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the Kuwaiti delegation was headed by the undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice, Hashim Al-Qallaf.

The ministry pointed out that the officials discussed many topics, including the draft agreement on the extradition of suspects and convicts within the GCC countries and the development of a draft agreement on the implementation of sentences, proclamations, and judicial declarations. The report of the meetings of the committee of officials for international cooperation and relations was also discussed.

The ministers of justice of the member states recommended that they submit it to the ministers of justice at their next meeting in October. She pointed out that the initiative submitted by Oman on strengthening judicial integration between the GCC countries was approved, and the secretariat was tasked with developing the mechanism and visualization of the initial draft of the document. — KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Photo shows the Sheikh Jaber Causeway in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Education Ministry prepares for the new academic season



KUWAIT: Minister of Education and the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Dr. Adel Al-Mane visits a number of schools to determine the readiness of the facilities as new academic year begins. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: The Minister of Education and the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Dr. Adel Al-Mane, called on educational leaders to exert efforts to equip the school facilities, especially those related to maintenance, air conditioning, furniture, books, and hygiene. This came in a press statement by the minister following an inspection tour on Tuesday. The minister visited a number of schools to determine the readiness of facilities before the start of the new academic year.

He stressed that he will not tolerate any negligence in the new academic year, as the performance of each department will be assessed and evaluated, adding that he will not hesitate to take the necessary

legal measures to hold the defaulters accountable in order to correct situations and improve performance.

"All of us at the Ministry of Education bear a great responsibility towards the education of students and consider it an uncompromising duty. Therefore, we must work with transparency and dedication in order to achieve our desired goals with team spirit and cooperation to ensure a safe and high-quality educational environment for all," he said. The minister called on the concerned departments to provide him with urgent reports on the preparations of schools, including the maintenance of facilities, the provision of furniture, and other necessary things, to be delivered on Wednesday. — KUNA



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Alghanim Industries supports KRCS Back to School Campaign

KUWAIT: For the second consecutive year, Alghanim Industries, part of the Kutayba Alghanim Group, has demonstrated its continued commitment to community outreach by participating in the Kuwait Red Crescent Society's (KRCS) Back to School Campaign. This year's involvement was marked by a special one-day event over the weekend where employees and their families assembled 2,000 school kits, each complete with essential stationery items.

The timing of the event on a single weekend day was strategic, allowing employees, their children, and extended family members to engage collectively in this philanthropic endeavor. The one-day format focused the efforts and amplified the impact, resulting in the rapid assembly and distribution of the school kits. This approach also highlights the communal

ethos Alghanim Industries nurtures within its team. By planning the event for a weekend, the company made it possible for family members to contribute to the effort, emphasizing the importance of community engagement in its corporate culture.

Assembled in coordination with KRCS, these school kits were promptly distributed to meet the needs of the current academic year. The timeliness of the distribution ensures that the recipients, children in need, are well-equipped with the necessary resources as they embark on their educational journey for the year.

In addition to the Back to School Campaign, Alghanim Industries has a history of supporting KRCS in other avenues. These include but are not limited to contributions during the holy month of Ramadan and participation in humanitarian projects that address various community needs at a regional level. This one-day event serves not only as a snapshot of the company's community involvement but also as an exemplar of the kinds of impactful activities Alghanim Industries seeks to promote in association with its community partners, including KRCS.



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Warmer seas, political chaos drive Libya flood toll: Experts

'There is no such thing as a natural disaster'



DERNA: Overturned cars lay among other debris caused by flash floods in Derna, eastern Libya, on September 11, 2023. — AFP

PARIS: Warmer seas, political chaos and inadequate infrastructure combined with devastating effect in the flooding that has killed more than 2,300 people in Libya, experts said on Tuesday. Riverside buildings in the eastern Mediterranean coastal city of Derna collapsed after Storm Daniel brought heavy rainfall that broke river dams and engulfed entire neighborhoods. Daniel formed around September 4, bringing death and destruction to Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey last week. These Mediterranean storms which bear the features of tropical cyclones and hurricanes, known as "medicanes", only occur one to three times a year.

They need fluxes of heat and moisture, which are "enhanced by warm sea surface temperatures", noted Suzanne Gray, a professor at the meteorology department at the University of Reading in Britain. The surface waters of the eastern Mediterranean and Atlantic are two to three degrees Celsius warmer

than usual and are "likely to have caused rainfall to be more intense", said scientists taking part in a UK National Climate Impacts meeting. But it is unclear if the persistent high-pressure blocking pattern that caused the heavy rainfall and flooding will become more common in the future, they said.

The last assessment report by the UN's scientific advisory panel on climate change, released earlier this year, concluded that a warming world increases the strength of medicanes even if they become less frequent, added Gray. Most scientists are cautious about making direct links between individual weather events and long-term changes in the climate.

But Storm Daniel "is illustrative of the type of devastating flooding event we may expect increasingly in the future" as the world heats up, said Lizzie Kendon, a climate science professor at the University of Bristol. The European Union's climate monitoring service Copernicus said rising global

sea surface temperatures were driving record levels of heat across the globe, with 2023 likely to be the warmest in human history. Oceans have absorbed 90 percent of the excess heat produced by human activity since the dawn of the industrial age, according to scientists.

A 'natural' disaster

Some analysts believe the fragmented political scene in Libya — torn apart by more than a decade of civil conflict following the fall of longtime dictator Moamer Kadhafi in 2011 — contributed to the devastation. The North African country is divided between two rival governments: the UN-brokered, internationally recognized administration based in the capital Tripoli in the west, and a separate administration in the eastern region impacted by the flooding. "There is no such thing as a natural disaster," argued Leslie Mabon, a lecturer in environmental systems

at the UK-based Open University. Although climate change can make extreme weather events more frequent and intense, social, political and economic factors determine who is at greatest risk, he said.

The loss of life was also a consequence of the limited nature of Libya's forecasting ability, warning and evacuation systems, said Kevin Collins, senior lecturer at the Open University. Weaknesses in the planning and design standards for infrastructure and cities were also exposed, he added. The UK National Climate Impacts scientists also noted that "infrastructure tipping points", such as extra strain on the dams, make extreme weather events deadlier and more destructive. The political conditions in Libya "pose challenges for developing risk communication and hazard assessment strategies, coordinating rescue operations, and also potentially for maintenance of critical infrastructure such as dams", Mabon added. — AFP

Shipyard hit by Ukrainian missiles in Crimea

MOSCOW: Ukrainian cruise missiles struck a shipyard in the Crimean port of Sevastopol overnight, Russia's defense ministry said Wednesday. The strike comes as Russia continues to intensify its attacks on Ukraine's southern Odesa and Mykolaiv regions, leaving Romanians living in nearby villages afraid for their lives.

Russia, which annexed Crimea in 2014, said that Ukraine used three maritime drones and ten cruise missiles in the attack, which it claimed damaged two ships undergoing repairs. "The Ukrainian armed forces launched a strike with 10 cruise missiles at the S Ordzhonikidze ship repair plant," Moscow's defense ministry said.

It said that air defense systems shot down seven of the missiles, while the Vasily Bykov patrol ship destroyed all the drones. "As a result of being hit by enemy cruise missiles, two ships undergoing repairs were damaged," it said.

Crimea has been targeted by Ukraine throughout Moscow's offensive but attacks there have recently intensified as Kyiv vows to take the peninsula back. Ukrainian air force commander Mykola Oleshchuk posted an image on social media of what appeared to be a large blaze at a port, and said Russia was "still recovering" from the attack. "I would like to thank the pilots of the Air Force of the Armed Forces of Ukraine for their excellent combat work," he said.

Mikhail Razvozhayev, the Russia-backed governor of Sevastopol, Crimea's biggest city and home to Russia's Black Sea fleet, said on social media that he was at the scene of a fire at the shipyard. "As a result of the attack, according to preliminary information, a total of 24 people were injured, four of them in moderate condition," he said.

'Louder than a plane'

Across the black sea, Romanians fear war spilling over. Villagers say they have not been able to sleep as Russia pounds Ukraine's southern regions. "When the sirens wail at night, that's when you should expect the drones to come," said Costica Tanase, who lives in the remote Romanian village of Plauru.



PLAURU: Crash site of a Russian drone in a forest outside the village of Plauru, Danube Delta, 300kms east of Bucharest, Romania, on Sept 11, 2023. — AFP

The border village faces Izmail just across the Danube, and drones can be often heard flying over Romanian territory. Since exiting a deal allowing safe grain shipments via the Black Sea, Moscow has ramped up strikes on Ukraine's southern Odesa and Mykolaiv regions, home to vital grain-exporting infrastructure.

Fresh drone debris was discovered Wednesday, after Romanian soldiers found fragments of a drone "similar to those used by the Russian army" in the Plauru area over the weekend. One of them left a gaping hole in the ground after burning several trees, AFP journalists observed at the scene.

In constant fear of a drone hitting his house, Tanase said that the Romanian soldiers who were recently deployed to the area did little to make him feel safer. "What can they do? They don't have an air-defense system," he said.

"The sound (of drones) is louder than a plane," says 72-year-old resident Ion Giovanovici, who went looking for debris after he saw one explode nearby. If things get worse, 70-year-old Gheorghe Puflea might pack up and leave, together with his two horses, cows and hens.

"It shakes like an earthquake" when a drone approaches, and his farm animals start stressing. "The calf hid between my legs, scared to death."

Soon the residents will be able to take refuge in two concrete air-raid shelters, hastily built by the military this week.

'Really in danger'

At the weekend, Bucharest condemned the "violation of (its) airspace" and called on Russia to refrain from actions that could threaten the "safety and security" of Romanians. President Klaus Iohannis and NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg also discussed the drone fragment discovery.

Stoltenberg wrote on X (formerly Twitter) that there was "no indication of intent to hit NATO, but the strikes are destabilizing". For several days, Romania had rejected claims by Kyiv that Iranian-made Russian drones fell and detonated on its soil.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba criticized its NATO neighbor for playing down events to avoid being drawn into a direct conflict. The mayor of Plauru, Tudor Cernega, claimed to have found the first drone fragments — and alerting the authorities — after scouring certain areas identified by Internet users. "Something like this (is not) in the mayor's manual," he told AFP. Real drone fragments were in the end found, said Cernega — fortunately for them, he added, for until then, nobody had believed the residents. "It turned out that we are really in danger," he said. — AFP

Palestinian figures slam Abbas for Holocaust outburst

RAMALLAH: More than 200 Palestinian figures have condemned President Mahmoud Abbas for his "reprehensible" comments claiming Jews were murdered in the Holocaust because of their "social role" and not their religion.

The public figures said they "unequivocally condemn the morally and politically reprehensible comments" by Abbas, in a letter published on Sunday. The signatories include US congresswoman Rashida Tlaib, historian Rashid Khalidi and legal scholar Noura Erakat. "We adamantly reject any attempt to diminish, misrepresent or justify anti-Semitism, Nazi crimes against humanity or historical revisionism vis-a-vis the Holocaust," they wrote.

The letter follows the surfacing of a video last week in which the Palestinian president said Nazis killed millions of Jews "because of usury and money" rather than anti-Semitism. The remarks made to senior members of his Fatah party in the seat of the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah were swiftly condemned by the European Union and Germany.

One of the signatories, businessman Sam Bahour, said Abbas "doesn't legitimately represent us". "It's not his role to give history lessons," Bahour told AFP on Wednesday, calling the president's remarks "inappropriate". But Fatah leapt to the defense of its leader, describing the letter as a "statement of shame" in comments published by the official Palestinian news agency Wafa on Tuesday.

The PLO's legislative arm, the Palestinian National Council, described the letter as "political and intellectual terrorism against our people", Wafa reported. Abbas, 87, has previously made similar comments downplaying the systematic killing of Jews during World War II. — AFP

International

‘Everything comes back’: Quake leaves mental scars

Morocco survivors haunted by flashbacks, grief looking to ‘heal their heart’

ASNI: When Khadija Temera, a survivor of Morocco’s devastating earthquake, was sent to a psychiatrist on Tuesday, she was just one of a hundred newly traumatized patients who would be seen within 24 hours. The powerful quake last Friday killed more than 2,900 people, most of them in remote villages of the High Atlas Mountains.

Beyond the physical devastation, soldiers and aid workers say it is becoming increasingly clear that many of the survivors are facing severe mental suffering. “The most important thing is that we are alive,” Temera says, her henna-stained fingers fiddling with a piece of paper, her eyes swollen with tears. But now she wants to “heal her heart”, and on Tuesday she had her first consultation with a psychiatrist, seeking balm for the trauma inflicted by the quake.

She had first gone to see a regular doctor for hypertension. But Moroccan troops in the area quickly referred her to the psychiatrist, who said he had seen around a hundred patients since the previous day out of the 500 who came to the field hospital in Asni, around 90 kilometers (55 miles) south of the tourist hub of Marrakesh.

Flashbacks from the fateful day continue to haunt Temera: of stairs collapsing and trapping her and the nine members of her family before they could be rescued. “I’ve been awake ever since, I can’t fall asleep—as soon as I lie down everything comes back,” said the 68-year-old from the village of Lareb.

‘Acute stress’

Next to her on a bench, a mute woman was also waiting for a consultation, her hands clasped across her chest and breathing heavily. She has lost both her children. After her comes the turn of a man in his thirties, his eyes red from crying. Of the thousands injured in the powerful earthquake, “some were not only wounded and bruised in their flesh, they were also often ‘be-reaved’, having lost their homes”, said Adil Akanour, the only psychiatrist at the makeshift hospital, which was opened to the press on Tuesday.

Meanwhile villagers in more isolated hamlets, which have remained inaccessible, told AFP of their isolation and the absence of aid. Survivors find themselves in a “state of acute stress with symptoms, often physical at first”, Akanour said, adding that dizziness, palpitations, headaches and abdominal pain can be symptoms that “hide” a psychological problem. According to the World Health Organization, nearly everyone who experiences such an emergency will suffer some psychological problems which, in most cases, will fade with time.

The separation of families, insecurity, loss of livelihoods and disruption of social contacts are all potential psychological problems, according to the UN organi-



IMI N'TALAT: A woman who lost her family members reacts sitting on the rubble of destroyed buildings in the aftermath of the deadly 6.8-magnitude earthquake on Sept 12, 2023. — AFP

zation, which recommends urgent care to prevent the development of post-traumatic stress disorders. The 6.8-magnitude quake that struck on September 8 was the most powerful ever recorded in the kingdom, with the provisional toll of 2,900 people dead likely to rise.

Entire villages were swallowed up, and with them the lives of hundreds of modest families. Thousands of people were left homeless, the majority now living alone in makeshift tents or, for a few such as Mouhamed

El Makhconi, sheltering in genuine windproof tents provided by the interior ministry. “I was the only one providing for my family,” the 60-year-old said with a resigned, toothless smile.

He did so by selling jewelry to tourists heading to the summits of the High Atlas Mountain range that dominates the landscape. But now “there’s nothing left” of his ground-floor apartment, leaving him and his eight-member family destitute.

“I haven’t even got a dirham on me,” he sighs, sitting outside the tent. He had to be provided with everything from blankets to glasses. Adding to his desperation are the sounds of the earthquake that remain resonant in his memory. He too cannot sleep, saying he can still feel the tremors and the waves of fear that went through his body. But El Makhconi has not consulted a psychiatrist, largely because he needs to sort out his diabetes first. — AFP

Broken city: Historic Marrakesh hit hard by quake

MARRAKESH: Fatima Sanoussi’s wrinkled hand tapped the wall in Marrakesh’s historic medina on Sunday. Her house was able to withstand the 6.8-magnitude earthquake that rocked Morocco, but many others did not. “Now that’s what I call solid,” said the 68-year-old in a yellow jellaba and black kerchief on her head, before sweeping away dust and stones from the arch leading to her modest home.

Marrakesh has a rich architectural heritage, and much of it suffered damage in Friday’s quake, the strongest ever to hit the North African country. Some parts of the 700-hectare (1,730-acre) medina and its network of alleyways saw significant damage, with mounds of rubble and crumpled buildings.

The 12th-century walls that surround the millennium-old city, founded by the Almoravid dynasty, have also been partly dis-

figured by the tremor. Al-Haouz province, site of the quake’s epicenter, suffered the most. It is around 70 kilometers (45 miles) southwest of Marrakesh, Morocco’s main tourist attraction. “After a disaster like this, the most important thing is to preserve human life,” said Eric Falt, UNESCO’s regional director for the Maghreb. “But we also have to plan immediately for the second phase, which includes rebuilding schools and cultural property affected by the earthquake.”

Marrakesh is full of such places that have been on the UN cultural agency’s World Heritage list since 1985. The vast Jemaa el-Fna square is just one: the huge open area on the edge of the medina is known for its snake charmers and henna hawkers among other attractions. Just hours after the quake struck, Falt led a UNESCO team into the medina on a visit to inspect the damage. “The damage is much more significant than we expected,” he said. “There are significant cracks on the emblematic Koutoubia minaret, and the minaret of the Kharbouch mosque is almost completely destroyed,” Falt said.

A few meters (yards) from this damaged mosque on Jemaa el-Fna square, vendors waiting for passing trade sat on their stools.

Across the street, a 1960s-era cafe remained open to customers, despite now having a large crack in an interior wall. The city’s ramps “have also been damaged in many places”, said Falt. “But the most badly affected district is the Mellah (the former Jewish quarter) where there has been widespread destruction of old houses.” In 2017, the district underwent significant renovation work estimated to cost more than 17.5 million euros, aimed at developing the district’s tourism potential.

Originally built for the Jewish population of Marrakesh, it is now home to a large Muslim population of modest means who carry out small jobs in the medina, and where several families often share one house. One-story houses of stone that shone pink in the sun have been reduced to rubble. Iron bars and other makeshift patchwork can be seen here and there to prop up sagging walls.

Those visiting Morocco’s main tourist attraction now come across entire families living in the street. “Some people, like my parents, found refuge with relatives, but many others are now living in the street,” said 56-year-old Saïda Mirouch, pointing to the cracks in the walls of the house where she grew up. “We don’t have the means to fix them. People came



MARRAKESH: Tourists walk past a damaged building in the old quarters of Marrakesh on Sept 12, 2023, following a 6.8-magnitude earthquake. — AFP

to inspect them, but they told us nothing. What do we do now? Will the house fall down? We don’t know,” she said. Housing ministry teams made site visits on Tuesday and architects were expected to come on Wednesday, but no official statements have yet been released. Chakib Benabdellah, head of Morocco’s Na-

tional Council of the Order of Architects, told AFP: “we will carry out diagnostics to determine whether evacuation will be necessary” or buildings can be reinforced. “In earthquakes it’s not just the houses that fall—those that don’t come down sometimes pose a very significant danger,” he said. — AFP

Fears mount of rising death...

Continued from Page 1

before being buried in mass graves. The confirmed death toll reached 2,300 by Tuesday afternoon, but some regional officials were quoted as giving figures more than twice as high.

“The death toll is huge and might reach thousands,” Tamer Ramadan of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) said on Tuesday. He added the organization had independent sources saying that “the number of missing people is hitting 10,000 persons so far”. The United Nations’ humanitarian agency OCHA on Wednesday reported estimates of “over 2,000 deaths and at least 5,000 people missing”.

Oil-rich Libya is still recovering from the war and chaos that followed the NATO-backed uprising which toppled and killed longtime dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. The country has been left divided between two rival governments — the UN-brokered, internationally recognized administration based in Tripoli, and a separate administration in the disaster-hit east.

Derna is ringed by hills and bisected by a riverbed that is usually dry in summer, but which became a raging torrent that also destroyed several bridges. Mudslides and flooding also hit nearby areas where aid group the Norwegian Refugee Council said “entire villages have been overwhelmed by the floods”. “Communities across Libya have endured years of conflict, poverty and displacement. The latest disaster will exacerbate the situation for these people.”

Erik Tollefsen, head of the weapon contamination unit at the International Committee of the Red Cross, warned of risks posed by landmines planted during the war. “Derna flood waters have shifted unexploded ordnance into areas previously free of weapon contamination. This means more risk for survivors and those providing humanitarian assistance,” Tollefsen said on X, formerly Twitter. Several nations offered

urgent aid and rescue teams to help address what one UN official called “a calamity of epic proportions”. At the Vatican, Pope Francis invited prayers “for those who lost their lives, their families and the displaced”.

Rescue teams from Turkey have arrived in eastern Libya, authorities said, and Algeria, France, Italy, Qatar and Tunisia also pledged to help. The UAE sent two planes carrying 150 tons of aid. The European Union said assistance from Germany, Romania and Finland had been dispatched. Palestinian media reported a rescue mission had left from Ramallah in the occupied West Bank, and Jordan sent a military plane loaded with food parcels, tents, blankets and mattresses.

Climate experts have linked Libya’s deadly disaster to a combination of the impacts of a heating planet and of the country’s years of political chaos and underinvestment in infrastructure. Hurricane-strength Mediterranean storms such as Daniel — which earlier hit Turkey, Bulgaria and Greece — are known as “medicanes” which can gain strength as warmer air absorbs more moisture.

Climate-linked extreme weather events tend to be the deadliest in strife-torn and poor countries that lack good infrastructure, early warning systems and strong emergency response services. As the world heats up, Libya’s disaster “is illustrative of the type of devastating flooding event we may expect increasingly in the future,” said University of Bristol climate science professor Lizzie Kendon.

Egypt’s President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi directed authorities Wednesday to set up camps in the country’s west to provide shelter for survivors of devastating floods in neighboring Libya, state media reported. Sisi ordered “the establishment of shelter camps” in the western coastal region bordering Libya “for our impacted Libyan brothers who have lost their homes”, according to official newspaper Al-Ahram.

The aid is unprecedented in Egypt’s recent history, with Cairo having repeatedly refused to set up camps in the face of refugee crises. Most recently, over 280,000 people have fled war in Sudan across Egypt’s southern border, but Cairo has said there was no need for camps as the new arrivals are given the right to work and move freely. — AFP

Kim meets Putin, says Russia will...

Continued from Page 1

US officials and experts have said Russia is interested in buying North Korean ammunition to use in Ukraine.

Both leaders affirmed historical ties between Moscow and Pyongyang. “We will always be with Russia,” Kim said, according to footage broadcast on Russian TV. “An old friend is better than two new ones,” Putin said, quoting a Russian proverb and referencing the Soviet Union’s role in the Korean War. Their talks as well as discussions with delegations lasted around two hours before the leaders proceeded to the officials’ dinner in Kim’s honor. Kim will later oversee a display of the potential of Russia’s Pacific fleet in Vladivostok, Putin announced.

The two leaders met at the Vostochny Cosmodrome in Russia’s Far East, with footage released by the Kremlin showing the pair shaking hands enthusiastically as Kim arrived. The two then toured assembly and launch facilities for the Angara and Soyuz-2 space rocket launchers before sitting down for talks with their delegations. While Kim was in Russia, Pyongyang fired two ballistic missiles on Wednesday, the South Korean military said, the latest in a string of sanctions-busting tests.

Experts say Russia will likely use the talks to seek artillery shells and antitank missiles from North Korea, which wants advanced satellite and nuclear-powered submarine technology in return. Kim, who travelled overland to Russia in his bulletproof train, was accompanied by an entourage that suggested the summit would have a strong military focus. Among the top military officials accompanying Kim were Korean People’s Army Marshal Pak Jong Chon and Munitions Industry Department Director Jo Chun Ryong, according to the North’s state media. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu took part in the talks with Kim, as did Foreign Minister Sergei

Lavrov, images on Russian state television showed. Ahead of the announcement of the talks, Russian news agencies published images of Kim and Putin touring the vast space center. “The leader of the DPRK shows great interest in rocket technology, and they are trying to develop (their presence in) space,” Putin said, referring to North Korea by its official name. Kim thanked Putin for inviting him to visit, despite the Russian leader’s “busy schedule”. Kim had earlier stressed the trip — his first post-pandemic foreign travel — showed North Korea was “prioritizing the strategic importance” of its Russia ties.

The meeting at the cosmodrome is symbolic, especially as Pyongyang failed twice recently in its bid to put a military spy satellite into orbit, experts said. Russia is eager for North Korea’s stockpile of artillery shells, while Pyongyang is looking for help with satellite technology and upgrading its Soviet-era military equipment. An Chan-il, a defector-turned-researcher who runs the World Institute for North Korea Studies, told AFP: “If North Korea’s multiple rocket launchers and other artillery shells are provided to Russia in large quantities, it could have a significant impact on the war in Ukraine,” he said.

Russia’s natural resources minister Alexander Kozlov greeted Kim when he arrived in the country, giving him historic autographed photographs of Soviet cosmonauts, including Yuri Gagarin, Kozlov’s ministry told TASS. The White House warned last week that North Korea would “pay a price” if it supplies Russia with weaponry for the conflict in Ukraine.

Kim is also risking the displeasure of his other major ally Beijing by meeting Putin, Vladimir Tikhonov, professor of Korean studies at the University of Oslo, told AFP. “China will be hardly too happy about Russia entering into what Chinese consider their monopoly territory,” he said, adding Beijing would be worried about the regional destabilization impact of any transfer of Russian military technology to Pyongyang. Kim and Putin “may conduct an exchange of North Korea’s old-age, Soviet-type ammo for Russia’s newer military tech or hard currency (or wheat)”. But he warned that “Russia’s important ties to Seoul will be dealt irreparable damage”. — AFP

International

Trump's allegations at heart of Biden impeachment push

Biden allowed family to 'sell his brand' for financial benefit: Committee

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump was impeached by Congress in late 2019 for extorting Ukraine in an unsuccessful effort to get up dirt on his reelection rival Joe Biden. Four years later, Republicans are moving to impeach now-President Biden, claiming they have the dirt Trump sought: that while vice president, Biden personally benefitted from his son Hunter's business dealings.

Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy on Tuesday announced he was ordering an impeachment inquiry into the Democratic leader — a move demanded for months by Trump and his right-wing backers in Congress. But in contrast to the well-documented actions by Trump that supported his impeachment, Democrats — and even some Republicans — say House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer, one of the Republicans leading the probe, has no evidence yet of wrongdoing by Biden.

Hunter's lucrative jobs

Comer alleges that the "Biden family" — without explicitly naming the president — and their "associates" have received over \$20 million in payments from foreign entities. While Hunter Biden had business ties in China, Kazakhstan, Romania and elsewhere, McCarthy's impeachment probe announcement focused on his dealings with Ukrainian energy company Burisma.

Hunter was given a lucrative position on Burisma's board in early 2014, when his father was vice president under Barack Obama and had oversight of US policy toward the country. Burisma's owner was Mykola Zlochevsky, a powerful oligarch awash in allegations of corruption, both inside and outside Ukraine. While Hunter Biden was a Yale law graduate and had some experience in business and finance, it

was unclear what he could bring to Burisma in exchange for \$1 million a year.

The Ukraine-Trump link

In 2014, Ukrainians revolted and ejected Moscow-backed president Viktor Yanukovich. The year was also the beginning of a deep economic crisis in Ukraine, and on the verge of a massive debt default, Ukraine sought global help. But the IMF held up new financing and Washington stalled a \$1 billion loan guarantee until newly-elected President Petro Poroshenko took action on corruption.

In meetings with Poroshenko in December 2015 and January 2016, Biden said fiscal support would not advance until he fired prosecutor general, Viktor Shokin, who allegedly continued to protect corrupt Ukrainian oligarchs, including Zlochevsky. "I looked at them and said, 'I'm leaving in six hours. If the prosecutor is not fired, you're not getting the money,'" Biden recounted in 2018. "He got fired," he said. With Shokin gone, Zlochevsky's properties were raided by the state prosecutor.

In January 2017, Biden left office and Trump became president. Within 18 months, it became clear that Joe Biden would challenge him for the White House in the 2020 vote. His reelection under threat, Trump dispatched his personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, to Kyiv to dig up dirt on the Bidens in early 2019. When Giuliani's efforts were stymied, Trump in July stepped up the pressure on Poroshenko's successor, Volodymyr Zelensky, by summarily freezing \$400 million in military aid. In a phone call days later, on July 25, Trump alluded to US support and strongly urged Zelensky to investigate the Bidens and announce the results. That call became the basis for the first impeachment of Trump, on the grounds that he illegally



WASHINGTON: US Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy arrives at the US Capitol on September 13, 2023. McCarthy announced Tuesday that he endorsed launching a formal impeachment inquiry into US President Joe Biden. — AFP

solicited foreign interference in the coming US election — which he went on to lose to Biden.

Biden 'brand'

With Republicans winning control of the House of Representatives in the 2022 midterm elections, Trump's allies gained the legal tools to take their revenge. After eight months of investigation, Comer's Oversight Committee is turning the story of Shokin's firing on its head. They allege that Shokin was a threat to Burisma and that Joe Biden's pressure for his removal was designed to protect the company and his son, and to financially benefit from doing so.

With records obtained from the FBI and Justice Department and witness testimony, Comer has been able to detail large sums of money going to Hunter Biden and his associates, but nothing showing the elder Biden personally benefited. The committee instead says the probe is investigating "influence peddling" by what Trump repeatedly calls "the Biden crime family."

The investigation "reveals Joe Biden allowed his family to sell him as 'the brand' around the world to enrich the Bidens," the committee said Tuesday. The committee will "work to follow the facts to ensure President Biden is held accountable for abusing public office for his family's financial gain," it said. — AFP



SANTA CLARA: Cuban Pedro Roberto Gamuza, the father of two men in their thirties believed to be among a group of Cubans recruited to fight for Russia in Ukraine, is seen in this photo. — AFP

Cubans fret about sons recruited to fight for Russia

SANTA CLARA: For Cuban Pedro Roberto Gamuza, 59, the war in Ukraine has hit very close to home: one of his sons has gone to fight there and another was detained on his way, charged with being a mercenary. Gamuza's sons, aged 33 and 34, are believed to be among a group of Cubans recruited by an alleged criminal network to fight for the Russian army.

Last week, Havana said it had arrested 17 people over alleged links to a "trafficking network that operates from Russia to incorporate Cuban citizens living there, and even some from Cuba, into the military forces involved in military operations in Ukraine." Among the 17 were an alleged organizer, two recruiters, and 14 volunteers — including one of Gamuza's four sons, 34-year-old Liogi Gamuza Perez.

Announcing the arrests, the Attorney General's office said anyone found guilty of human trafficking, offering mercenary services or "hostile acts in a foreign state" could face a life sentence or even the death penalty. Gamuza told AFP that Liogi phoned him on Tuesday of last week to say he had been summoned by Cuban state security.

Days later, authorities informed him his son had been detained for mercenary activities. Gamuza said in his hometown of Santa Clara, some 280 kilometers (174 miles) from the capital. He has not heard from him since. Gamuza also has no idea as to the whereabouts of his other son, 33-year-old Robeisi Alexander, who has a three-year-old daughter.

Six weeks ago, Alexander's wife told Gamuza her husband had left for Russia. Local media identified him as a recruit for Russia's war. There has also been no recent news from him. "I feel giddy, my head doesn't work," a worried Gamuza, decked out in the blue uniform and white rubber boots of a factory worker, told AFP on Monday.

'Deception'

Gamuza said he was unaware of his boys being recruited to fight for Russia. Liogi, he said, was never called up nor did he undergo military training due to ill health. His son must have fallen victim to "deception," said Gamuza, who said Liogi had denied ever signing any contract with any recruitment group.

Earlier this month, Miami's America TeVe station circulated what it said were testimonies from two teenagers — Andorf Velazquez and Alex Vega — who claimed to have been tricked into working with the Russian army on construction sites in Ukraine. Another Cuban man told the media outlet he had signed up with Moscow's armed forces hoping to legalize his status in Russia. Andorf's father, Mario Velazquez, told AFP he has had no word from his son for a week. The last time he spoke to him, the 19-year-old said he was in Russia and headed for Ukraine. Velazquez said by telephone from Leon in Mexico, where he lives. He also claimed to have had no response from the Cuban embassy in Mexico, which he had approached for help. — AFP

'Moving fortress': Kim Jong Un's bulletproof train

SEOUL: An olive green North Korean train, emblazoned with a gold stripe, trundled across the border into Russia Tuesday, carrying North Korea's Kim Jong Un to a meeting with President Vladimir Putin. Since taking power in 2011, Kim has made seven international trips, and crossed the border into South Korea twice, using his special train for the majority of his overseas travel. AFP takes a look at what we know about Kim's preferred modes of transport:

Why the train?

From his 2018 trip to Beijing to a 60-hour journey to Hanoi for a summit with then-US president Donald Trump, Kim has used his train for many high-profile trips. A love of locomotives runs in the family: Kim's father Kim Jong Il was known for his fear of flying, limiting his foreign trips to overland journeys to China and Russia by armored train.

The elder Kim once took his train from Pyongyang to Moscow in 2001, a marathon 20,000-kilometre (12,400-mile) round trip that took about 24 days. The train was well stocked, however, with fresh lobster and cases of French Bordeaux and Burgundy red wines, according to an account by Russian official Konstantin Pulikovskiy, who was also aboard.

According to the official North Korean account, Kim Jong Un was on a train for a "field guidance" visit in 2011 when he died of a heart attack. The carriages used by Kim Jong Il and by his own father and predecessor, the North's founder Kim Il Sung, are now on display at the Kumsusan

Memorial Palace in Pyongyang, where both late leaders' bodies lie in state.

How safe is it?

The Kims reportedly have several almost identical special trains made by a factory in Pyongyang. Nicknamed the "moving fortress", Kim's current train has bulletproof windows and reinforced walls and floors to protect against explosives, according to Seoul's unification ministry.

"It is equipped with attack weapons and a helicopter for escape in case of emergency," the ministry says, adding that due to the weight of all the extra equipment the vehicle moves at only around 60 kilometers (37 miles) per hour. Despite its slowness, the train has key advantages over an aircraft, it said, chiefly offering more flexibility in unforeseen circumstances, including attacks. Were an aircraft with Kim on it to be attacked, "survival chances are significantly reduced", it said. The ministry said it was also "more challenging to predict train itineraries". To bolster on-board security measures, Pyongyang has in the past asked for guards to be deployed along the tracks, as it did for Kim's 2019 Hanoi visit.

Does Kim ever fly?

Kim has made seven previous overseas trips — four to China and one each to Russia, Vietnam and Singapore. The latter two were for summits with Trump. He has also crossed the border into South Korea twice. Unlike his father, he is not scared to fly: he flew on three trips — two to China, and one to Singapore — and has even been shown at the controls of an aircraft in 2014 state media footage. His private plane, which flew him to China in 2018, is known as "Chammae-1" after the national bird of North Korea and is a Cold War-era Russian-made Ilyushin-62. Analysts question the aircraft's reliability due to its age and possible maintenance issues. — AFP



KHASAN: North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un gets out of the train carriage at the start of his official visit to Russia. — AFP

At least 40 killed in Darfur as UN's Sudan chief quits

WAD MADANI: An air raid on Sudan's war-ravaged Darfur region killed at least 40 civilians Wednesday, according to a medical source, as the head of the UN mission to the country resigned. Volker Perthes, who has been "persona non grata" by Sudanese authorities since June, warned the United Nations Security Council again, in his final briefing before leaving the post, that Sudan's war risks further deterioration.

"Forty civilians have been killed in an air strike that hit two markets and a number of the city's neighborhoods," the medical source told AFP from a hospital

in Nyala, the capital of South Darfur. The source asked for anonymity out of security concerns. Since battles began on April 15 between the regular army, led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) commanded by Burhan's former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, nearly 7,500 people have been killed, according to a conservative estimate from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project. More than five million people have been uprooted, including one million who fled across borders, according to UN figures.

Intensified fighting

Witnesses in Nyala had reported earlier on Wednesday air strikes falling on two markets and causing civilian casualties in Sudan's second-biggest city. The western region of Darfur — the size of France and home to a quarter of Sudan's population — had already seen some of the war's worst unrest before violence intensified last month.

Iranians hit by Internet curbs since protests

TEHRAN: Iran has imposed curbs on the Internet in the year since protests erupted over Mahsa Amini's death, forcing people to find other ways to run their businesses or keep in touch with loved ones. Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd, died on September 16, 2022 after her arrest in Tehran for an alleged breach of the Islamic republic's strict dress code for women.

Her death triggered months of nationwide protests in which hundreds of people were killed, including dozens of security personnel, before authorities moved to quell what they branded "riots", including restrictions on the use of social media.

Alma Samimi, who makes a living by selling leather bags online, said her business had suffered since the blackout came into force. "The damage has been irreversible," she said, with profits linked to her Instagram account — which had amassed thousands of followers — nosediving 80 percent. "Online interactions have dramatically dropped since last year," she said. The restrictions, which affected online activity including on Instagram and WhatsApp, come as millions of Iranians struggle to make ends meet, grappling with an economic crisis marked by soaring inflation and the Iranian rial's sharp decline. Iran's economic woes were significantly compounded by Washington's 2018 decision to reimpose sanctions on Tehran after then-president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from a landmark nuclear deal. "We cannot plan for the future anymore," Samimi lamented.

'Added cost'

Some 1,200 business owners have since called on Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi to lift the restrictions, according to local media. To keep her business afloat, Samimi resorted to using virtual private networks and anti-filter tools to bypass the censorship. Daily demand on VPN services in Iran rocketed to "3,082 percent higher than before the protests" last year, according to Top10VPN, a British-based digital security advocacy group.

Mohammad Rahim Pouya, a psychologist who offers online therapy sessions, said he lost more than 50 percent of his clients in the early days of the blackout. The 32-year-old said he could maintain communication lines with clients in Iran but it was more challenging with those abroad. For him, the use of anti-censorship tools was "an added cost and probably has security flaws". "But what are the options?" Finding ways around Internet curbs has become commonplace in Iran where authorities have repeatedly blocked access over the years at times of unrest. — AFP

Over 10 days in August, more than 50,000 people fled the city, according to the UN. In early September, those who remained looked up to see a new escalation: air force fighter jets — whose strikes have been largely limited to the capital Khartoum — flying overhead.

Their bombs struck both RSF bases and the residential neighborhoods they inhabit, witnesses told AFP. The army maintains control of the skies, and has been accused of repeated indiscriminate shelling of residential areas where paramilitaries have embedded themselves, including by evicting families and taking over homes. Positioning themselves in civilian occupied neighborhoods and buildings is "a potential violation of the Geneva Conventions," the US-supported Sudan Conflict Observatory has said. It added that the Sudanese Armed Forces "would still be required to ensure that civilian harm is minimized regardless of whether a target has been made a legitimate military target." — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2023

Al-Safat Investment adds 'market maker' activities to its objectives

Al-Terkait: We seek to diversify financial services, add more value to our portfolio

KUWAIT: During the postponed extraordinary general assembly of Al-Safat Investment Company, an important amendment to the company's statute was approved. This amendment, proposed by the company's Board of Directors, allows the company to engage in "market maker" activities for listed shares, in accordance with the technical rules governing this process.

The Assembly, held with 53,362 percent of its members present, voted to amend article 5 of the establishment contract and article 4 of the statute. These amendments expanded the company's objectives to include "market maker" activities, in addition to its existing roles such as managing investment portfolios, providing financial and investment consultations, and owning real estate and movable assets, all within the boundaries defined by the law.

Expansion plan

Al-Safat Investment Company is actively pursuing a "market maker" license, in alignment with its expansion plan for investment activities, previously approved by the board of directors. The company's executive management is implementing this plan according to rigorous standards that align with their aspirations.

The company is committed to developing and diversifying investment channels and services offered to customers, leveraging technological and economic advancements in the field. This strategic move represents a significant step for the



Al-Safat Investment Company
Chairman Abdullah Al-Terkait

company, especially after its listing on the Kuwait Bourse and its merger with Cap Corp, resulting in increased operational activity, revenues, cost management, improved financial balance, and a stronger position in the local market.

It's important to note that the "market maker" license is issued by the Capital Markets Authority to qualified institutions that meet specific conditions and requirements. These include having a technically proficient team and an advanced electronic system capable of

executing market trading operations for specific shares or multiple shares.

Al-Safat's duties

As a market maker, Al-Safat Investment Company's primary responsibilities include providing buy and sell orders for shares in the market, ensuring continuous and accurate pricing, and facilitating trading in the required quantities. All of this is done in compliance with the rules established by the Capital Markets Authority and enforced by the market organization.

The acquisition of this license at this juncture underscores the confidence the executive team has in Al-Safat's ability to add significant value to companies and traders alike. This reflects the company's commitment to meeting the needs of its customers both locally and abroad, highlighting the depth of experience within the company's team.

Objectives and amendments

The company's objectives now encompass the buying and selling of shares and bonds, participation in joint investment activities, investment oversight, savings trusts, and market making. Al-Safat re-

- Assembly approves an amendment to the statute
- New amendment in alignment with company's expansion plans



mains firmly committed to adhering to Islamic sharia principles and rules, excluding any activities that contradict these principles. The assembly also approved an amendment to article 17 of the statute, which now reads as follows:

"No one, including representatives on the board of directors, the chairman, any board members, or members of the executive administration, along with their spouses or relatives, may have direct or indirect interests in contracts signed with the company, unless such interests are authorized by the ordinary general assembly."

Furthermore, the amendment stipulates that "the chairman of the board or any board members may not hold positions in two competing companies, participate in

activities that compete with the company, or engage in personal or third-party trading within the company's activities, unless such actions are approved by the ordinary general assembly."

The amendment also includes provisions preventing the chairman or board members from using privileged information for personal gain and outlines the rules governing the sale or purchase of their shares in the company during their membership. It emphasizes the importance of adhering to Capital Markets Authority regulations regarding the trading activities of board members and the disclosure of such activities. Violations of these provisions may result in dismissal and compensation for any resulting damages.

US consumer inflation ticks up

WASHINGTON: Consumer inflation in the United States rose for a second straight month in August, the government reported Wednesday, putting the heat on policymakers as they work to lower prices.

The consumer price index (CPI), a key inflation gauge, jumped 3.7 percent from a year ago, picking up pace from July's 3.2 percent figure, said the Labor Department. But a measurement stripping out volatile segments cooled to its slowest rate since September 2021.

All eyes are on the report, which is expected to have a bearing on the US central bank's interest rate decision due next week. The Federal Reserve has lifted the benchmark lending rate rapidly since March last year to tamp down demand and sustainably lower inflation — but the current figure remains stubbornly above officials' two percent goal. In August, higher gasoline costs bumped up headline inflation but the so-called core reading — removing the volatile food and energy components — cooled to 4.3 percent on an annual basis.

This is its lowest level in nearly two years. "Today's report provides more evidence that core inflation is trending down toward pre-pandemic levels at a time when employment remains strong," said President Joe Biden in a statement. Acknowledging that an increase in gas prices has strained family budgets, Biden added that he remains "laser-focused on cutting energy costs."

Disinflation ahead

"The index for gasoline was the largest contribu-



Gasoline prices bumped up the US inflation reading in August, ahead of policymakers' key interest rate decision. — AFP

tor to the monthly all items increase, accounting for over half of the increase," said the Labor Department on Wednesday. The department added that the shelter index, which takes into account rent, continued advancing — rising for a 40th consecutive month.

Between July and August, CPI rose 0.6 percent, accelerating from the prior month too while the core figure picked up more than anticipated in the same period. But the general uptick is expected to reverse in the coming months.

"We expect that a slowing economy, looser labor market conditions and moderating wage growth will support a further deceleration in inflation," said economist Nancy Vanden Houten of Oxford Economics. She added that Fed officials will likely look past the latest rise in headline CPI. "Easing demand for goods and services, the pass-through from softer home and rent price inflation, and cooling wage growth should lead to further disinflation," added EY chief economist Gregory Daco. — AFP

ECB taps Germany's Claudia Buch to head banking watchdog

FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank on Wednesday named Germany's deputy central bank chief Claudia Buch to head its banking watchdog, tasked with overseeing lenders at a challenging time for the eurozone economy.

The ECB's governing council voted for the 57-year-old to succeed Italy's Andrea Enria as chair of the so-called Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM) from January. Buch, who has been vice president of Germany's powerful Bundesbank central bank since 2014, would be the second woman to hold the high-profile post after Enria's predecessor, Daniele Nouy from France.

"The governing council of the European Central Bank today nominated Claudia Buch for the non-renewable five-year position of chair of the supervisory board," the Frankfurt-based institution said in a statement. The ECB's pick must still be approved by the European Parliament.

Buch saw off competition from Bank of Spain



Claudia Buch

deputy governor Margarita Delgado, who had also made the shortlist. According to industry insiders, Buch's nomination could boost Spain's chances of nabbing a different top EU role. Spain's deputy prime minister and economy minister Nadia Calvino is currently in a tight race to become the new president of the European Investment Bank (EIB).

If Buch's nomination is approved, she will take the helm of the SSM as lenders are adjusting to a high-interest-rate environment after years of ultra-low rates that squeezed banks' profitability. At the same time, inflation remains stubbornly high despite an unprecedented series of rate hikes from the ECB, adding to a gloomy outlook for the eurozone economy. In an interview with the Financial Times in July, Buch said the resilience of eurozone banks following the upheaval from the pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine reflected the sector's efforts to boost capital and liquidity as well as "the success of supervision". — AFP

EATON

Powering Business Worldwide

Eaton confirms termination of panel builder agreement with Sahara Combined General Trading And Contracting Co. Company

- Following a review of their business, Eaton has taken the decision to terminate the Panel Builder Agreement with Sahara in Kuwait.
- As a result, Sahara is no longer a formal partner of Eaton and in particular is no longer authorized to assemble Eaton xEnergy and Tabula System products.
- Eaton products are no longer supplied to Sahara.
- Eaton continues to serve the Kuwait market through its existing channel partners.

Business



Talal Behbehani

- The great demand witnessed is a reflection of shareholders' confidence in the bank
- The capital increase will be used to further develop our operations and continue to invest in our digital transformation strategy and the financing of projects



Abdulla Al-Sumait

- Proceeds from the capital increase will contribute to strengthening our competitive position in the banking sector within the markets in which we operate
- ABK is keen on implementing its strategic transformation plans

ABK successfully completes its capital increase led by Kamco Invest, ABK Capital

Demand exceeds targeted value by 331% to reach KD 331.37 million

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced the successful completion of its capital increase by offering 500 million shares valued at KD 100 million. The demand exceeded the targeted value by 331 percent to reach KD 331.37 million. Following the completion of the capital increase, the bank's paid-up capital increased by 26.7 percent to reach KD 237.4 million. ABK will utilize the proceeds to strengthen its capital base, aligning with its strategy to further develop and grow its operations.

The subscription period spanned from Sunday, Aug 27, 2023 to Sunday, Sept 10, 2023, managed by Kamco Invest as the lead manager and subscription agent along with ABK Capital as the joint lead manager and subscription agent. The subscription was conducted entirely through Kuwait Clearing Company's online platform.

On this occasion, Talal Behbehani, Chairman of ABK Group, said, "We are pleased with the level of demand witnessed throughout the subscription process. Exceeding the targeted value is a reflection of shareholders' confidence in the bank."

Behbehani highlighted that the subscription coverage exceeded the offering value by 331 percent. He emphasized that the capital increase would strengthen the Bank's capital base and contribute towards enhancing its core business activities, reinforcing its leading position in the Kuwaiti banking sector.

The chairman affirmed that proceeds will also be allocated towards achiev-

ing the targets set under ABK's strategy, which include enriching customer experience, investing in the bank's digital transformation strategy, and keeping pace with the rapid changes in the local, regional, and global banking industry. This will contribute to enhancing ABK's operations in the Kuwaiti market through the provision of new banking products and services as well as allow the bank to finance infrastructure projects in the country.

In terms of the Bank's geographical presence, Behbehani emphasized that the capital increase will contribute to the bank's expansion plans in the regional markets in which it operates, namely Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. He said, "The bank continuously strives to add value to all its stakeholders, including shareholders, customers and others."

Behbehani extended his appreciation to Kamco Invest, ABK Capital, and Kuwait Clearing Company for their significant efforts in managing the subscription process. He also praised the ongoing support ABK receives from the Central Bank of Kuwait, the Capital Markets Authority, and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. For his part, Abdulla Al-Sumait, Acting Group CEO at ABK, said, "We are proud of our investors' great confidence in ABK. This is reflected in the great turnout where proceeds from the capital increase will contribute to strengthening our competitive position in the banking sector."



ABK building

He added that ABK is keen on implementing its strategic transformation plans, pointing out that the capital increase will contribute to strengthening operations in Kuwait and across the region in the UAE, and Egypt. ABK achieved a net profit of KD 23.9

million at the end of the first half of 2023, representing a growth of 30 percent compared to KD 18.4 million during the first half of 2022. Meanwhile, earnings per share reached 11 fils compared to 8 fils during the same period in the previous year.

ABK's financial performance reflects its continuous improvement in key operational aspects, the strong growth of its loan portfolio, the decrease in its provisions and risks, its healthy balance sheet, and its stable liquidity levels. Since its establishment in 1967, ABK has progressed to become one of the leading Kuwaiti banks in the region that offers a wide array of personal, corporate, and private banking products and services. ABK also provides a broad range of local, regional, and global investment solutions and services through its subsidiary, ABK Capital.

Across the region, the Bank offers individuals and corporates the convenience of comprehensive banking and financial services in the Egyptian market through ABK-Egypt's network of 44 branches. This is in addition to ABK's three branches located in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) in the United Arab Emirates, servicing both Kuwaiti and Emirati individual and corporate clients. ABK is a strong supporter of the Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association's 'Let's Be Aware' awareness campaign. Through its various initiatives, the Bank aims to promote financial inclusion by educating Kuwaiti society about customers' rights, responsibilities, and the different types of banking and special needs services. Additionally, ABK consistently provides strategic information on how to avoid banking and financial fraud, loan application requirements, digital services, and more.



CLARKSBURG: Prospective home buyers visit a home for sale during an Open House in a neighborhood in Clarksburg, Maryland on September 3, 2023. -- AFP

Oil prices fuel US inflation but stocks resist

LONDON: US stocks edged higher Wednesday despite data showing rising oil prices pushed US inflation to its largest monthly gain in over a year in August as investors see the Federal Reserve likely to hold interest rates steady. The consumer price index (CPI), a key inflation gauge, jumped 3.7 percent from a year ago in August, in line with expectations, picking up pace from July's 3.2 percent figure.

The 0.6 percent monthly increase was also an acceleration from the 0.2 percent registered in July. But the "core" measure that excludes volatile food and energy prices cooled last month. US pre-market stock futures fell after the data was initially released, but bounced back with the Dow edging higher at the opening bell. All three major indices pushed into the green as trading continued. Ben Laidler, global markets strategist at financial services firm eToro, said the drop in core inflation may outweigh the rise in headline inflation. "However the numbers will still be too high for the Federal Reserve," which holds its next meeting on interest rates next week, he said in a note to investors. "This will force it to keep interest rates at a 20-year high until it sees more progress in the last and hardest yards to get inflation firmly on track towards its 2 percent target," Laidler added.

Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare said the data "probably won't compel the Fed to raise rates further at this point" but it "will certainly keep the Fed in a 'higher for longer' mindset." He noted that investors' expectations of a 0.25 percentage point Fed rate hike later this year dipped only marginally to 43.3 percent.

The US central bank has insisted that its decision-making on monetary policy will be data-driven as it assesses a range of figures, which have for much of 2023 suggested that more than a year of tightening is having the desired effect. That had fanned optimism that July's hike was the last and officials would allow its measures to work through the economy and bring inflation to heel.

But a recent run of strong data, particularly on the jobs market and the services sector, has revived talk that more were on the way, with a surge in oil prices to 10-month highs adding to those concerns.

The pick-up has been fuelled by Saudi Arabia and Russia's decision to slash output until the end of the year, while floods in Libya have hampered its ability to pump. Oil prices rose further on Wednesday as the International Energy Agency warned that Moscow and Riyadh's decision would cause a "significant supply shortfall". In afternoon trading, both Paris and Frankfurt stocks were lower, ahead of an interest-rate decision Thursday from the European Central Bank.

On the corporate front, shares in British oil giant BP fell nearly 1.4 percent after chief executive Bernard Looney unexpectedly resigned, having admitted to not being "fully transparent" about historical relationships with colleagues. Looney, 53, has left after less than four years in the role, having seen the firm through a tumultuous period that included huge swings in prices owing to the COVID pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. — AFP


High costs push home ownership out of reach of younger Americans

WASHINGTON: When Jennie Luhmann started searching for her family's "forever home," she found herself in a perfect storm — few properties were available, buyers were making all-cash offers and interest rates were climbing. Outbid by others and pressured by soaring mortgage rates, Luhmann and her husband decided to rent, before temporarily moving into her mother's house.

The 37-year-old is not alone. Homeownership feels increasingly out of reach for younger generations of Americans, who are squeezed by student debt and childcare costs in an era of slower economic growth. The pressures come as President Joe Biden struggles to tackle negative sentiment about his handling of the economy, as he campaigns for re-election. The Biden administration has sought to narrow America's housing shortfall, in part by lowering barriers to building, but it is not a quick solution.

Millennials, born between the early 1980s to late 1990s, formed the biggest share of homebuyers between 2014 and 2022 according to the National Association of Realtors (NAR). But they lost the position this year to baby boomers, who can fork out cash for their home purchase.

"Inventory is incredibly limited especially at the affordable price points," said NAR deputy chief economist Jessica Lautz. "We're seeing millennials encounter a very difficult housing market, especially with rising interest rates," she added. Young adults in America also "have a rising amount of student loan debt," Lautz said, and the restarting of payments in October after a pandemic-era pause adds to financial stress. Among first-time buyers, 27 percent moved directly from a family member's home into homeownership last year — the highest share recorded since the 1980s — the NAR said. First-time homebuyers are also older, at a median age of 36. — AFP



331%

Coverage of the capital increase of Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait K.S.C.P.

The rights issue subscription period for the increase in the issued capital of Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait K.S.C.P. (the "Bank") ended on Sunday, 10 September 2023. The offered rights of 500 million shares were fully subscribed during this period.

The following is a summary of the subscription results for the rights offering:

- Total number of rights issue shares offered: 500,000,000 shares
- Total value of rights issue shares offered: KD 100,000,000
- Total number of subscribed shares: 1,656,852,596 shares
- Total value of subscribed shares: KD 331,370,519.200
- The percentage of allocation of additional issue shares to subscribers who have applied for more than their entitlement: 1.907%

The shares will be distributed to the subscribers and the excess amount shall be refunded to the respective shareholders within five business days of the disclosure of the allocation results that was made in Boursa Kuwait.



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Joint Lead Manager and Subscription Agent

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Business

Kuwait's financial wealth to reach \$302 billion by 2027: BCG report

'Global Wealth Report 2023' puts annual growth rate of Kuwait's wealth at 2.7%

KUWAIT: Kuwait's financial wealth is anticipated to experience a steady compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 2.7 percent in new wealth, rising to \$302 billion by 2027, according to a new report by Boston Consulting Group (BCG).

The BCG report, titled 'Global Wealth Report 2023: Resetting the Course,' reveals that equities and investment funds in Kuwait continue to make up the largest asset class at 57 percent of total personal wealth in 2022, while bonds are expected to grow the fastest with a CAGR of 6.5 percent between 2022 - 2027. Life insurance and pensions are set to become the third largest asset class by 2027.

"Representing 3.6 percent of the Middle East and Africa's financial wealth in 2022 and growing at a rate of 1.7 percent per annum from 2017 to reach \$265 billion in 2022, Kuwait's trajectory signals calculated risk-taking and continued economic development, despite global market challenges," said Markus Massi, managing director and senior partner at BCG.

In 2022, a significant portion of Kuwait's wealth, approximately 24 percent, originated from ultra high net worth (UHNW) individuals worth more than \$100 million. The influence of these individuals is anticipated to continue to remain consistent until 2027. Furthermore, individuals with wealth between \$1 million - \$20 million held 24 percent of Kuwait's wealth in 2022, with this expected to remain the same in 2027. A significant 30 percent of the wealth was held by individuals' worth under \$250,000, which is expected to remain the same by 2027.

Highlights

- In 2022, approximately 24% of Kuwait's wealth originated from Ultra High Net Worth (UHNW) individuals worth more than \$100 million. The influence of these UHNW individuals is anticipated to remain consistent until 2027.
- Individuals worth under \$250,000 held a significant 30% of the wealth in 2022, and this is also expected to remain the same by 2027.
- Equities & investment funds remain the largest asset class in Kuwait, making up 57% of total personal wealth in 2022, with bonds expected to have the fastest growth at a 6.5% Compound Annual Growth Rate between 2022 - 2027

"The concentration of Kuwait's wealth in the hands of UHNW individuals garners its sustained growth. These individuals are driving investments in the region and their contribution to the economic landscape is significant," said Massi.

The report also presents notable findings on Kuwait's real assets and liabilities. Real assets in Kuwait grew by 1 percent per year from 2017 to 2022, reaching \$219 billion, and are projected to increase by 3.3 percent per annum to \$257 billion by 2027.

Simultaneously, Kuwait's liabilities sector expanded by 4.9 percent per annum to \$34.1 billion during the same period and is expected to grow by 3 percent per annum to \$39.6 billion by 2027. This balanced growth invokes a financial profile of a nation that is confident in taking calculated risks, potentially enhancing the all-around growth narrative.

Sustainable profitability

The report provides a detailed analysis of the performance of wealth managers across different areas of their businesses, as well as market-sizing and the quest for long-term profitability. It outlines eight initiatives on both the revenue and cost sides that can aid firms in positioning themselves optimally for the future. The aim is to provide actionable information and insights for wealth managers looking for a competitive advantage amidst a challenging market-place and tough overall economic conditions.

On the revenue side, the strategies include scalable client acquisition, distinctive private-market offerings, revising product shelves towards fixed-income products, and incorporating generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in financial advice. For cost reduction, the focus is on end-to-end (E2E) process review, mak-



Markus Massi



Nimrod Pais

ing informed shoring decisions, utilizing third-party tech and operational solutions, and simplifying products and services via advice-like discretionary portfolio management (DPM) to streamline operations and cater to various client needs effectively.

"To ensure long-term profitability in wealth management, strategic adoption of initiatives such as scalable client acquisition, distinctive private-market offerings, and the integration of new technologies into financial advice can accelerate revenue generation. Simultaneously, focusing on reviews, decisions, and tech-based solutions is key to strategic cost management. By redesigning wealth management with these insights, we can unlock a future of growth, efficiency, and scalability," concluded Nimrod Pais, managing director, and partner at BCG.

Gulf Bank enters a partnership with Transcrate Int'l Logistics

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing efforts to support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Gulf Bank has entered into a strategic partnership with Transcrate, a leading international logistics company, to provide its premium services to the Bank's SMEs customers at discounted rates. Transcrate International Logistics will provide Gulf Bank's SMEs customers with a range of services that would help them expand their businesses, meet the requirements of their customers, and carry out shipping, customs clearance, and logistics services.

On this occasion, Gulf Bank's General Manager of Corporate Banking, Faisal Al-Adsani, said: "This agreement is part of Gulf Bank's 2025 strategy, which considers the SMEs sector as one of its main pillars. The bank aims to increase the growth rates of corporate services and help them expand their portfolio of products and banking services."

He added: "Gulf Bank is always striving to enhance non-banking services for SMEs, to help them operate their business successfully, without having to invest in the purchasing, renting, managing stand-alone warehouses, or hire a specialized team to manage clearance, delivery and inventory transportation."

Today, SMEs play an important role in diversifying the Kuwaiti economy, creating job opportunities and raising the value of entrepreneurship. Hence, Gulf Bank is keen to provide the necessary support in accordance with the Bank's policies, to promote sustainable growth in SMEs, and the national economy as a whole.

Al-Adsani continued: "In addition to its distinguished role in providing credit financing to this sector, in accordance with the Bank's policies, Gulf Bank also provides its SMEs customers with electronic banking services, electronic salary transfers, issuance of debit cards, point-of-sale registration services, payment gateways, logistics, advisory and other services for companies. Customers can visit the website to register and for further inquiries."

Commenting on the strategic partnership, Ahmad Al-Qenaei from Transcrate International Logistics, said: "We are delighted to enter this important partnership with Gulf Bank, one of the leading banks in Kuwait, and to provide our services to its SMEs customers. This would help them expand their business and activities both internally and externally, in addition to facilitating all their logistics requirements. It is part of our company's goals to educate customers and complete their requests in a timely manner, to help them reach their goals."

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.



Faisal Al-Adsani

Oula Fuel partners with banks, KNET for GCCPOS card acceptance

KUWAIT: Oula Fuel has become the pioneering fuel station chain in Kuwait by enabling visitors with debit cards from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member banks to make payments. This marks the first instance in Kuwait where GCCPOS debit cards are accepted at fuel stations, as announced by The Shared Electronic Banking Services Company 'KNET'.

Esam Alkhesham, the Chief Executive Officer at KNET stated: "This step underscores KNET's crucial role in the current expansion of GCC card acceptance within the State of Kuwait. KNET is widely recognized as the pioneer behind GCCNET, an ATM network that facilitates debit card cash withdrawals across GCC countries. Moreover, KNET is a prominent advocate for the development of Kuwait's banking sector, offering a comprehensive suite of advanced services and solutions in the realm of digital payments. In addition to its online payment gateway, KNET connects ATM machines and Point-of-Sale devices in Kuwait, as well as those in GCCNET/GCCPOS member countries."

The stakeholders and facilitators at Al-Ahli Bank of

Kuwait, Warba Bank, KIB and Ahli United Bank have played an effective and key role in introducing the service to all POS devices operating at "Oula Fuel" - totaling 43 fuel stations.

In alignment with the ongoing digital transformation and a concerted effort to decrease reliance on physical cash, this action underscores KNET's dedication and contribution towards Kuwait's vision amidst the persistent expansion of digital payment volumes.

The Shared Electronic Banking Services Company "KNET" is the pioneer in electronic payments in Kuwait. KNET was established in 1992 with the partnership of the local banks to connect all local bank's systems and enable wide range of banking services through an advanced network. KNET is committed to pursue and adopt state of the art technologies in various fields of electronic banking and payments to the highest standards available globally. Amongst the targeted sectors are the commercial, banking, and governmental sectors in the State of Kuwait.



Esam Alkhesham

Management and economy blamed for Wilko demise

LONDON: The imminent demise of household goods seller Wilko highlights the challenges UK retailers currently face amid decades-high inflation and anaemic economic growth, but experts argue it also stems from bad management. With nearly 12,500 job losses looming, Wilko's downfall is the biggest bankruptcy in the sector since Woolworths shuttered in 2008, according to the Centre for Retail Research.

The chain's red-and-white logo has been a familiar sight for decades on shopping streets across the country, but will soon disappear following Monday's liquidation announcement.

Wilko was synonymous with bargains in household and garden items, from small electrical appliances and cleaning products to suitcases and gardening tools. The chain, which filed for bankruptcy in August, prided itself on being a family business—founded 93 years ago by JK and Mary

Wilkinson in Leicester, central England—before expanding nationwide. But it ultimately found itself ensnared by Britain's worst cost-of-living crisis in a generation, as increasingly cash-strapped customers curbed their spending in the face of rising bills and went elsewhere. Inflation, supply chain problems and so-called "business rates" taxes also ate into profit margins.

Its 400 stores will close over the coming weeks, but around 50 will be resurrected by B&M European Value Retail, under their brand, while a further 71 have been snapped up by Poundland, another discount retailer. Despite the difficult sector-wide conditions, analysts and the GMB union have taken aim at Wilko's management. The chain traditionally had a reputation for good value, but failed to keep its prices and product range competitive with rival discounters such as budget-conscious supermarkets like Aldi or cut-price chains like Poundland, they said.

Susannah Streeter, an analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown, told AFP that Wilko "hadn't invested enough into keeping prices lower and couldn't stop customers drifting away to cheaper competitors". One social media user described its offerings as "a lot of overpriced rubbish". Meanwhile, the GMB union mirrored the UK press in noting the millions of pounds in dividends that Wilko's shareholders, and in particular the founders' heirs, had awarded themselves. —AFP

EU to probe China electric car subsidies

STRASBOURG: Brussels will investigate Chinese state subsidies for electric cars, EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said Wednesday, vowing to defend Europe's industry against "artificially low prices".

"Global markets are now flooded with cheaper Chinese electric cars. And their price is kept artificially low by huge state subsidies," von der Leyen said, during a speech at the European Parliament in Strasbourg. This could lead the European Union to impose duties on those cars that it believes are unfairly sold at a lower price, thereby undercutting European competitors.

"Europe is open for competition but not for a race to the bottom," the European Commission president said. France reportedly pushed von der Leyen to launch the investigation, but there are growing concerns across Europe about how much the continent relies on Chinese products. European car makers hailed the investigation as a "positive signal".

"The European Commission is recognizing the increasingly asymmetric situation our industry is faced with, and is giving urgent consideration to distorted competition in our sector," said Sigrud de Vries, director general of the European Automobile Manufacturers Association. The EU's internal market chief Thierry Breton last week warned about a trend emerging where Europe was "being relegated to net imports of electric vehicles or solar panels".

China could overtake Japan to become the world's largest car manufacturer this year, according to some experts. France is particularly concerned that Europe will fall behind if it is not more assertive when confronted with China's actions that are more protectionist.

Paris has announced measures that would provide subsidies for new electric cars based on the manufacturers' emissions output. This would be more difficult for Chinese cars since their production often relies on coal-powered electricity. Von der Leyen has called



STRASBOURG: EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is photographed during a plenary session at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, eastern France, on Sept 13, 2023. — AFP

on the EU to define its own approach to Beijing, although some of Europe's larger powers want to be cautious to avoid severing business ties. Despite her strong comments, von der Leyen said it was "vital" for Europe to maintain "communication and dialogue with China".

"Because there are also topics, where we can and have to cooperate.

De-risk, not decouple—this will be my approach with the Chinese leadership at the EU-China Summit later this year," she added. The EU's trade commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis will head to China next week, he said in a social media post, "to engage on trade and economic opportunities/challenges". — AFP

Credit Suisse takeover, 'deal of the century'?

ZURICH: Did banking giant UBS make "the deal of the century" when it bought one of the world's biggest banks for a pittance as it teetered on the edge of the abyss? Switzerland's largest bank was in March strong-armed by Swiss authorities into a \$3.25-billion takeover of Credit Suisse, to keep its closest domestic rival from going under.

At the time, investors gasped at the risks UBS was taking on with the purchase. But by August, the bank said it would not need the billions in support offered by the Swiss government and central bank to offset any surprises that might pop up in its stricken rival's accounts. That must mean that Credit Suisse's situation was "much better than described in March", Thomas Aeschi, a member of parliament with the populist rightwing Swiss People's Party (SVP), wrote on X, formerly Twitter. UBS seemed to prove him right when it unveiled its second quarter results on August 31.

The bank posted a towering net profit of \$29.2 billion for the three-month period, thanks to an exceptional gain due to the gulf between the amount paid for Credit Suisse and its book value.

'Godsend'

"UBS has pulled off the deal of the century," Switzerland's Socialist Party said, maintaining the "rescue" was more of a "godsend", allowing it to snatch up a bank at a dramatically reduced rate. "If we had chosen another path, (like) a temporary or partial nationalization," said Samuel Bendahan, a Socialist MP and economics professor at the University of Lausanne, the Swiss state "would have taken on the risk, but those \$29 billion would have gone to the population". —AFP

Business

Visa, NBK announce winners of first Kuwait edition of She's Next program

She's Next winner announced at awards ceremony at NBK headquarters



KUWAIT: Carl Manlan from Visa and Ghadeer Al-Awadhi from NBK with the two winners.

KUWAIT: Visa (NYSE:V), the world's leader in digital payments, together with National Bank of Kuwait announced Yasmeen Al-Kandari and Yuser Al-Mutawa from "Seeds" as the much-anticipated winner of its first She's Next grant program for Kuwait. The winner was selected at an award ceremony held at NBK headquarters branch, Kuwait City.

Handpicked from a pool of over 880 applicants, the winning women-owned small business in Kuwait will receive a \$50,000 grant along with a year of business coaching from International Trade Centre (ITC), a United Nations and World Trade Organization, and \$3,000 of Amazon Web Services credits. The business coaching will be implemented by the ITC She Trades Initiative, ITC's flagship women and trade program. The winner was selected from a pool of applicants representing a range of sectors including but not limited to textiles, education, food and beverage, professional services, beauty and wellness.

A jury evaluated entries based on the following

criteria: the progression of applicant's entrepreneurial journey; robustness of their business metrics; digital presence; and a demonstrated ability to problem-solve confidently. The members of the jury included: Carl Manlan, VP, Inclusive Impact & Sustainability, CEMEA, Visa, Ankush Devadason, Head of Solutions Delivery, GCC, Visa, Arti Manilal Thanki, Head of FinTech and Partnerships, Visa, and Ghadeer Al-Awadhi, AGM - Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait, Consumer Banking, NBK.

For the first time, She's Next included a People's Favorite award, voted by members of the public online for their favorite business. This award with cash prize of \$10,000 went to Dalal Beidun from mylk ma'am. Further highlighting the increasing focus on sustainability in today's local business landscape, most of the She's Next applicants showcased sustainable business practices. In fact, based on the SMB Digitization Index commissioned by Visa to support the She's Next program, all the women entrepreneurs

surveyed across GCC (100 percent) acknowledged the increasing importance of sustainability in the current business landscape, indicating their commitment to reduce waste, recycle products (45 percent), and minimize plastic usage (51 percent).

Through their participation in the She's Next program, these women entrepreneurs have gained access to practical insights from women leaders, valuable tools, educational resources, and facilitated trainings. This includes access to AWS Connected Community and ITC She Trades Initiative's "Elevate Your Business" training program. Visa and ITC will also provide one-to-one advisory support for 30 finalists - equipping these individuals with the guidance and insights to boost their business and financial strategies.

On this occasion, Ghadeer Al-Awadhi, AGM - Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait, said: "Supporting and empowering women is deeply rooted in NBK's culture. In that context, we

are committed to leading the Kuwaiti private sector endeavors to create a business environment that increases the ability of national female talent to introduce innovative solutions for their businesses, especially in the digital innovation area. Therefore, we are proud to partner with Visa to launch "She's Next" for the first time in Kuwait, as we believe that supporting women-owned and led businesses has become an urgent necessity, in light of the pivotal role of women entrepreneurs in driving the growth of modern economies."

"In a world where women-owned small businesses consistently demonstrate their resilience and future-forward optimism, Visa is proud to acknowledge and support these trailblazing female entrepreneurs in Kuwait. We extend our heartfelt congratulations once again to the winners of She's Next in Kuwait and look forward to supporting them in their business journey," said Shashank Singh, Visa's VP and General Manager for Kuwait and Qatar.

Euromoney: Boubyan 'The World's Best Islamic Structured Products House'

KUWAIT: Boubyan Bank received another award as a part of Euromoney's international awards to banks in Kuwait and the region, where the bank was named "The World's Best Islamic Structured Products House 2023". This emphasizes the bank's leadership in acquiring a share of corporate finance in the Kuwaiti market, and reinforcing its competitive abilities to offer outstanding financing solutions and products to corporate customers.

The international institution recognized Boubyan with this award on the back of Boubyan's financing deals to major projects and companies, which reinforced its strategy in the financing market and its role in the growth of the banking industry through its financing solutions which contribute to the growth of Islamic finance.

Boubyan received "The World's Best Islamic Structured Products House 2023" award for being the mandated lead arranger, global agent, in financing the J3 project for developing Jaber Al-Ahmad Residential City at a total cost of KD 150+ million.

Mohammed Al-Jaser Al-Ghanim, Deputy General



Mohammed Al-Jaser

Manager - Corporate Banking Group, stated: "Thanks to Almighty Allah, we made a new achievement by outperforming Islamic financial institutions worldwide. The outstanding award by a prestigious institution such as Euromoney reinforces our achievements and emphasizes our leadership in terms of excellence and uniqueness of products, thus leading to our sustainable growth across various financing sectors and on the long term."

He added: "The most prominent aspect about this award is that it comes from an international institution which is renowned for its fairness, and that this recognition is based on a thorough assessment, which reflects



the role of the leadership of the bank and its prominent role in reinforcing the Islamic finance sector by financing mega corporate projects, and the accelerating growth of the finance industry by providing all means of support, innovating financing solutions, and the necessary support to many vital projects for its business banking customers.

Al-Jaser concluded: "Boubyan Bank's solid performance and growth across all financial indicators, especially market shares in various sectors, are the fruit of its unwavering commitment to offering sustainable solutions and products that achieve sustainable growth over the long term. All this was achieved by the special efforts of our human resources, and we remain committed to maintaining our successes across all business sectors."

Kuwait Airways' board of directors holds first meeting

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways' new board of directors held its first meeting at the company's headquarters, headed by the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Kuwait Airways, Captain Abdulmohsen Salem Alfagaan, and in the presence of the members of the board comprising Dr Amani Khaled Borelli, Abdulaziz Abdullah Alhumaidhi, Omar Mohammad Alomar, Salem Bader Al-Shatti, Mohammad Mannaa Alenezi, and Ali Haidar Khajah. The meeting ended with the decision to appoint Dr Amani Khaled Borelli as Vice Chairman of the board of directors, in addition to the establishment of the members of the working committees.

This meeting follows the decision of Minister of Finance Fahad Abdulaziz Al-Jarallah, (No:55 of 2023, dated September 6, 2023) to appoint the new board of directors for a period of three years. On this occasion, the Chairman of the Board of Directors, Captain Abdulmohsen Salem Alfagaan stated, "On behalf of myself and the board of directors, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to the political leadership in the country and to His Excellency the Minister of Finance, Fahad Abdulaziz Al-Jarallah for the trust placed in us to take over the management and assume these duties. We invoke the blessings of God Almighty to enable us to fulfill these expectations and achieve the aspirations of the honorable people of Kuwait, by developing Kuwait Airways, the national carrier of the State of Kuwait."

Alfagaan added, "The Board of Directors met with His Excellency the Minister of Finance, heeding his judicious directives and proposals re-



KUWAIT: Captain Abdulmohsen Salem Alfagaan with Kuwait Airways' new board of directors.

garding the development of Kuwait Airways in the subsequent stages and towards contributing to achieving the anticipated objectives. We assured His Excellency of our endeavors towards achieving these directives and plans with precision, diligence, and dedication, which is to be implemented, to reach broader horizons of progress in the best interests of Kuwait Airways as entrusted by its valued customers, whether in the State of Kuwait or abroad."

Alfagaan mentioned, "The new board of directors will strive with all diligence to complete the phase of developing and improving Kuwait Airways, which has been full of achievements since 1954, and based on the aspiration of its esteemed customers. We will work with the honorable members of the board to develop appropriate and practical strategies to confront challenges and circumstances, reviewing them suitably and to develop solutions that will assist to achieve these goals, leading to the development and progress of all sectors of the company and the improvement of the entire operational system, to meet the preferences and requirements of our valued customers, as well as achieve their complete

last month it would levy a one-time 40-percent tax on banks' "surplus profits" netted as a result of the ECB's series of interest rate hikes over the past year. The shock move spooked investors and sent shares in Italian banks plunging before the government watered down the plan, saying the new tax would be capped at 0.1 percent of a bank's assets.

"Imposing an extraordinary tax on the banking sector could make it more difficult for credit institutions to build up additional capital buffers, as their retained earnings will be reduced, making them less resilient to economic shocks," the ECB said in a legal opinion. The tax also does not take into account the long-term im-

part of higher borrowing costs, it said, which could lead to increased credit risks as households and businesses struggle to pay off more expensive loans.

The ECB said the windfall tax would hurt smaller banks in particular, as their income depends heavily on lending activity. The Frankfurt institution also criticized the out-of-the-blue announcement of the special measure, saying it had created uncertainty that could spark legal issues and scare off future investors, potentially making it more costly for Italian lenders to attract funding. It recommended that Italy carry out "a thorough analysis" of the windfall tax's "potential negative consequences for the banking sector". — AFP

BP shares drop after CEO quits over relationships

LONDON: Shares in British energy major BP dropped Wednesday after chief executive Bernard Looney resigned unexpectedly over his failure to disclose past relationships with colleagues. BP's stock fell nearly one percent to 518.20 pence at midday on London's falling FTSE 100 index, despite rising oil prices that normally boost energy firms. The company announced late Tuesday that Looney, 53, resigned "with immediate effect" after admitting he had not been "fully transparent" about historical relationships with colleagues.

The Irishman is leaving after less than four years in the role, having steered the energy major through a tumultuous period that included huge swings in prices owing to the COVID pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "The higher oil price might limit some of the fallout from the shock resignation... but this is a highly unwelcome turn of events for investors given his long tenure at the company and his pivotal role at the helm as it navigates the tricky transition to greener energy," said Susannah Streeter, head of money and markets at Hargreaves Lansdown.

"Change at the top is always unsettling and the abrupt nature of his departure will intensify reactions, particularly as it comes at such a sensitive time in the company's strategy," she said. Looney took the top job in February 2020, shortly before the 10th anniversary of the explosion on the BP-leased Deepwater Horizon rig in the Gulf of Mexico that triggered the worst oil spill in US history. The disaster killed 11 employees and cost the British firm tens of billions of dollars in damages and compensation. Looney's arrival came also shortly before oil prices briefly turned negative as COVID lockdowns slashed energy demand and slammed the sector. Finance chief Murray Auchincloss will now act as interim CEO while the group seeks a permanent successor.

"Compared to the multi-billion-dollar fines following the Deepwater Horizon spill, briefly negative oil futures prices and dividend cuts during the pandemic, the resignation is a surprise but perhaps not a major chapter in BP history," said Interactive Investor analyst Richard Hunter.

"With a temporary replacement now confirmed, BP will be hoping for markets to regard the situation as business as usual," he said. "There will, however, inevitably be uncertainty until such time as a permanent replacement is found and the company clarifies whether there will be any changes to its current strategy." Looney had also come under fierce criticism from environmentalists, who have accused BP and rivals of not going far enough in transitioning away from fossil fuels. He is not the first head of a major global company to resign or be ousted over relationships with employees. Steve Easterbook was ousted as CEO of McDonald's in 2019 for having a "consensual relationship" with an employee, in violation of company policy. — AFP



Bernard Looney

ECB worried over Italy's windfall tax on banks

FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank on Wednesday sharply criticized Italy's surprise windfall tax on banks, warning it could weaken lenders' capital buffers and make them more vulnerable to future economic shocks. Italy's hard-right government announced



Taylor Swift ties record for most VMA wins in one night

US singer-songwriter Taylor Swift accepts the Video of the Year award onstage.



US singer Taylor Swift arrives for the MTV Video Music Awards.

Taylor Swift cleaned up at Tuesday's MTV Video Music Awards and won the evening's top trophy, as Shakira accepted the night's prestigious Video Vanguard honor with a hip-shaking, career-spanning performance. Swift continued her global reign by scooping awards including Best Song, Best Pop and Best Direction, as well as the top competitive award for Video of the Year, which she won for her hit "Anti-Hero."

Turn-of-the-millennium teen heartthrobs NSYNC reunited onstage for the first time in a decade to present her with the Best Pop award, leaving Swift, who is poised to post the first billion-dollar tour, fanning her cheeks. "This is unbelievable," Swift



Ice Spice poses with the "Best New Artist" award in the press room.

said as she accepted the night's top prize, which she also took home in 2022. "I just want to say that the fact that this is a fan-voted award means so much to me." But she didn't perform on the night known far more for its spectacle than its awards, instead sipping her drink as artists including Olivia Rodrigo, Anitta and Doja Cat took the stage.

The made-for-broadcast show, held this year in Newark's Prudential Center, frequently panned to Swift who was seated near the main stage next to Ice Spice, the viral Bronx rapper who has collaborated with the pop phenom and who won the evening's prize for Best New Artist. A camera operator was reportedly tasked with filming Swift for the show's entire duration.

The nearly four-hour show that included some 20 performances ended without handing out awards in a number of categories, however, including for Artist of the Year, which for the first time was an all-women slate including Swift, Shakira and Beyonce. Lil Wayne opened the show in a nod to this year's 50th anniversary of hip hop, and Sean Combs—known by his stage names Puff Daddy, Puffy, P. Diddy and Diddy—delivered a career-spanning performance as he accepted the night's Global Icon lifetime achievement award.

"This is so surreal," said the 53-year-old from Harlem. "I started out as a paper boy." And it was Shakira who scored the night's most prestigious honor for lifetime achievement, the Video Vanguard award that celebrates music video innovations. The Colombian performer, 46, stole the show as she performed her signature hip swings and pops, singing a bilingual medley including "She Wolf," "Te Felicito," "Objection (Tango)," "Whenever, Wherever" and "Hips Don't Lie."

Wearing a glittering, nude ensemble, the artist finished her set by crowd-surfing to a platform that then elevated her high above a screaming crowd of fans and peers. "Thank you MTV."

Thank you for being such a big part of my career since I was only 18 years old," she said.



Shakira accepts the Michael Jackson Video Vanguard Award onstage.



US singer-songwriter Taylor Swift accepts the Song of the Year award for "Anti-Hero" onstage during the MTV Video Music Awards at the Prudential Center in Newark, New Jersey.— AFP photos



US rapper and singer Nicki Minaj arrives for the MTV Video Music Awards.



(From left) Taehyun, Yeonjun, Soobin, HueningKai and Beomgyu, of South Korean boy band Tomorrow X Together arrive for the MTV Video Music Awards.



US rapper Nicki Minaj accepts the Best Hip Hop award for "Super Freaky Girl" onstage.



Shakira and Karol G accept the Best Collaboration award for "TQG" onstage.



Anitta accepts the Best Latin award for "Funk Rave" onstage.



(From left) Thomas Raggi, Ethan Torchio, Victoria De Angelis and Damiano David of Maneskin pose with the "Best Rock Award" for "The Loneliest" in the press room.



(From left) Bang Chan, Lee Know, Felix, Han, Seungmin, Changbin, Hyunjin and I.N of Stray Kids pose in the press room with their Best K-Pop award for "S-Class".



US producer-musician Sean "Diddy" Combs (left) and his son US rapper King Combs pose with the Global Icon award in the press room.

Lifestyle



US singer Dove Cameron poses with Video for Good award on stage.



(From left) Han, Hyunjin, Bang Chan, I.N, Felix, Lee Know, Seungmin and Changbin of Stray Kids perform onstage.



Colombian singer Shakira poses with the Best Collaboration award for "TQG" and the MTV Michael Jackson Video Vanguard award.

Afrobeats and Bongos

Rapper Nicki Minaj hosted the event for the second consecutive year, also debuting live her newest single, "Last Time I Saw You," which is slated for release on her album "Pink Friday 2" in November. She won the night's award for Best Hip Hop, for "Super Freaky Girl." Minaj also participated in the evening's tribute to five decades of hip hop, which also saw Lil Wayne return to the stage for a medley performance that included pioneers Doug E. Fresh and Slick Rick, LL Cool J, DMC of Run-DMC, and Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five.



Doja Cat performs onstage.



(From left) Joey Fatone, Lance Bass, Justin Timberlake, JC Chasez and Chris Kirkpatrick of former boy band NSYNC speak onstage.

Earlier Doja Cat ignited the crowd as she performed a medley of "Attention," "Paint The Town Red" and "Demons," donning a sexy skirtsuit situation she slowly loosened as she danced, meanwhile unfurling a long blonde mane. Best R&B went to SZA, who did not attend, while South Korea's Stray Kids won the award for Best K-pop and later performed. Nigeria's Rema won the prize for Best Afrobeats, a new category, for his remixed single "Calm Down" featuring Selena Gomez. The song surpassed a billion streams on Spotify over the weekend.

"This means so much seeing Afrobeats grow this big," Rema said while accepting the trophy. Brazil's Anitta dropped a booty-shaking dance party of a show with hits including "Funk Rave," which earned the evening's prize for Best Latin. Colombian Karol G was also among the evening's top performers, and she scored a prize with Shakira for Best Collaboration.

Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion debuted their live performance of "Bongos," their latest collaboration that follows the resounding success of "WAP." Cardi entered the stage from the ceiling



US singer-songwriter Demi Lovato performs onstage.

on a disco ball, her hair in loose waves a la Donna Summer. Megan joined her from another stage, and after their respective verses the pair led the audience through a high-energy, twerkified dance breakdown.

Pop-punk band Fall Out Boy rounded out the millennial nostalgia tour that began the night with NSYNC. The emo rockers performed their updated version of Billy Joel's "We Didn't Start The Fire," hitting major moments of the past three decades in a revamp that includes the line: "YouTube killed MTV." —AFP



South Korean boy band Stray Kids performs onstage.



Rema and Selena Gomez accept the Best Afrobeats award for "Calm Down" from Tiffany Haddish onstage.



US rapper LL Cool J (left) and US rapper DMC perform onstage.



Tiffany Haddish speaks onstage.



Future performs onstage.



Lil Wayne performs onstage.



The Furious Five attend the 2023 MTV Video Music Awards.



(From left) King Combs and Diddy perform onstage.



US actress and singer Sofia Carson.

Winners

Video of the Year
Taylor Swift – "Anti-Hero"

Artist of the Year
Taylor Swift

Song of the Year
Taylor Swift – "Anti-Hero"

Best New Artist
Ice Spice

Push Performance of the Year
April 2023: Tomorrow X Together – "Sugar Rush Ride"

Best Collaboration
Karol G, Shakira – "TQG"

Best Pop
Taylor Swift – "Anti-Hero"

Best Hip-Hop
Nicki Minaj – "Super Freaky Girl"

Best R&B
SZA – "Shirt"

Best Alternative
Lana Del Rey featuring Jon Batiste – "Candy Necklace"

Best Rock
Maneskin – "The Loneliest"

Best Latin
Anitta – "Funk Rave"

Best K-Pop
Stray Kids – "S-Class"

Best Afrobeats
Rema & Selena Gomez – "Calm Down"

Video for Good
Dove Cameron – "Breakfast"

Best Direction
Taylor Swift – "Anti-Hero"

Best Cinematography
Taylor Swift – "Anti-Hero"

Best Visual Effects
Taylor Swift – "Anti-Hero"

Best Choreography
Blackpink – "Pink Venom"

Best Art Direction
Doja Cat – "Attention"

Best Editing
Olivia Rodrigo – "Vampire"

Show of the Summer
Taylor Swift

Group of the Year
Blackpink

Song of the Summer
Jung Kook featuring Latto – "Seven"

Album of the Year
Taylor Swift – Midnights

Video Vanguard
Shakira

Global Icon
Diddy

Sports

Wellalage effort in vain as India beat Sri Lanka to reach Asia Cup final

Rohit enters an elite list of players with over 10,000 ODI runs

COLOMBO: Kuldeep Yadav starred as India overcame a brilliant all-round effort from Sri Lanka's Dunieth Wellalage to win a tense Asia Cup clash by 41 runs on Tuesday and book a place in the final. Kuldeep took four wickets including the final two as India defended 213, bowling out Sri Lanka for 172 to silence a large home crowd at Colombo's R. Premadasa Stadium.

India recorded their second straight Super Four win in the 50-over tournament, a prelude to the upcoming ODI World Cup, and ended Sri Lanka's 13-match winning streak in ODIs. Wellalage, who claimed his maiden ODI five-wicket haul, remained unbeaten on 42 when he ran out of partners as left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep wrapped up the opposition tail in 41.3 overs.

"Kuldeep is a great bowler, I tried to play my normal game with a positive mindset," said Wellalage, who was named man of the match despite being on the losing team. "I want to thank my team-mates and my coaching staff — they gave me great support."

India skipper Rohit Sharma praised Kuldeep, who also took five wickets in his team's previous win over Pakistan, for his rhythm and consistency. "For the past year or so, bowling really, really well. He has done a lot of hard work on his rhythm," said Rohit.

"He went back to the drawing board and worked on it. The ball is coming out nicely and you can see the results in the last 10 ODIs." It was India's third straight day on the field after they crushed Pakistan by 228 runs on Monday in a match that was played across two days due to rain. The next Super Four match between Sri Lanka and Pakistan on Thursday will decide the second finalists between the two teams.

Rohit to 10,000 runs

Rohit, who entered an elite list of players with over 10,000 ODI runs and hit his second successive fifty, scored 53 to hand his team a brisk start but Wellalage hit back. The 20-year-old returned figures of 5-40 including the key wickets of Rohit and Virat Kohli with strong support from part-time spinner Charith Asalanka, who claimed four victims for 18 runs.

Wellalage struck with his first ball of the match when he bowled Shubman Gill for 19 and there was no looking back for the young spinner. He made the home fans erupt with the wicket of Kohli who fell for three a day after an unbeaten 122 against Pakistan at the same venue.

Rohit was also bowled by Wellalage who snared his third scalp in three overs. Ishan Kishan, who made 33, and previous-match centurion KL Rahul attempted to rebuild the innings with a stand of 63.

Wellalage ended that partnership when he got Rahul caught and bowled for 39 and then took his fifth. Asalanka kept chipping away from the other end and was on a hat-trick with India on 186-9, but Axar Patel took the total past 200 after a nearly 45-minute rain break and hit 26.

India hit back with regular wickets and Jasprit Bumrah struck twice. Asalanka attempted to increase the run-rate but became Kuldeep's second wicket. Dhananjaya de Silva fought back along with Wellalage in a threatening seventh-wicket stand of 63 but Ravindra Jadeja broke the partnership with the wicket of De Silva for 41. — AFP



COLOMBO: India's Kuldeep Yadav (R) celebrates after taking the wicket of Sri Lanka's Sadeera Samarawickrama (L) during the Asia Cup 2023 Super Four one-day international (ODI) cricket match between India and Sri Lanka at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo. — AFP

News in Brief

Man Utd shirt deal

LONDON: Manchester United have announced a bumper sponsorship deal with US-based Qualcomm Technologies, whose Snapdragon brand will replace the TeamViewer logo on their shirts from next season. The Premier League club, who did not reveal the financial details of the deal, were reportedly targeting an agreement worth £60 million (\$75 million) per year. It is understood the figure equals or even surpasses the previous biggest shirt deal in football history. Qualcomm has been one of United's global partners since last year. "Manchester United plc has agreed to an expanded strategic collaboration with Qualcomm Technologies, Inc, that will see the Snapdragon brand displayed on the front of the club's famous shirt," the club said in a statement confirming the agreement. It added: "Under the expanded agreement, Snapdragon will become Manchester United's front of shirt partner from the start of the 2024/25 season, featuring on the home, away and third kits of the men's and women's teams." United have not won the Premier League since former manager Alex Ferguson retired in 2013. — AFP

Mushfiqur to miss India match

DHAKA: Bangladeshi batsman Mushfiqur Rahim will skip Friday's Asia Cup Super Four match against India to spend time with his wife and newborn daughter, the cricket board said Wednesday. Bangladesh is already out of the race for the September 17 final after India defeated Sri Lanka by 41 runs in Colombo on Tuesday, in the tournament that is a prelude to the upcoming ODI World Cup in India. Mushfiqur had returned to Bangladesh for the birth of his second child, born on Monday. He was initially expected to re-join the team for the India match in the Sri Lankan capital Colombo. He will now remain in Dhaka, the Bangladesh Cricket Board said. "Mushfiqur has informed us that his wife is still recovering, and he needs to be by her side and with their children," BCB operations chief Mohammed Jalal Yunus. "We fully understand his situation, and have decided to permit him to skip the game." Skipper Shakib Al Hasan, who also returned home with Mushfiqur after their defeat against Sri Lanka on September 9, rejoined the team in Colombo on Wednesday. — AFP

Embarrassing defeat

BEIJING: Angry China fans turned on their team and applauded the visiting Syrians off the pitch after what Chinese state media called "another embarrassing defeat". China's Serbian coach Aleksandar Jankovic blamed bad luck for the 1-0 friendly loss in Chengdu on Tuesday, which came days after they were held 1-1 by Malaysia also at home. President Xi Jinping wants China to one day host and even win the World Cup, but they are ranked 80th in the world and confidence is rock-bottom ahead of World Cup qualifying. Thaer Krouma scored the second-half winner for Syria, who are 94th in the FIFA rankings, in front of just over 12,000 spectators at a 60,000-capacity stadium. The Paper, reporting from the southwestern city, said irate home fans booed afterwards and demanded refunds. Video footage also showed the Chinese players being roundly booed and spectators chanting: "What a disgrace!" — AFP

Markram, spinners keep S Africa's series hopes alive

POTCHEFSTROOM: South Africa's spin bowlers backed up a century by Aiden Markram as the hosts ended Australia's winning streak with a 111-run victory in the third one-day international at the JB Marks Oval in Potchefstroom on Tuesday.

Markram hit 102 not out in a South African total of 338 for six. South Africa survived a furious assault by David Warner and Travis Head before bowling out Australia for 227. Australia won the first two games in the five-match series after sweeping a Twenty20 series 3-0.

The tourists looked on track for another win when Warner and Head thrashed 79 for the first wicket off only 48 balls. Australia were 104 for one at the end of the 10-over power play, the second time in a row they reached three figures while fielding restrictions were in place.

But left-arm spinners Tabraiz Shamsi (two for 29) and Keshav Ma-

haraj (two for 37) changed the course of the match on a spin-friendly pitch before fast bowler Gerald Coetzee (four for 50) finished off the Australian innings.

Maharaj also made a key intervention in the field with a direct-hit run-out of Warner, who made 78 off 56 balls before slipping and losing his shoe as he set off for a single. "We needed a positive one," said South African captain Temba Bavuma.

"The batters knuckled down and we were banking on the wicket assisting the spin bowlers and it's exactly what it did. "The power play didn't go as well as we wanted but the way we clawed it back was exactly what we're looking for."

Australian captain Mitchell Marsh said the loss was "a little slip-up" in conditions which are likely to be replicated during the World Cup in India next month. "Hopefully we learnt a lot from it," he said.



POTCHEFSTROOM: Australia's Marnus Labuschagne (L) reacts after being stumped out by South Africa's wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock (R) during the third one-day international (ODI) cricket match between South Africa and Australia at Senwes Park in Potchefstroom. — AFP

Quinton de Kock (82) and captain Temba Bavuma (57) gave South Africa an ideal start with an opening stand of 146 in 22.5 overs. But Australia were able to slow down the scoring, with part-time off-spinner Travis Head making good use of a slow, dry pitch to bowl unchanged

and take two for 39 in 10 overs.

Markram and Marco Jansen gave the innings late impetus with a sixth-wicket partnership of 63 off 31 balls which was ended by a sensational diving left-handed catch by Sean Abbott on the cover boundary off Nathan Ellis. — AFP

Max Verstappen win streak under threat in 'perilous' Singapore race

SINGAPORE: Max Verstappen's bid for a record-extending 11th straight win faces a severe test in Sunday's "perilous" Singapore night race on the unpredictable Marina Bay street circuit. The Red Bull driver's third world title in a row is only a matter of time but the Dutchman has never triumphed under the lights in Singapore, where tropical storms, intense humidity and concrete barriers all await.

Safety cars and red flags will almost certainly play a part too, with memories of an "incredibly messy" race in Singapore a year ago fresh in Verstappen's mind. Rain is again forecast for race weekend. Verstappen was only eighth on the grid in 2022 after being under-fuelled in Saturday qualifying and a pre-race deluge saw him start poorly on the sodden track, dropping back five places.

He clawed his way through the field with the help of several safety car and virtual safety car periods, only to slither on to an escape road while trying to take fourth place, eventually rejoining and settling for seventh.

Red Bull teammate Sergio Perez kept his cool out in front to win ahead of Charles Leclerc in a Ferrari and keep the champagne on ice for a bit longer. "It's better than eighth but it's not what I'm here for, not with a car like that," lamented Verstappen after the race. "It was just incredibly messy."

Verstappen leads Perez by 145 points in this year's championship and could clinch the world title with six races to spare at next week's Japanese Grand Prix. Mercedes are second in the constructors' championship, a distant 310 points behind, with team boss Toto Wolff believing that Red Bull are on course to win all 22 races this season.

"I think they need to screw it up themselves," Wolff said after Verstappen's 10th win in a row at

Johnson ready for blame if US should fall at Ryder Cup

SAN FRANCISCO: US Ryder Cup captain Zach Johnson said Tuesday he is ready to handle criticism if the Americans lose to Europe in two weeks at Italy after a dominating 2021 triumph. Seeing the disappointment over a fourth-place finish by US NBA

stars at the Basketball World Cup, Johnson accepts he might pay a price if the Americans cannot snap a 30-year win drought on European soil.

"I've thought about it," Johnson said. "I kind of know what I'm signing up for. That being said, I didn't know all of that was going to be shot at me. There's no way to really know that. "All the arrows, some of them you just deflect and some of them you've got to veer and just try to navigate what you can. I don't mind it."

"I love responsibility, I love difficul-



MONZA: Second placed Red Bull Racing's Mexican driver Sergio Perez (2nd L), first placed Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen and third placed Ferrari's Spanish driver Carlos Sainz Jr celebrate on the podium after the Italian Formula One Grand Prix race at Autodromo Nazionale Monza circuit, in Monza. — AFP

Monza a fortnight ago made it 14 out of 14 for Red Bull in 2023.

'One of the toughest'

If they complete the clean sweep, Red Bull would eclipse the record of Mercedes in 2016 when Nico Rosberg and Lewis Hamilton won 19 of 21 races. Red Bull team principal Christian Horner warned that the unique Marina Bay challenge could upset their perfect season.

"It's a street circuit, it's one of the toughest on the calendar. We saw last year how perilous it can be," said Horner. "We'll just do our best to keep this momentum running. "One day we're going to get beaten. It's just a question of when, and we've just got to make the when as far away as we can. "I think with every weekend that goes past there's more expectation to keep up this amazing run of results."

ty, I love being pushed and somewhat being uncomfortable if that makes sense." Johnson said full credit for victory should go to his 12-man team but he accepts his share of blame for a defeat. "If we lose this, there's probably some merit some of that can go on me," Johnson said. "I fully accept that, that's what I signed up for."

"I hope that's not the case but I'm at peace with whatever comes my way." Johnson spoke ahead of the PGA Tour's Fortinet Championship, which starts Thursday at Napa, California.

Mercedes chance?

Singapore lap times will be quicker this year because of construction work near the city-centre circuit which has meant the removal of four 90-degree corners towards the end of the lap. The total number of corners has dropped from 22 to 19 with lap times around eight seconds faster.

That will add a new element of uncertainty — team strategists will have less time to make calls on whether to pit for new tyres during the safety-car periods that frequent the Singapore race. Wolff believes Mercedes may have their best chance to upset Red Bull on a track where straight-line speed is not so crucial but grid position is everything because of the difficulty in overtaking.

"Singapore is back to high downforce and coming towards our direction a little bit more," he said. "It will be important for us to maximize that opportunity when it comes." — AFP

Two-time defending Fortinet champion Max Homa and two-time major winner Justin Thomas from the US squad will compete in the field.

Thomas, a controversial captain's pick without a top-eight finish in seven months, has not played in six weeks after missing the FedEx Cup playoffs. Homa went 4-0 in the 2022 Presidents Cup the week after a Napa triumph. "Ideally they get some momentum. Momentum in this game is pretty lethal and can be a really good thing," Johnson said. — AFP

Sports

France off to a flyer as Davis Cup group stage finals begin

Wawrinka mocks empty stands for Davis Cup in Manchester

PARIS: France swept aside Switzerland and Chile crushed Sweden as the Davis Cup group stage finals got underway on Tuesday. Serbia, with Sunday's US Open champion Novak Djokovic taking a well-earned breather, were equally emphatic winners over South Korea while the Netherlands felled Finland 2-1.

The top two from each of the 16-team four group round robin will move into the knockout phase in Spain in November. And 10-time previous titleholders France made the best possible start to their Group B campaign in Manchester.

In front of massed ranks of empty seats - as the home crowd awaited the arrival on court of Andy Murray and his Great Britain team's clash with Australia on Wednesday - France gave Switzerland short shrift.

Adrian Mannarino got the ball rolling for Sebastien Grosjean's team, despatching 21-year-old Dominick Stricker who made the last 16 at the US Open at Flushing Meadows, in three sets, 3-6, 6-1, 6-4. Making reference to the near-deserted arena Mannarino said: "I wasn't expecting such a small crowd, it was almost cold out on court". Ugo Humbert made it 2-0 for the French when beating Stan Wawrinka, 38, who delivered the Davis Cup for Switzerland alongside Roger Federer in 2014, 6-4, 6-4, saving a match point before succumbing.

Earlier Wawrinka had also drawn attention to the sparse turnout, poking fun at the former organizers of the Davis Cup, ex-footballer Gerard Pique's Kosmos company. The three-time Grand Slam champion played in Switzerland's 2014 triumph, when they beat France in the final, under the old format of knock-out ties played home and away.

Kosmos changed the tournament format in 2019 to include a group stage which is now played in several cities across Europe. It has been widely criticized for late finishes and smaller crowds. "Thank you Gerard Pique and the ITF!... lol," Wawrinka posted on social media, along with a video showing the largely empty Manchester Arena.

The French wrapped up their 3-0 win in the doubles with Nicolas Mahut and Davis Cup debutant Edouard Roger-Vasselin seeing off Wawrinka and Marc-Andrea Huesler 6-2, 6-2. "It's the best way to start the competition," said captain Grosjean.

"We have a day to prepare for (28-time winners) Australia - we're going to watch the matches tomorrow and then give 100 percent on Thursday," he added. In Bologna, Chile made an early statement in a Group A which includes reigning champions Canada and hosts Italy. Christian Garin was made to sweat for his opening 7-6 (8/6), 3-6, 7-5 win over Leo Borg, the 20-year-old son of the legendary Bjorn Borg.

'Rollercoaster'

Nicolas Jarry had an easier time of it sending Elias Ymer packing with the loss of only six games before Marcelo Tomas Barrios and Alejandro Tabilo took the closing doubles 6-4, 7-5. For Jarry this was the latest high in what has been a "rollercoaster" few weeks. Last month he had to pull out of Cincinnati to attend the birth of his second child. He then flew to New York for the US Open, returned home after losing in the third round, before flying to Bologna, arriving with his luggage missing.

"I'm very happy, very emotional, a rollercoaster of things happening, travel and beautiful things," he smiled. With Djokovic sitting out the



MANCHESTER: France's Nicolas Mahut (R) and Edouard Roger-Vasselin return the ball to Switzerland's Leandro Riedi and Alexander Ritschard during their men's doubles tennis match during the Davis Cup finals for Group B between France and Switzerland, at the AO Arena, in Manchester, northern England. — AFP

group phase Serbia relied on Dusan Lajovic and Laslo Djere in the singles and doubles pairing Nikola Cacic and Miomir Kecmanovic to sweep past South Korea 3-0 in Valencia. In Split, Finland's Otto Virtanen won the opening singles but the Dutch fought back with Tallon Griekspoor leveling and Wesley Koolhof and Matwe Middelkoop

completing a tense win in the closing doubles. On Wednesday, Australia, face Murray's Great Britain, Croatia take on Italy, Spain - missing Carlos Alcaraz - are up against the Czech Republic, with Croatia playing the United States, the record 32-time winners but who last lifted the coveted trophy 16 years ago. — AFP

Halep gets four-year doping ban

LONDON: Former world number one Simona Halep has been given a four-year suspension from tennis for two doping offences, the International Tennis Integrity Agency said Tuesday. The 31-year-old Romanian has been provisionally suspended since October last year after testing positive for the blood-boosting substance Roxadustat at the 2022 US Open.

And in May the two-time Grand Slam singles champion was charged with a second anti-doping breach relating to irregularities in her Athlete Biological Passport (ABP). Both charges have been upheld by an independent tribunal. Halep, who has been provisionally suspended since October 2022, will not be able to play professional tennis again until October 6 2026.

'My fight continues'

But soon after the ITIA statement was released, Halep announced she would appeal the decision, saying: "Today (Tuesday), a tribunal under the tennis anti-doping programme announced a tentative decision in my case. The last year has been the hardest match of my life, and unfortunately my fight continues. "I have devoted my life to the beau-

tiful game of tennis. I take the rules that govern our sport very seriously and take pride in the fact I have never knowingly or intentionally used any prohibited substance. I refused to accept their decision of a four-year ban. I intend to appeal to The Court of Arbitration for Sport."

An independent tribunal, which heard evidence from Halep, the winner of the 2018 French Open and 2019 Wimbledon singles titles, met in London on June 28-29. On September 11, the tribunal — which also heard evidence from scientific experts and sifted through some 8,000 pages of evidence — confirmed it had found Halep had committed intentional violations under tennis's anti-doping programme.

One of these was the use of Roxadustat discovered in her urine sample at the 2022 US Open, with the other breach based on collection and analysis of 51 blood samples provided by Halep as part of the ABP programme. Roxadustat is a substance that can be used legitimately to treat anaemia.

But it is also on the World Anti-Doping Agency banned list as it is considered a blood-doping agent, which increases haemoglobin and the production of red blood cells. The biological passport system is designed for the long-term monitoring of an athlete's blood indicators with the aim of identifying irregularities that could indicate doping.

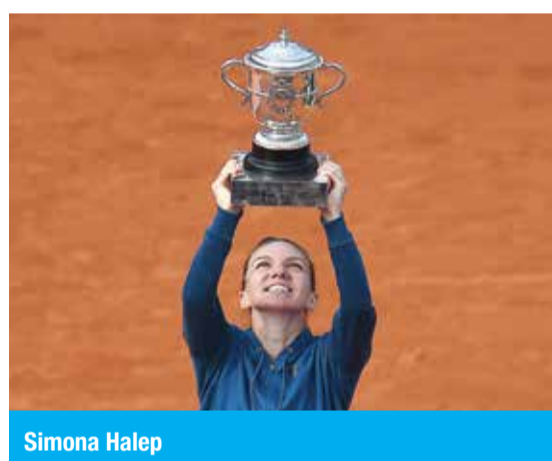
Halep has claimed experts found she had accidentally taken a contaminated supplement. But the ITIA said Tuesday that while the tribunal accepted Halep had taken a contaminated supplement, they also "determined the volume the player in-

"Supporters in Tonga and all over the world are getting warm now as it is close to our first match and I think they are still doing that, painting the cars a lot," he added grinning. Tonga have appeared at every World Cup apart from 1991 and recorded a famous pool win over eventual finalists France in 2011.

However, despite never reaching the knockout stages passion for the team and the sport remains high as assistant coach Zane Hilton discovered. "There is great support in Tonga," said the Australian. "When we left there were individual floats for each player from their own village taking them to the airport. "It was like Carnival. "To feel the support and love coming into this tournament was very moving for me. "Heaven knows what it was like for you guys," he added rubbing Takulua's shoulder.

'Humility'

The Tongans have arguably their strongest squad this time round having been able under eligibility rules to select players with Tongan heritage who played for other countries. Former New Zealand stars Charles Piutau and Malakai Fekitoa are amongst those who now wear the red of Tonga.



Simona Halep

gested could not have resulted in the concentration of Roxadustat found in the positive sample". ITIA chief executive Karen Moorhouse said: "After a complex and rigorous hearing process, we welcome the independent tribunal's decision."

She added: "The ITIA has followed the proper processes as we would with any other individual — in accordance with the world anti-doping code — fulfilling our purpose and responsibility to uphold the principle of fair competition, on behalf of the sport. "The panel recognized that appropriate procedure had been followed within the written decision." Moorhouse said that, given "the significant public interest", the full decision in Halep's case "will be published in due course". — AFP

However, Hilton says whilst they bring a lot to the squad in terms of top tier experience and skills the Tongans have not sacrificed their identity. "We represent Tonga, we do it a Tongan way and that is a really important thing as a group," said Hilton.

"They (the ones who played for other nations) bring excellence but we are 'Ikale Tahī we do it our way. "Sonatane has over 50 caps experience, which is the equivalent of 100 for a top tier nation which is some achievement, and that legacy is a really important part of this group.

"Those guys are very much about adding new ways of doing things but it is really important to keep that legacy of who we are, the 'Ikale Tahī part." Hilton has coached in Australia and Japan but he says the Tongans have touched him in a way he has not experienced elsewhere due to one particular human quality.

"Humility, which I believe is an incredibly important part of Tongan culture," said Hilton, who joins the Queensland Reds coaching staff after the tournament. "For me this is the greatest coaching experience I have ever had and I have been lucky enough to have a number of jobs around the world. — AFP

Rubiales insists Hermoso kiss was mutual, consented

BARCELONA: Former Spanish football federation president Luis Rubiales continued to insist his kiss on Jenni Hermoso's lips after the Women's World Cup final was "a mutual act", in an interview broadcast Tuesday in the United Kingdom.

World Cup-winning Spain midfielder Hermoso, 33, says the kiss was not consensual and a Spanish judge has summoned Rubiales to appear in court on Friday in a sexual assault investigation. Rubiales, who stood down from his post on Sunday, three weeks after the incident during the final medal ceremony following Spain's Sydney triumph, maintains his version is the "truth".

"What we had is a spontaneous act, a mutual act, an act that both consented to, which was driven by the emotion of the moment, the happiness, so I maintain that that is the truth of what happened," Rubiales told TalkTV show Piers Morgan Uncensored. The 46-year-old described the kiss as "non-sexual", having previously compared his behavior to how he would act with his daughters.

"My intentions were noble, enthusiastic, 100 percent non-sexual, 100 percent. I repeat, 100 percent," said Rubiales. The former federation chief, who was provisionally suspended by FIFA before he resigned, said the kiss occurred in a moment of jubilation. "You can imagine if you win the lottery or hopefully soon one day the war in the Ukraine finishes, I mean celebrations will go on up and down the globe," said Rubiales. "People don't ask permissions, it's just a happy, happy time and people celebrate."

However Rubiales reiterated that he had asked permission for the kiss, which he described as "a peck", and accepted that as president of the federation, the act was wrong. "Of course, I have said it from the beginning, I made a mistake, and I apologized in a sincere manner," he said.

"A president can give a hug, but needs to act in a more diplomatic and colder way." Rubiales faced unprecedented criticism after the kiss and his initial refusal to resign. Over 80 women's players went on strike from the national team and controversial coach Jorge Vilda was sacked.

The former chief said Sunday he was now stepping down to help Spain's 2030 men's World Cup bid, as well as his family who had come under pressure following his actions. — AFP

Tonga to turn up the heat on Ireland in Rugby WCup

RUEIL-MALMAISON: Tongan rugby fans "are getting warm" as the 'Ikale Tahī (Sea Eagles) prepare for their Rugby World Cup opening match with world ranked number one Ireland in Nantes on Saturday, said captain Sonatane Takulua.

The 32-year-old scrum-half knows this because they have apparently started by now familiar ritual of painting his name on to cars and property in his home village of Lapaha. Whether there are any cars or houses left for his name to be painted on remains to be seen as they did this prior to the 2015 and 2019 editions.

"They were hot back then," Takulua said on Tuesday. "Then you know our people when they are hot they are hot but when they are cold they don't know where they are at. "But the feeling is coming back.

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752

Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000

Change of Name

I, **Dhawani** Hiteshkumar holder of Indian Passport No. M5455684 having permanent address - Gujarat, India Pin 392001, residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Dhwani Hiteshkumar and (surname) Talati. (#4227) 13/9/2023

dertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (#4226) 12/9/2023

I, **Avith** Lovel, holder of Passport No. N1729719, do hereby change my name to Avith Lovel (as given name) Fernandes (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Avith Lovel Fernandes and I also un-

I, **Abdul** (current name in passport), holder of Indian National Passport Number S3692812 having permanent address house no. 20 Tripolya Gate Kotawala Bag Ratlam, Madhya Pradesh Pin code 457001 India, residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Abdul Kadar and (surname) Alot Wala. (#4225) 12/9/2023

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

Argentina triumph without Messi

Brazil grab late win in Peru, Venezuela defeat Paraguay at home



LA PAZ: Argentina's forward Angel Di Maria fights for the ball with Bolivia's midfielder Moises Villarroel during the 2026 FIFA World Cup South American qualifiers football match between Bolivia and Argentina, at the Hernando Siles stadium in La Paz. — AFP

LA PAZ: World champions Argentina rested Lionel Messi but still shined in a 3-0 victory over 10-man Bolivia in La Paz on Tuesday to maintain their winning start to South American World Cup qualifying. Brazil also have the maximum six points from two games after a superb 90th-minute winner from Marquinhos against Peru in Lima for the only goal of the match.

But Marcelo Bielsa's Uruguay suffered a setback, giving up the lead to end with a 2-1 defeat at Ecuador. Messi, who has had a hectic schedule with his club Inter Miami, watched his teammates from the bench but was not listed as a substitute, having complained of tiredness after scoring the winner in Thursday's 1-0 victory over Ecuador.

Despite the absence of their talisman Lionel Scaloni's side had too much firepower for Bolivia with goals from Enzo Fernandez, Nicolas Gonzalez securing an impressive victory. Chelsea midfielder Fernandez went close with a wonderful effort superbly saved by Guillermo Viscarra, who then did well again to near-post drive from Julian Alvarez.

The lively Alvarez had a hand in Argentina's opener in the 31st minute, feeding Angel Di Maria, whose low cross was turned in by Fernandez, who had made a perfectly timed run into the box. Eight minutes later Bolivia's task got even tougher when Roberto Fernandez was sent off for an over-the-top challenge on Cristian Romero.

Argentina went in at the break with a 2-0 lead after Tagliafico met a floated Di Maria free-kick with a header that looped over Viscarra. The three-time World Cup winners were in total control after the break with Alvarez hitting the post in the 70th minute and Viscarra kept busy by efforts from Rodrigo De Paul and Di Maria.

Gonzalez wrapped up the victory seven minutes from the end with a left-footed drive after more hesitant defending from the home side, who have lost both their opening games. Scaloni was pleased with the performance by his team, saying they were "not afraid to play with the ball" and also offered an explanation for Messi's absence. "Leo was not ready to play, he tried to recover, but he did not feel comfortable," he said.

Brazil came up against a determined Peru side and looked set to be frustrated when Raphinha's rocket in the 72nd minute was brilliantly saved by Pedro Gallese. But in the final minute Neymar whipped in a corner and Marquinhos met it with a masterful glancing header that flashed into the far corner.

Colombia had to settle for a point in a disappointing goalless draw in Santiago, Chile, with Alexis Sanchez back in the starting line-up, had the better of the game, playing some intelligent football in possession but like their opponents they lacked a cutting edge.

After an impressive start to his reign in charge of Uruguay, Argentine Bielsa saw his team lose to two goals from Ecuador defender Felix Torres in Quito. Uruguay took the lead in the 38th minute through Agustin Canobbio but the home side levelled just before the break when Torres rose to power home a header from a Moises Caicedo cross.

A penalty award gave Ecuador the opportunity to take the lead after the break but Enner Valencia's woeful effort from the spot flew wide. But Torres showed his value again to grab the winner,

sliding into a crowded box to turn in a low cross from 16-year-old Kendry Paez. Venezuela defeated Paraguay 1-0 at home thanks to Salomon Rondon's injury-time penalty to raise hopes of making the World Cup for the first time in their history. The hosts thought they had the lead in the 78th minute when Yangel Herrera fired home, but the referee's review at the monitor concluded that the midfielder had handled the ball—to the fury of the home crowd. But the technology worked in Venezuela's favor in stoppage time when it spotted that Paraguay defender Ivan Piris had handled during an aerial challenge in the box and Rondon confidently tucked away the spot-kick.

The qualification process for the expanded 48-team World Cup, to be held in the United States, Canada and Mexico, offers two extra places for South America with six teams qualifying directly. The seventh out of the 10 nations will head to an inter-continental play-off. After the opening two rounds Brazil lead Argentina on goal difference with Colombia third on four points, one ahead of Uruguay and Venezuela. Paraguay, Peru and Chile have a point each. — AFP

Spain, Italy step up chase of runaway Euro leaders

PARIS: Spain crashed in six in Euro 2024 qualifying on Tuesday while Belgium were also big winners as Italy revived their campaign and Austria and Switzerland stayed on course for qualification. Substitute Ferran Torres struck twice for Spain, while Gavi, Mikel Merino, Joselu and debutant Alex Baena were also on target as they beat Cyprus 6-0 in Granada.

Spain closed to six points behind runaway Group A leaders Scotland with a game in hand. The two teams meet in the next round in Seville on October 12. "Our objective is clear—win the rest of the games," coach Luis De la Fuente told Spanish broadcasters TVE.

"We want to finish top of the group." Norway kept alive their faint chance of catching either Scotland or Spain while ending Georgia's hopes of qualifying with a 2-1 victory in Oslo. Erling Haaland gave Norway the lead with his seventh goal in five competitive matches this season and his 25th in 26 internationals. Martin Odegaard added a second before Budu Zivzivadze responded deep in added time.

Davide Frattesi ensured that Italy got their Euro 2024 qualifying campaign back on track with a brace in an entertaining 2-1 win over Ukraine which moved the Azzurri second in Group C. Inter Milan midfielder Frattesi rifled in two low finishes in the first half—an-hour at the San Siro to give Luciano Spalletti his first success on his home debut as coach of the European champions.

Italy moved level on seven points with Ukraine, who scored through captain Andriy Yarmolenko four minutes before half-time, and North Macedonia. Italy occupy the second of two automatic qualifying places on head-

to-head record between those three teams, six points behind England who have played a game more. "We need to be happy," said Spalletti to broadcaster Rai. "The team played good football and was well-organised on the pitch." Ukraine drew with England on Saturday. "It was hard for us to play so soon after playing against England,"

said Ukraine coach Serhij Rebrov. Next month Italy face Malta in Bari before travelling to Wembley, the site of their triumph at the last Euro, to take on England.

Belgium leapfrogged Austria at the top of Group F on goal difference even though both sides won. Romelu Lukaku scored twice as Belgium crushed Estonia 5-0 in Brussels while Austria, facing a much trickier trip to Solna, beat Sweden 3-1. "A perfect night: 5-0, clean sheet. A goal, my 150th game," said veteran Belgium defender Jan Vertonghen who opened the scoring. "We have many players who are no longer part of the national team," the 36-year-old added. "I didn't feel ready for that yet."

In Sweden, Austria scored three times in 16 second-half minutes. Michael Gregoritsch hit the first and Marko Arnautovic the next two before Emil Holm replied in the 90th minute. The top two have a seven-point cushion over Sweden. "Now we can breathe a bit," said Austria coach Ralf Rangnick.

Switzerland stayed top of Group I after making hard work of a 3-0 victory of last-place Andorra. Cedric Itten gave the hosts a 49th minute lead in Sion. Granit Xhaka, in the 84th minute, and Xherdan Shaqiri with a penalty deep in added time, gave a little polish to the final score.

Romania stayed two points behind in second after they beat Kosovo 2-0 in Bucharest in a game delayed after home fans unfurled an anti-Kosovo banner in the first half. Even though the visitors played with 10 men from the 42nd minute when striker Verdat Muriqi was sent off, the hosts did not take the lead until captain Nicolai Stanciu, who had earlier missed a penalty, scored with seven minutes left. Valentin Mihailescu added a second deep into added time. — AFP

Emotional release as Germany beat France

DORTMUND: Despite responding to coach Hansi Flick's sacking with a 2-1 victory over neighbours France in Dortmund on Tuesday, pressing questions remain for Euro 2024 hosts Germany. Usually a bitter rivalry between two of Europe's proudest footballing nations with six World Cups and five European Championships between them, France did not bring their usual intensity to Tuesday's friendly.

Manager Didier Deschamps made six changes from their last outing, a 2-0 win over Ireland, including benching star striker Kylian Mbappe. With France trailing 1-0 for most of the second half, Deschamps left Mbappe on the bench as his side chased the game, the manager later revealing "we didn't want to risk him in this game".

The France manager admitted his changes were made with the future in mind, including leading the line with Randal Kolo Muani who "hasn't played for a while, hasn't trained (and) isn't in top form right now". Calling Flick's caretaker successor Rudi Voeller a "unique and rare coach", Deschamps congratulated his "old friend", telling reporters "I'm not happy we lost, but nevertheless I'm happy for him."

Immediately after the game, interim coach Voeller described the win, Germany's first since March and only the second since the disappointing group stage exit at the Qatar World Cup, as an "emotional release". "What I liked most was that we brought good energy onto the field", telling the post-match press conference "it's not just about the result, but the style and manner of the performance".

Veteran Germany striker Thomas Mueller, who was named in the starting XI for the first time since Qatar, scored after just four minutes. The 2014 World Cup winner said the win was an "emotional liberation" for his side, but told German TV "it was fun, but we don't need to overstate it—we still have a long way to go". — AFP



MILAN: Italy's forward #07 Riccardo Orsolini (up) is tackled by Ukraine's midfielder #15 Viktor Tsyhankov during the Euro 2024 football tournament group C qualifying match between Italy and Ukraine, at Stadio San Siro in Milan. — AFP