

3 Kuwait's hospitals treat 10,000 children with eczema annually



5 Aid arrives in flood-hit Libya but hopes fade for survivors



7 Kim inspects key weapons with Russian defense chief



16 Brighton thump Man Utd as Man City come from behind



Outrage grows over coed ban

Students to file case, hold protest • Bushehri to submit bill to scrap segregation law

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Students from the College of Law at Kuwait University plan to file a lawsuit asking the court to order the university administration to call off a decision banning mixed-gender classes at the college, a lawyer said on Saturday. Adnan Abul said he was asked by the students to file the case urgently on Sunday so coeducation classes continue and studies of students are not disrupted. The Al-Mostaqilla group at Kuwait University has called on students to

organize a sit-in at Kuwait University on Monday to protest against the decision to stop mixed classes. Another liberal students group, the Democratic Students Forum, began collecting signatures in protest against the decision.

Meanwhile, Kuwait University Faculty Association released a statement on Saturday demanding MPs and government "stop interfering in Kuwait University affairs" and maintain the university's independence. In its statement, the association urged MPs to avoid interfering in the university's affairs

without coordination with officials there, saying that positive support is through coordination with the university administration, faculty association and student's union. The association also urged the government to "stop their unjustified political and media interventions" in Kuwait University's affairs.

The association called on the acting director of Kuwait University to avoid falling under political and media pressure and to work on protecting the university's independence.

Continued on Page 6

NEWS IN BRIEF

500 patrol cars at the ready

KUWAIT: The interior ministry is taking all procedures to facilitate traffic as the new school year starts Sunday, traffic awareness director Brig Gen Nawaf Al-Hayyan said. The traffic department has readied 500 patrol vehicles to be stationed around Kuwait to help regulate traffic.

Kuwait protests Iraqi ruling

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for the Arab World Affairs Ahmad Al-Baker on Friday handed Iraqi Ambassador to Kuwait Al-Manhal Al-Safi a letter of protest regarding a recent ruling by the supreme court of Iraq rescinding an agreement between the two countries on maritime navigation at Khor Abdullah. Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also met Safi to discuss bilateral ties, including the ruling. — KUNA

Kuwait open to Manila talks

KUWAIT: Informed sources have affirmed that Kuwait does not object to the resumption of negotiations with the Philippines to allow its workers to return to Kuwait, provided that Manila adheres to Kuwaiti conditions and laws, commits to not committing any violations contrary to regulations in force in the country and does not repeat negative behaviors. Earlier, the Philippine ministry of foreign affairs expressed hope for "sitting down" and discussing the resumption of sending its workers to Kuwait.

Ghazali St closed 4 hours daily

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Roads and Land Transport announced that in collaboration with the traffic department, Al-Ghazali Road will be closed in both directions for four hours daily, from 1:00 am to 5:00 am from Saturday, Sept 16 until Thursday, Sept 21.

Iran seizes two foreign tankers

TEHRAN: Iran has seized two oil tankers allegedly carrying smuggled fuel in the Gulf and arrested their crews, state television announced on Friday. "The seized tankers... flying the flags of Panama and Tanzania were transporting more than 1.5 million liters of Iranian oil and gas," state television said, citing Mohammad-Sharif Shirali, a Revolutionary Guards commander. "Thirty-seven crewmembers were handed over to judicial authorities in Mahshahr" in the country's southwest, he added. — AFP

India imposes curbs over Nipah

NEW DELHI: India has curbed public gatherings and shut some schools in the southern state of Kerala after two people died of Nipah, a virus from bats or pigs that causes deadly fever. The virus has no vaccine and a fatality rate ranging from 40 to 75 percent, according to the WHO. Three others have tested positive, and more than 700 people including 153 health workers who came in contact with those infected are under observation, health officials said. — AFP

Kuwait adheres to multipolar global order

KUWAIT: Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, who is taking part in the G77+China Summit hosted by Cuba, has affirmed Kuwait's adherence to the multipolar global order. According to a statement by the ministry of foreign affairs on Saturday, Sheikh Jarrah, the head of the Kuwaiti delegation at the summit, addressed the conference at its venue in Havana. The summit, held on Sept 15-16, is themed "challenges of

sustainable development, role of science, technology and innovation".

Kuwait advocates greater cooperation among states of the globe to address complex challenges facing the human race, the representative of HHH the Amir said. It is a necessity to proceed with reforming regional and international organizations, namely the UN and international financial agencies, to ensure transparency and effectiveness of their performance and render them more capable of dealing with current and future crises, he said.

Science, technology and innovation play a pivotal role in "empowering our states to face the current and emerging challenges for sake of attaining sustainable development and ensuring that no one is left behind", Sheikh Jarrah said.

Continued on Page 6

Fitch affirms Kuwait at 'AA-' with stable outlook

KUWAIT: Fitch Ratings on Friday affirmed Kuwait's long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating (IDR) at 'AA-' with a stable outlook. Kuwait's 'AA-' rating balances its exceptionally strong fiscal and external balance sheets against a political context that makes fiscal consolidation and other reforms difficult, evidenced by the absence of meaningful fiscal adjustment and the absence of legislation since

2017 to authorize debt issuance.

Fiscal and structural challenges stemming from heavy oil dependence, a generous welfare state and a large public sector and low governance indicators also constrain the rating, according to the latest report by credit rating agency. With exceptionally strong external assets, Kuwait's fiscal and external balance sheets remain among the strongest of Fitch-rated sovereigns.

"We forecast Kuwait's sovereign net foreign asset position will average 505 percent of GDP in 2023-24, remaining one of the highest among

Iran thwarts commemoration of Amini death

PARIS: Iranian authorities on Saturday prevented the family of Mahsa Amini from holding a ceremony to commemorate the first anniversary of her death, confining her father to his home, as sporadic protests were reported nationwide despite heavy security, rights groups said. Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd, died a few days after her arrest by religious police for allegedly violating the strict dress code for women in force since shortly after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Her family says she

died from a blow to the head but this is disputed by Iranian authorities.

Anger over her death rapidly expanded into weeks of taboo-breaking protests which saw women tearing off their mandatory headscarves in an open challenge to the Islamic republic's system of government under supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Mahsa Amini's father Amjad was detained early Saturday as he left the family home in the western town of Saqez, and then released after being warned not to hold a memorial service at her graveside, the Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN), 1500tasvir monitor and Norway-based Iran Human Rights (IHR) said.

Security personnel were stationed outside the family home to prevent

Continued on Page 6

US Palestinians accuse Zionists of bias at borders

JERUSALEM: A visa-free travel deal between the Zionist entity and the United States has raised hopes of easier journeys for Palestinian-Americans, but many still complain of discrimination by Zionist authorities. The aim of the reciprocal agreement reached in July was for all Americans "to be recognized by the Zionist entity as US citizens and receive

equal treatment" regardless of their origins, the US State Department said.

It paved the way for some Palestinian-Americans to finally land at Ben Gurion international airport — which has been off limits to most of them for years — rather than travel overland from Jordan. However, despite progress on paper, Palestinian-Americans have complained of unequal treatment in a series of interviews AFP conducted in the United States and the Palestinian territories.

Hanna Hanania, a board member of the US Palestinian Council advocacy group, described the change at arrivals in Ben Gurion airport as an "improvement for everybody". But, as he headed back to the US state of Virginia, he said he faced "total profiling" by

Fitch Ratings

all Fitch-rated sovereigns and more than 10x the 'AA' median," according to Fitch report. The bulk of the assets are held in the Future Generation Fund (FGF) managed by the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), which also manages the assets of the General Reserve Fund (GRF), the government's treasury account. — KUNA (See Page 8)



HAVANA: Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel welcomes Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah during the G77+China summit at the Convention Palace on Sept 15, 2023. — KUNA



BRUSSELS: A protester holds a portrait of Mahsa Amini during a demonstration in her support in front of the Iranian embassy in this Sept 23, 2022 file photo. — AFP

Zionist officials who searched his car and insisted on seeing his Palestinian passport.

Jerusalem-born Hanania said he was also directed to a queue for additional security checks where he charged that "discrimination (was) very clear". "Almost everybody in line one was speaking Arabic," he told AFP. "You can very clearly tell that it's mainly Palestinians or Arabs." The Zionist entity's immigration authority did not immediately respond to a request to comment on the complaints.

More than 5,400 Palestinian-Americans have arrived in the Zionist entity since July 20, according to the Population and Immigration Authority, Washington is now contemplating whether to admit the

Continued on Page 6



Local

Kuwait sends 3rd planeload of supplies, medical accessories to quake-hit Libya

Red Crescent mission shocked by tragic situation in Derna



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti delegation arrives in Libya. The third planeload of supplies flew to Libya to relieve victims of Hurricane Daniel. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: The third planeload of supplies flew to Libya to relieve victims of Hurricane Daniel. Supplies on board the aircraft, provided by the Kuwait Society for Relief, include ten tons of various materials and medical accessories. The Kuwaiti air bridge for relieving the quake-afflicted people in Libya has been launched in line with instructions by the supreme political leadership and direct guidelines by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, along with close follow-up by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Other departments and a host of associations and charities are partaking in the humanitarian efforts to help the people affected by the ferocious hurricane that has devastated many houses and buildings, particularly in Derna, which has taken the brunt of the robust tremors. Upon the aircraft's take-off, the representative of the foreign ministry and the diplomatic attaché, Saad Al-Nuwaiif, affirmed in remarks to KUNA that the humanitarian bridge has been launched in line with the guidelines of the state leaders.

Colonel Dr. Meshari Al-Fars, a member of the

UN team for assessing catastrophes, said he was flying to Libya in response to a notification by the UN branch for emergency response indicating that he would join a UN team operating in Libya. Yousef Al-Siddiqi, the representative of the Kuwaiti Society for Relief, said that the departing plane boarded ten tons of supplies, including materials needed for treating the injured. The first Kuwaiti planeload of relief supplies was dispatched on September 13 and the second one two days ago.

Tragic situation

Head of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society's (KRCS) mission to Libya, Dr. Musaed Al-Enezi, said the situation is "tragic and beyond description" in the Libyan city of Derna, which was hard hit by Storm Daniel early this week. Speaking to KUNA by phone from Derna, Al-Enezi highlighted the need for more concerted efforts to speed up the provision of every possible aid to "our Libyan brothers." "The KRCS team saw the extent of the massive destruction that befell the city and caused the killing, injury, and displacement of

thousands of Libyans, describing the situation in the town as catastrophic," he said.

Al-Enezi revealed that the victims of the flood disaster caused by Hurricane Daniel, which struck cities in eastern Libya last Sunday, exceeded 7,000 dead, in addition to thousands of injured and missing people. Al-Enezi said that the operations to extract victims from under the rubble of buildings swept away by the torrential rains are facing extreme difficulty, adding that the teams sent by the Libyan authorities lack modern devices and equipment.

Al-Enezi added that the mission will work in coordination with the Libyan Red Crescent Society to distribute the Kuwaiti aid that arrived in Libya on two planes on Friday and Saturday within a Kuwaiti air bridge and includes food supplies, medicines, medical supplies, tents, and rescue boats for those affected by the repercussions of the Hurricane Daniel disaster. The second relief plane from the Kuwaiti Air Bridge landed at Benina Airport in the Libyan city of Benghazi, carrying 41 tons of urgent aid for those affected by Storm Daniel. — KUNA

Kuwait charity honors Al-Azhar University's expat female students

ALEXANDRIA: The Kuwait Office for Charitable Projects on Friday honored a number of expatriate female students enrolled at Al-Azhar University under a scholarship program from Kuwait Zakat House. The students have completed a cultural course organized by the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs at the AboBakr Al-Seddiq camp in Alexandria between September 13 and 16.

The honoring ceremony gathered Egyptian Minister of Awqaf (religious endowments) Dr. Ali Jomaa, Kuwait Ambassador to Egypt and Permanent Delegate to the Arab League Ghanem Al-Ghanem, Indonesia Ambassador Lutfi Rauf, Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs Mohammad Ezzat, and Director of the Kuwait Office for Charitable Projects Sara Al-Mutairi, as well as several other senior officials. In a speech to the gathering, the Egyptian minister praised the Egyptian-Kuwaiti relationship as histori-

cal, exemplary, and deep-rooted.

Dr. Jomaa said that the Kuwait Office for Charitable Projects, as a representative of the Zakat House, plays a key role in supporting expatriate students in Egypt in collaboration with the Ministry of Awqaf. On his part, Ambassador Al-Ghanem expressed hope that the students will be religious scholars who help promote the correct religious science, the moderate ideology of the Noble Al-Azhar, and the true message of Islam, which was brought to us by Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him).

He commended the role of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs in organizing such cultural courses for students from around the globe and the efforts of the Egyptian Ministry of Awqaf in promoting the moderate values of Islam. Ambassador Al-Ghanem noted that Kuwait maintains fruitful longstanding cooperation with Egypt in all areas, including the cultural and



Kuwaiti charity honors female students of Al-Azhar University. — KUNA

religious ones, under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his brother, the Egyptian President Abdul-Fattah Al-Sisi.

He commended the role of the Kuwait Office for Charitable Projects in realizing the strategic objectives of Zakat House and promoting humanitarian philanthropic action. The Kuwaiti diplomat thanked the Egyptian Ministry of Awqaf for hosting the expatriate students and organizing the training and cultural programs. Meanwhile, Sara Al-Mutairi said the Kuwaiti Office for Charitable Projects in Cairo

was keen on caring for foreign students studying at Al-Azhar University and considered them "guardians of the message of Islam."

In statements to KUNA, she said the office's participation in the honoring of the expatriate students stemmed from Kuwait's conviction that good education is the key to knowledge and enlightenment. Al-Mutairi thanked the Egyptian Ministry of Awqaf for preparing educational courses for expatriate students, which contribute to spreading enlightened thought, correcting misconceptions, and dealing with the morals of Islam. — KUNA

OPEC securing stable oil supplies

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil, and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Dr. Saad Al-Barak, said that the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has contributed, since its establishment, to ensuring the stability and balance of oil markets with regular supplies. Speaking to KUNA on the 63rd anniversary of the organization, he said OPEC succeeded in achieving the goals it set for itself, which include coordinating and unifying the oil policies of member states.

"OPEC is an international economic platform that acts with full responsibility and constantly strives to maintain stability in the oil market for the benefit of both producers and consumers," he pointed out. "It also contributes to the recovery of the global economy, which achieves a solid mutual interest for all," he stressed. OPEC achieved great success by establishing the OPEC+ alliance, which includes 23 oil exporting countries, in November 2016, as it "contributed to restoring balance to the market after the Corona pandemic in 2020, and it is still continuing the cycle," he went on.

"OPEC members have demonstrated, at various stages, harmony and consensus that have contributed to recording continuous successes." They have proven that they keep the balance of the oil market in mind. They work according to a future strategy and vision, and they have a noticeable presence in all international forums, international negotiations, and economic blocs," he explained.

OPEC places among its priorities the achievement of economic development and takes into account the preservation of the environment, economic development, and energy security. It confirms that it is moving with all professionalism, progressing towards energy transformation, and expanding its investments to raise its production capacity to ensure the security of supplies, the minister added. OPEC was founded by five countries — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Iran, and Venezuela — on September 14, 1960. — KUNA

In my view

One Kuwait for all



Nejouad Al-Yagout

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In the face of natural disasters, wars, tragedy and death, human beings continue to create laws to persecute minorities and alienate those we consider foreigners. One wonders: What will it take for humans to wake up from our stupor of separation? And why do we think nationalism is the panacea to our suffering?

If we don't come together to address global issues, we are bringing about our own destruction. But first, as they say, charity begins at home; so, as Kuwaitis, it is important to try and transform ourselves for our community. Instead of blaming the world for our issues or saying that it is the fault of this country or that country, we must do the terrifying work of self-reflection and see what kind of a society we are creating. After all, if we dare to self-reflect, we are doing exactly what we criticize others for! It takes individuals to transform a society, so one by one we must own the darkness within ourselves to allow the light to penetrate our core and shine within us and on so-called others.

The first step is addressing our prejudices and immediately seeking to transcend them. Who do we condemn? Who do we blame for our problems? And, consequently, how can we reach out to those we fear? Social media has become the pulse of nations, and when we read some of the comments written against expatriates, women and minorities, how can we not shudder at who we have become? It is time to come together as one society and reclaim the hospitality of our forefathers and foremothers. And this is the gift each of us can bring to Kuwait (as locals, however, since expats may be deported for voicing discontent).

Xenophobia and misogyny are creating an imbalanced society in which men and locals are in positions of privilege, clinging tightly to an era that is way beyond its expiry date. Unfortunately, privilege increases greed and creates an unhealthy fear of sharing which results in the formation of repressive laws and even murder. This is where education comes into place. Schools should not merely focus on education, but also on creating humanitarian individuals in an inclusive manner, free of dogma and divisiveness and superiority.

The second step to creating a harmonious society is via the implementation of laws which benefit all individuals who contribute to Kuwait, regardless of nationality (or the lack of it, for that matter, as in the case of the stateless), religion, gender, orientation social or financial status. Time and again, we read yet another attack against expatriates or women, or another proposal in place to restrict the freedom of individuals. The parliament seems focused solely on punishing expatriates for their devotion and service, depriving the stateless of their rights (even while promising to take care of them), creating laws which keep in place the patriarchy, and stifling artistic expression and creativity rather than manifesting a nation open to tourists and artists, or a haven for those who live here.

The third step is remembering our fragility. We are here on this planet for a short time. It is our duty to ensure that we spread light wherever we go. If we dislike a person, let us ensure we dislike them because they do not share our values and not because of the color of their passport or their skin color or because of their belief system. And in time, let us even give up our dislike of them, even when we choose to maintain a distance from them for our wellbeing (and theirs). We can raise the frequency of Earth and save the planet from our greed and disregard when we realize that every person on earth has the right to be here.

So far, we have proved to be a virus on this blue planet. If human beings left the earth, the sky, the seas, the oceans, the rivers and all creatures would breathe a collective sigh of relief. We create destruction wherever we go. What have we done? And why do we continue to go down this hellbent path even while there are solutions all around us? We have brought ourselves and other species to the brink of extinction (and even to extinction, in many cases) because of our sense of entitlement and our egoism and filth.

The time is now to live in love. Here's to equality in Kuwait. Not just for citizens, but for foreigners and the stateless. Here's to ensuring that women are no longer considered second-class citizens and can lead lives in which their dignity is assured. Here's to freedom of religion and the freedom to practice it in public. Here's to eradicating the humiliation of those who live in poverty. Here's to encouraging our fellow human beings to visit and live in Kuwait rather than ending up on the top of the list for worst places for expatriates. Here's to protecting animals, the environment, the seas, the skies. Here's to the dignity of each of us. And here's to dissolving any system in place which keeps separation in place. Viva l'amore!



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Local

Kuwait and Hungary to seal investment protection deal

Remarkable anniversary underscores enduring strength of ties

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Hungarian Deputy Minister of Defense Tamas Vargha shared with Kuwait Times an upcoming milestone in Hungary's economic diplomacy as the country prepares to sign an investment protection agreement with Kuwait in the coming year. This agreement underscores Hungary's commitment to nurturing economic ties with Gulf region countries and solidifying its position as a hub for investment and trade in Central Europe.

With Hungary's strategic location within the European Union and Kuwait's substantial investment potential, Vargha, during an exclusive interview, revealed that several agreements are slated to be signed with Kuwait next year, coinciding with the remarkable 60th anniversary of their diplomatic relationship, symbolizing six decades of enduring friendship and cooperation. He emphasized that this anniversary underscores the enduring strength of diplomatic ties between the two nations and paves the way for a brighter future of collaboration. Hungary aims to sign two agreements next year, focusing on investment protection and double taxation agreements.

The deputy minister highlighted Hungary's ambition to attract Kuwaiti investors, given the range of opportunities and incentives the country offers. He emphasized Hungary's robust automotive industry, boasting the presence of major European manufacturers known for their high-quality production. He also men-

tioned Hungary's strategic location within Europe, its skilled workforce, and business-friendly environment, all of which make it an enticing prospect for investors seeking opportunities in Europe.

Regarding trade between both countries, Deputy Minister Vargha revealed that the total bilateral trade with Kuwait has reached approximately €30 million and is on the rise. Furthermore, he mentioned an anticipated visit by Peter Szijjarto, the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, to Kuwait next year.

Regarding his visit to Kuwait, Vargha said: "We had a joint economic commissions meeting, which Hungary holds with 65 countries, and Kuwait is one of them. We typically have annual meetings to discuss economic relations, and this marks our fourth meeting with Kuwait. During my visit, I engaged with several officials, and our discussions encompassed various topics, including defense. Defense holds great significance for my country, particularly given the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia, which has persisted for over two years in our vicinity."

He added that Hungary has been a valued member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) since its accession on March 12, 1999, marking a pivotal moment in the country's post-Cold War foreign policy. As a NATO member, Hungary actively contributes to the alliance's missions and objectives, participating in various peacekeeping operations and supporting efforts to



Deputy Minister of Hungary for Defense, Tamas Vargha



Tamas Vargha speaks to Kuwait Times Deputy Managing Editor Faten Omar. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

maintain stability and security in Europe and beyond. Hungary's commitment to NATO is rooted in its recognition of the alliance's fundamental principles, including mutual defense, democratic values, and the promotion of peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region.

On a different note, Vargha disclosed that Hungary offers 20 scholarships to Kuwaiti students, allowing them to pursue degrees in various fields at Hungarian higher education institutions. He mentioned, "Hungarian universities are increasingly gaining recognition among students seeking to study abroad. The

scholarship application process is set to commence in November 2023."

Regarding tourism, he highlighted Hungary's rich history, stunning architecture, thermal spas, and vibrant cultural scene, with Budapest, the capital city, serving as a major attraction for tourists due to its iconic landmarks. Vargha further stated, "To bolster the number of Kuwaiti tourists, Hungary's steadfast support for Kuwait's inclusion in the Schengen visa waiver program is a testament to the deepening ties between our two countries. This move holds the potential to boost tourism, trade, and

cultural exchanges between our nations."

Regarding the number of Kuwaiti tourists visiting Hungary, he revealed that around 2,000 Kuwaitis visited his country in 2022. It's worth noting that Hungary has been actively promoting tourism, and its appeal to Middle Eastern travelers, including Kuwaitis, has been steadily increasing due to its unique blend of history, culture and natural beauty. Additionally, discussions are underway to establish direct flights to further enhance the influx of Kuwaiti tourists, not only for regular tourism but also for medical tourism.



KUWAIT: Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Friday received US Charge d'Affaires in Kuwait, James Holtsnider. The historic bilateral relations and the latest regional and international state of affairs were discussed during the meeting. Also, Minister of Foreign Affairs met with UK Ambassador Belinda Lewis. The historic bilateral relations and means to develop them on all levels were discussed during the reception. — KUNA photos



KCCC organizes training on radioactive treatment



Abdulredah Abbas



Faredia Al-Kandery

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Cancer Control Center (KCCC) announced on Sunday the launch of a regional training course on the use of radioactive materials for patients with prostate cancer and neurohormonal tumors. The five-day course is held in cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to boost the exchange of expertise with Arab and Asian countries taking part in the event.

Head Chief of Nuclear Medicine at KCCC Abdulredah Abbas told KUNA that holding such courses in the center aims at making KCCC a regional training center through the Cooperative Agreement for Arab States in Asia for Research, Development, and Training related to Nuclear Science and Technology (ARASIA). He added that such a step aims to showcase Kuwaiti competencies as a result of continuous cooperation between nuclear medicine departments in Kuwait and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the field of technical projects and training courses.

On her part, head of the training course Faredia Al-Kandery said that 40 participants from Arab and Asian countries are taking part in this event. She added that the course also includes lectures by four prominent scientists and six local experts. She also noted that the course is registered in the Continuing Medical Education (CME) program at the Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialization (KIMS). — KUNA



Participants in a group photo during the awareness campaign against eczema launched by Mubarak Hospital. — KUNA photos

Kuwait hospitals treats 10,000 kids with skin diseases

KUWAIT: Mubarak Hospital announced on Saturday that 30 percent of skin cases it receives suffer from atopic eczema and that more than 10,000 people under-12 years of age report to dermatology clinics in the country per year. Dr. Manar Al-Enezi, the head of skin diseases ward at the hospital, said in a statement upon the launch of an awareness campaign against the disease that the effort is aimed at educating the public about causes of the illness and treatments.

The campaign has been launched on the international day for atopic eczema, officially called the World Atopic Dermatitis Day. Dr. Al-Enezi affirmed that the causes of the disease are multiple and can be rooted to hereditary issues, immunity malfunction and skin defects. — KUNA



Awareness campaign against eczema.

Teachers Society congratulates teachers, advisors

KUWAIT: Kuwait Teachers Society extended its warmest congratulations to all teachers, school administrators, educational advisors and the entire educational community on the occasion of the beginning of the new academic year 2023/2024. It reiterated its deep appreciation and pride in their roles and missions, and its complete confidence in their dedication, commitment and utmost efforts to fulfill their educational mission to the fullest.



Hamad Al-Huwaila

The society also congratulated Education Minister Dr Adel Al-Mane, expressing hope that the steps taken in the days leading up to the start of the school year will address all needs, create a stable environment for those in the field and tackle pending issues. This includes filling leadership and supervisory vacancies and establishing the organizational structure of the ministry to avoid overlapping responsibilities and set clear goals for each role.

It emphasized the need to address deficiencies and focus on developing plans to address unforeseen circumstances, ensuring a stable and conducive atmosphere for implementing the annual educational plans. Additionally, it urged the prompt disbursement of allowances and rewards owed to teachers, along with serious efforts to approve educational projects that meet the actual needs and requirements, such as the teacher's license project and other initiatives capable of facing challenges while safeguarding teachers' rights and enhancing their capabilities.

The society also expressed its full support for the current ministry leadership and its commitment to enhancing cooperation, consultation, and coordination. It assured its understanding of the field's needs and their importance in securing a suitable educational environment. It reaffirms its dedication to standing by the ministry, working together to advance development and reform plans, and achieving the desired goals in our educational journey.

Furthermore, it pledged to contribute, cooperate and participate in the association's activities, programs and committees in Ahmadi and Jahra governorates. It also promised to provide opinions, advice, and proposals to be considered and acted upon, aiming to overcome challenges and obstacles and realize desired goals and hopes.

On another note, Kuwait Teachers Society President Hamad Al-Huwaila praised the positive initiative of the Kuwait Municipality under the directives of Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Fahad Al-Shula and Acting Director General of the Municipality Saud Al-Dabbous. This initiative involved providing sanitation workers and necessary equipment for school cleaning, in coordination with the ministry of education and school administrations. He pointed out that this initiative contributed to the completion of necessary preparations for schools' readiness and eased the burden previously borne by school administrations in providing the required labor.

News in Brief

Iran to cooperate with IAEA

VIENNA: Kuwait has called on Iran to further cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) over its nuclear program, in line with relevant UN conventions and protocols. Countries reserve the right to develop nuclear weapons so long as they remain committed to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which guarantees the right of all members to develop nuclear energy for peaceful ends, according to a Kuwaiti embassy statement, citing the country's ambassador to Vienna and permanent representative to the UN Talal Al-Fassam. Commending the UN nuclear watchdog's effort in monitoring the Islamic Republic's nuclear program, the statement urged Tehran to commit to IAEA protocols by fulfilling its legal obligations to provide "credible information" on its nuclear material. — KUNA



Ambassador to Vienna and permanent representative to the UN Talal Al-Fassam

MoI detains drug suspects

KUWAIT: The officials from the Ministry of Interior (MoI) declared that they arrested 16 persons, charging them with 13 counts and possessing some amounts of drugs and methamphetamine pills. Additionally, the MoI personnel found two pieces of money reaped in illegal transactions, in their possession. The statement said the personnel found 6.2 grams of various narcotics and 550 antipsychotic drugs in their possession. The detainees confessed during interrogations that they had the drugs for trading. The MoI receives reports about illegal acts on the emergency phone number: 112. The hotline to reach the anti-drugs department is: 1884141. — KUNA

Kuwait charities reach quake-stricken regions in Morocco to relieve victims

Kuwait Embassy organizes blood donation campaign



Kuwaiti charities arrive at earthquake-stricken regions in Morocco to take part in relief operations. — KUNA photos



MARRAKECH: A number of Kuwaiti associations and charities have taken part in the relief operations, dispatching teams to the quake-stricken regions to determine the needs of survivors of the catastrophe and relieve them rapidly. The general supervisor for the Kuwaiti Morocco humanitarian campaign, Omar Al-Thuwaini, told KUNA that up to 14 Kuwaiti societies have taken part in the humanitarian efforts, in coordination with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Social Affairs.

"We have reached some regions that have been ravaged by the earthquake and examined the volume of the damage," he said, noting that the Kuwaiti team focused at the beginning of the operation on securing shelter and food for the afflicted. The Kuwaiti associations have distributed 1,100 food parcels and 2,200 blankets to more than 7,000 people who were affected by the disaster, he said, indicating that some of the victims lost some of their loved ones in the tragedy.

Meanwhile, Meshari Al-Enezi, an official at the Kuwaiti "Al-Najat" charity, indicated that the Kuwaiti groups would focus in the second phase of the operation on rebuilding houses, schools, and medical centers in the ravaged areas. He also affirmed that the activities have been carried out in

coordination with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "the umbrella of the Kuwaiti charity work abroad," in addition to other government departments. Khaled Al-Shamri, the director of the "Namaa" charity, expressed horror at the enormous destruction he has seen while touring the stricken regions. He thanked the Kuwaiti Embassy staff, namely Ambassador Abdulatif Al-Yahya, who has personally facilitated the Kuwaiti mission.

Blood donation

In another development, the Kuwait Embassy in Morocco organized a blood donation campaign as part of the aid for victims of the recent devastating earthquake. The embassy said in a statement, a copy of which was obtained by KUNA, that the campaign was in response to appeals by the local authorities to donate blood and save the lives of many people injured in the fiery tremors. Abdulatif Al-Yahya, the State of Kuwait Ambassador to the Kingdom, and the staff of the diplomatic mission took part in the campaign and were given a hand by ordinary Kuwaiti citizens currently present in the country. More than 2,900 people have perished in the earthquake, the power of which is rarely witnessed in the kingdom. — KUNA



Kuwaiti Ambassador Abdulatif Al-Yahya donates blood.

CONDOLENCES

Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief,

management and staff

convey our deepest condolences

to our colleague

Antonio Coelho

on the sad demise of his

Mother

May her soul rest in peace



Kim inspects key weapons with Russian defense chief

UN risks widening rifts as Zelensky takes center-stage

Page 6

Page 7



Residents walk amid buildings damaged by floods after the Mediterranean storm "Daniel" hit Libya's eastern city of Derna. — AFP

Hopes fade for survivors in Libya

International aid arrives as port city of Derna lies in ruins

DERNA, Libya: Shipments of international aid began to arrive in Libya on Saturday, offering a lifeline to thousands despite dwindling hopes of finding more survivors days after deadly flash floods. Sunday's floods submerged the port city of Derna, washing thousands of people and homes out to sea after two upstream dams burst under the pressure of torrential rains triggered by a hurricane-strength storm. Conflicting death tolls have been reported, with the health minister of the eastern-based administration, Othman Abdeljalil, putting the number of lives lost at 3,166. The World Health Organization said "the bodies of 3,958 people have been recovered and identified", with 9,000 more still missing, as it announced 29 tons of aid had arrived in the eastern city of Benghazi.

"This is a disaster of epic proportions," said Ahmed Zouiten, the WHO's Libya representative. "We are saddened by the unspeakable loss of thousands of souls." An AFP correspondent saw two aid-laden planes, one from the United Arab Emirates and another from Iran, land in Benghazi, more than 300 kilometers (186 miles) west of Derna. A steady stream of vehicles trickled into Derna on a makeshift road as diggers toiled to shift rub-

ble near an apartment block with a missing facade. In Al-Bayda, 100 kilometers west of Derna, people worked to clear roads and homes of the mounds of mud left behind by the flash flood.

'Confusion and chaos'

A volunteer in Al-Bayda who is originally from Derna said she had received word from many people of the "confusion and chaos" of relief efforts in the flood-stricken port city.

"I have also lost a lot of loved ones there," said Rahab Shneib. "Despite the ongoing efforts of many humanitarian organizations to bring comfort to the heart, it is important to note that many people have remarked on the lack of organization."

Derna resident Mohammad Al-Dawali said: "In this city, every single family has been affected."

Seir Mohammed Seir, a member of the security forces, said more than 1,500 families had been saved, along with a three-month-old girl. "Her entire family died, she was the only one who survived."

The floods were caused by hurricane-strength Storm Daniel, compounded by the poor infrastructure in Libya, which was plunged into turmoil after a NATO-backed uprising toppled and killed long-

time president Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. The Islamic Relief aid organization warned of a "second humanitarian crisis", pointing to the "growing risk of water-borne diseases and shortages of food, shelter and medicine". But the Red Cross and the World Health Organization pointed out that contrary to widespread belief, the bodies of victims of natural disasters rarely pose a health threat.

The spokesman for the eastern-based Libyan National Army, Ahmed Al-Mesmari, said the flood had affected "over 1.2 million people". "Everything was washed away... the waters have completely cut off the roads in these regions," he said.

The United Nations has launched an appeal for more than \$71 million to assist hundreds of thousands in need. "We don't know the extent of the problem," UN aid chief Martin Griffiths said Friday, as he called for coordination between Libya's two rival administrations — the UN-backed, internationally recognized government in Tripoli, and one based in the disaster-hit east.

Civilian access blocked

The head of the eastern-based government, Oussama Hamad, announced new measures would

be imposed from Saturday closing the disaster zone off from civilians. After opening a probe, Libya's prosecutor general Al-Seddik Al-Sur said the two dams at the origin of the disaster had been cracked since 1998. But repairs begun by a Turkish company in 2010 were suspended after a few months when the 2011 revolution flared, and the work never resumed, the prosecutor said, vowing to deal firmly with those responsible.

The scale of the devastation has given way to shows of solidarity, as volunteers in Tripoli gathered aid for the flood victims in the east. Teams from the Libyan Red Crescent were "still searching for possible survivors and clearing bodies from the rubble in the most damaged areas" of Derna, its spokesman Tawfik Shoukri said on Friday. Other teams were trying to deliver much-needed aid to families in the eastern part of the city, which had been spared the worst of the flooding but was cut off by road, he added. The International Organization for Migration, meanwhile, said "over 38,640" people had been left homeless in eastern Libya, 30,000 of them in Derna alone. Climate experts have linked the disaster to the impacts of a heating planet, combined with Libya's decaying infrastructure. — AFP

Two Russians, American reach space station

BAIKONUR, Kazakhstan: Two Russian cosmonauts and an American astronaut docked with the International Space Station on Friday after blasting off amid raging tensions between Moscow and Washington over Ukraine. Earlier Friday Roscosmos cosmonauts Oleg Kononenko and Nikolai Chub and NASA astronaut Loral O'Hara lifted off from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan aboard the Soyuz MS-24 spacecraft.

The crew docked at the ISS three hours later, the Russian space agency said. At the orbiting station, the trio will join three Russians, two Americans, a Japanese astronaut and a representative of the European Space Agency. The liftoff took place after Russia's first lunar mission in nearly 50 years failed last month. The ISS is a rare venue for cooperation between the United States and Russia, whose ties broke down after Moscow unleashed its of-

fensive in Ukraine last year.

Kononenko alluded to the tensions during a pre-flight press conference on Thursday, saying that "unlike on earth" cosmonauts and astronauts took care of each other in space. "We hear each other there, and we understand each other, and we are very sensitive to our relationships," he said. "We always take care of each other."

O'Hara praised the station's "legacy" and said it had been bringing the countries together. "I'm excited to get on board and see the crewmates who are waiting for us," she added. Kononenko, 59, and Chub, 39, were scheduled to spend a year on the ISS, while O'Hara, 40, was to spend six months aboard. It was the first mission to space for both O'Hara and Chub.

Chub said that travelling to space was his "childhood dream" and he had dedicated "all his life" to reaching that goal. The three take over from Russians Dmitry Petelin and Sergey Prokopyev, as well as NASA astronaut Frank Rubio, who have spent one year aboard the ISS.

While that trio was initially supposed to return in March, their mission had to be extended after their vessel, the Soyuz MS-22, suffered a



BAIKONUR, Kazakhstan: (Bottom-top) Russian Roscosmos cosmonauts Oleg Kononenko and Nikolai Chub and US NASA astronaut Loral O'Hara, members of the International Space Station (ISS) Expedition 70-71 main crew, board the Soyuz MS-24 spacecraft ahead of the launch in the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on September 15, 2023. — AFP

coolant leak following damage from a suspected tiny meteoroid.

They will now return to Earth on the MS-23, according to Roscosmos. Russian President Vladimir Putin is looking to strengthen space cooperation with China as Western condemnation and sanctions over Moscow's offensive in Ukraine intensify.

On Wednesday, Putin hosted the

reclusive leader of North Korea, Kim Jong Un, at the new Vostochny spaceport in Russia's Far East region, and the two discussed the possibility of sending a North Korean into space. Last month, Russia's Luna-25 module crashed on the Moon's surface after an incident during pre-landing maneuvers, in a huge embarrassment for Moscow. — AFP

Belgian court sentences 8 over Brussels attack

BRUSSELS: A Belgian court on Friday handed out sentences ranging up to life in prison to eight men for the 2016 jihadist bombings in Brussels, ending the country's largest-ever criminal trial.

The suicide bombings on March 22, 2016 at Brussels' main airport and on the metro system killed 32 people and were claimed by the Islamic State group. French citizen Salah Abdeslam and Belgian-Moroccan Mohamed Abrini — already sentenced to life in jail by France for a 2015 massacre in Paris — were the highest-profile of six culprits found guilty of murder in July.

Abrini, who was one of the designated bombers but decided not to blow himself up at the last

moment, was given a 30-year jail term. The court ruled not to give Abdeslam an additional term after he was sentenced in Belgium to 20 years in 2018 over a shootout.

The bombings — near the headquarters of both NATO and the EU — were part of a wave of attacks claimed by the Islamic State group in Europe. Hundreds of travelers and transport staff were maimed and, seven years on many victims, relatives and rescuers remain traumatized by the biggest peacetime attack in Belgium. Authorities later raised the official death toll from the attacks to 35, after finding a link between the trauma suffered and the later deaths of three more people. Dozens of wounded survivors and bereaved relatives gave emotional testimony during the months of hearings.

The trial, which started at the end of last year, was held under tight security at the converted former headquarters of the NATO military alliance. Abdeslam, who turned 34 on Friday, was the sole surviving perpetrator of the 2015 Paris attack that killed 130 people. He had fled to Brussels after taking part in

the Paris attacks and holed up for four months in an apartment hosting members of the local cell.

He was arrested several days before the Brussels bombings took place, but the jury decided he was one of the co-authors of the attack. A Belgian court turned down a request from the convict to stay in the country to carry out his sentence and he should eventually return to France to serve it.

Abrini was found guilty of being in one of the teams of suicide bombers who targeted Brussels' airport and a metro station. He testified that he had decided at the last minute not to detonate his explosive at the airport — as did another defendant, Osama Krayem, a Swede of Syrian descent.

Krayem was handed a life sentence, along with Bilal El Makhouchi and Oussama Atar. Atar, a senior commander in the Islamic State group who headed the jihadist cell, was tried in absentia because he is presumed to have died in Syria in 2017. Herve Bayingana Muhirwa, found guilty of "participating in the activities of a terrorist group", was sentenced to 10 years in prison. — AFP

Egypt court jails top dissident ahead of vote

CAIRO: An Egyptian court has sentenced prominent dissident Hisham Kassem to six months in prison, his lawyer and political movement said, a move barring him from taking part in campaigning for next year's presidential election.

It comes one day after Egypt's only candidate campaigning so far for the election, Ahmed Al-Tantawi, revealed his phone had been bugged by authorities, according to a report by the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab. A day earlier, Tantawi had denounced harassment by the security forces against his teams and supporters.

Kassem was also slapped with a 20,000 pound (about \$650) fine after being found guilty of defaming a former minister and "contempt of officials", Gameela Ismail, a member of his Free Current liberal opposition movement, wrote on X, formerly Twitter. His lawyer Nasser Amin wrote on Facebook that the verdict would be appealed in a court hearing set to take place on October 7.

Kassem, 64, had begun a hunger strike, his supporters said earlier this month, after the opening of his trial, before ending it days ago. He was initially summoned after a former minister complained he had shared online articles suggesting the minister had embezzled funds.

The opposition activist was later accused of "contempt" by officers during questioning at a police station. He has been in custody since August 20. Kassem's Free Current coalition, formed in June by opposition parties, advocates economic liberalization and calls for an end to the army's stranglehold on the Egyptian economy. London-based Amnesty International on Thursday called on Egypt's authorities to "immediately release" Kassem, saying he had been "arbitrarily detained".

"The prosecution of Hisham Kassem for simply posting critical messages online is a signal that the Egyptian authorities' relentless campaign to silence peaceful critics and punish dissent... is continuing in full force," said Philip Luther, Amnesty's research and advocacy director in the region. Several opposition figures, including renowned activist Ahmed Douma, received presidential pardons in past weeks in what many analysts saw as a bid to curry public and international favor ahead of next year's election. — AFP

International

UN risks widening rifts as Zelensky takes center-stage

Russia denies losing front-line village to Ukraine forces

UNITED NATIONS: More than 140 world leaders will head to the United Nations next week at a time of myriad crises, as a starring role for Ukraine's leader may only highlight the growing global fragmentation.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who a year ago was obliged to appear virtually, will join leaders including President Joe Biden when the UN General Assembly formally opens Tuesday as he seeks to rally support against Russia's bloody invasion. But while Western powers have rallied behind Ukraine, the war has laid bare deep divisions, with some developing countries uneasy about the billions of dollars devoted to Kyiv, even as the war also affects the poor by driving up food prices.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will kick off the week on Monday with a summit on development, hoping to keep a focus on meeting elusive goals for helping the neediest countries.

"We will be gathering at a time when humanity faces huge challenges — from the worsening climate emergency to escalating conflicts, the global cost-of-living crisis, soaring inequalities and dramatic technological disruptions," Guterres said of the General Assembly. "People are looking to their leaders for a way out of this mess. Yet in the face of all this and more, geopolitical divisions are undermining our capacity to respond," he said. "A multipolar world is emerging. Multipolarity can be a factor

of equilibrium. But it can also lead to escalating tensions, fragmentation and worse." Zelensky is expected Wednesday to attend a special session on Ukraine at the Security Council — raising the possibility of a dramatic confrontation with Russia, a veto-wielding permanent member.

A day later, Zelensky will head to Washington for talks at the White House and on Capitol Hill. Despite the starring role, Zelensky "has to tread carefully," said Richard Gowan, an expert on the United Nations at the International Crisis Group. "If he's too hardline, he may actually turn this opportunity into a bit of a diplomatic crisis," he said.

An overwhelming majority of countries have voted to condemn Russia's invasion launched in February 2022. But leaders such as Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva "have made it very clear that they believe that now it's time for diplomacy, and you may see quite a lot of friction between the Ukrainians and countries from the Global South," Gowan said.

A senior European diplomat said that the war was "stealing away political and economic attention" from other pressing problems such as food insecurity, the climate crisis, inequalities and access to finance. "There is a growing rift between the developing world and the developed world. Preparing for this week is also making sure that that rift doesn't grow further," the diplomat said on condition of anonymity.

Commitments sought

At the summit on Monday, governments will be urged to show new urgency in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals - 17 wide-ranging ambitions that the United Nations wants to fulfill by 2030 including ending extreme poverty. A UN report warned that the goals are in peril, with the COVID-19 pandemic as well as crushing debts setting back efforts in much of the developing world. While much of the attention will be on Ukraine at the UN General Assembly, intense diplomacy is also expected on Haiti, with meetings set to jumpstart long-running efforts to send an international force to the impoverished nation ravaged by gang violence.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi will also be in attendance just as Tehran completes a prisoner deal with arch-nemesis the United States, but no talks are expected between the clerical ruler and Biden.

Biden will meet, however, with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, giving him time in New York — but not a White House invitation. Biden, while seeking to avoid major clashes with Netanyahu, has shown frustration with the US ally's hard-right government, including its controversial overhaul of the judiciary and pursuit of settlements in the occupied West Bank.

Meanwhile, Russia said Saturday that its forces had not been pushed out of Andriivka, a village near the key frontline town



KYIV, Ukraine: Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky arrives to attend a ceremony marking Ukraine's Independence Day, in Kyiv on August 24, 2023, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

of Bakhmut, a day after Ukraine said it had "liberated" the site and inflicted heavy losses on enemy troops. Andriivka is around 14 kilometers (nine miles) south of Bakhmut in the Donetsk region, where Kyiv has been pushing back against Moscow's forces since June. Ukraine's General Staff said Friday that the village was back under Ukrainian control.

But in its daily bulletin, Russia's defense ministry said that "in the Donetsk sector, the enemy... continues to carry out assaults... trying in vain to dislodge Russian troops in the localities of Andriivka and Klischchiivka". The statement adds to the confusion surrounding the situation on the ground in the village, which had just a few dozen residents before Russia's offensive. — AFP

Sinner, savior or both?: Trump woos evangelicals, women

WASHINGTON: Former US president Donald Trump courted evangelical Christians and women at two back-to-back Washington events on Friday — voting blocks whose loyalties to him once seemed contradictory but have now become a well-established part of his base. The legal, moral and sexual escapades of the scandal-plagued frontrunner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination have earned him indictments, impeachments and public scorn in many quarters. But support among his devotees remains strong.

"As a woman I understand that he can be offensive," Joan Horswell, a 76-year-old retired nurse from Texas, told AFP. But "personally, I like him," she said at the "Pray Vote Stand" summit, put on by the conservative Christian group Family Research Council.

Something of a rock star among white evangelical Protestants, 84 percent of whom voted for him in 2020, Trump also holds his own among women, having won 44 percent of their vote in the last election, according to the Pew Research Center.

"This election will decide whether America will be ruled by Marxist, fascist, communist tyrants who

want to smash the Judeo-Christian heritage," Trump, 77, said at the summit, "or whether America will be saved by God-fearing freedom-loving patriots like all of the people in this room."

"Is he a flawed individual? Sure. But most Christians will say, we are all sinners," said William Wan, a 60-year-old Catholic engineer from Winter Garden, Florida who attended the summit. Still, Trump may strike many as offensive.

He was found liable in a civil trial in May for sexually abusing writer E. Jean Carroll in 1996. He's also set to go on trial for allegedly paying election-eve hush money to a porn star. And he was heard boasting of groping women's genitals when the infamous "Access Hollywood" tape was published, just one month before the 2016 presidential election. But lots of conservative evangelicals believe he "is the perfect man for the job precisely because he does not reflect Christian values," Kristin Du Mez, a history professor at Calvin University, told AFP. Trump's supporters "certainly like what he's done for them. But I think that many are also very comfortable with how he's done it," Du Mez said.

She points to his take-no-prisoners approach in getting conservative Christians what they wanted, from ending the federal right to an abortion to recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Her book "Jesus and John Wayne" chronicles the rise of rugged masculinity ideology within white evangelical Christianity. Penny Nance, CEO of conservative Christian women's group Concerned

Women for America, echoed this dogma when she introduced Trump before he spoke across town at a leadership summit for her advocacy group on Friday.

"Conservative women are not looking for a pastor or a husband for president, we are looking for a bodyguard," she told the audience to cheers. "Someone willing to stick the knife in his teeth and swim the moat to our rescue from those who threaten our safety and our freedom."

Melissa Deckman, CEO of the nonpartisan Public Religion Research Institute, points out that while some political observers had initially been surprised by the number of women willing to vote for Trump, not all women see eye-to-eye on issues of sex and sexism. "American women are far from monolithic when it comes to attitudes about gender dynamics," she told AFP in an interview.

Trump's former vice president Mike Pence — who is also running for the Republican 2024 nomination and spoke at the "Pray Vote Stand" summit — brandishes authentic evangelical bona fides as a deeply religious long-time churchgoer who has described himself as "a Christian, a conservative, and a Republican, in that order." Yet only five percent of surveyed white, evangelical potential Republican primary voters said they would choose him as their nominee. Trump meanwhile would receive 56 percent of their vote, according to a July 2023 New York Times/Siena Poll.

"He is the clearest kind of white evangelical poster boy out there," said Du Mez. "They might want



WASHINGTON: Former US President and 2024 Presidential hopeful Donald Trump speaks at the CWA (Concerned Women for America) Summit 2023 in Washington, DC, on September 15, 2023. — AFP

(Pence) as a Sunday school teacher; that's not who they want in the Oval Office."

Horswell, the retired nurse, thinks "Mike Pence is OK," but adds, "I think at this point in our government, we need a much stronger man."

For conservative Christians, Trump's accomplishments as a "strong man" are many.

He appointed three of the Supreme Court's nine justices, creating a bench that went on to overturn abortion rights. In 2020 he became the first sitting president to attend the annual anti-abortion March for Life rally in Washington. — AFP

Outrage grows over coed ban...

Continued from Page 1

"Kuwait University was, still is and always will be the flagbearer of knowledge and values" away from outside influence, it added.

MP Jenan Bushehri said she will submit a draft law on Sunday calling for the abolishing of a 1996 law that enforced segregation of the sexes at Kuwait University, adding the law has no legislative value in the face of the constitutional court ruling in 2015 which allowed coeducation classes when it is necessary. She added that organizational matters regarding the arrangement of classes must be left for the university administration to handle depending on the situation.

Three lawmakers, MPs Muhannad Al-Sayer, Abdullah Al-Mudhaf and Osama Al-Zaid cited the education minister as saying that mixed male-female classes will continue "as long as they are necessary". The lawmakers rejected the wrong implementation of the law. MP Abdulwahab Al-Essa blasted the Kuwait University administration for succumbing to political pressure at the cost of public interest, adding

Kuwait University has been implementing correctly a ruling by the constitutional court allowing mixed classes whenever necessary.

The decision was taken last week by new Education Minister Adel Al-Mane and acting Kuwait University Director Fayed Al-Dhafiri and implemented on Wednesday, just three days before the start of the new academic year at the College of Law. Dhafiri said the decision came in implementation of the 1996 law that banned mixed education at Kuwait University, despite a ruling by the constitutional court in 2015 allowing mixed education when it was necessary and under exceptional cases.

Islamist MP Mohammad Hayef, who heads a parliamentary committee on virtue and Islamic principles, said on Wednesday that the committee agreed with the education minister and the Kuwait University director to apply the 1996 law banning mixed education. Students were furious at the decision because it came at the last moment when they had almost completed the registration of subjects for the upcoming semester, opening on Sunday. Former MP Hisham Al-Saleh blasted the education minister, claiming he took the decision in order to protect his post, adding that the constitutional court ruling has allowed mixed education under emergency circumstances.

It was not immediately possible to confirm the report. The protests sparked by Amini's death lost momentum after several months in the face of a crackdown that saw security forces kill 551 protesters, according to IHR, and arrest more than 22,000, according to Amnesty International.

Iranian authorities say dozens of security personnel were also killed in what they describe as "riots" incited by foreign governments and hostile media. Seven men have been executed after being convicted in protest-related cases. Campaigners say the authorities have renewed their crackdown in the runup to the anniversary, putting pressure on relatives of those killed in the protests in a bid to stop them speaking out.

New York-based Human Rights Watch said family members of at least 36 people killed or executed in the crackdown had been interrogated, arrested, prosecuted or sentenced to prison over the past month with authorities imposing a "chokehold on dissent". With additional security forces sent to the area, Hengaw said people in western Iran were expressing discontent through a general strike, with shops closed in a dozen towns and cities including Saqez. — AFP

Kuwait adheres to multipolar...

Continued from Page 1

"Kuwait has always adopted such a role and considers it as a basis upon which coming generations can hinge upon." The representative of HH the Amir continued in his address at the international summit, conveying greetings from HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf and expressing gratitude to Cuba for the warm hospitality and good organization of the event. He called

US Palestinians accuse Zionists...

Continued from Page 1

Zionist entity into its coveted visa waiver program, with a decision due by Sept 30.

New York police officer Haider Darwish, 38, landed in mid-August and said he was denied a three-month visa without a reason, instead being granted a month-long stay. "This is not fair," Darwish said from the West Bank city of Ramallah. "If they want to proceed with this visa (waiver program), they need to treat us exactly the way they get treated when they get to the US."

Several Palestinian-Americans said they had complained about mistreatment to the US embassy in Jerusalem, which declined an AFP interview request. In the West Bank village of Turmus Ayya, known for its sizeable American population, Abed Ijbar has sought advice from his neighbors before he returns to Tennessee later this month. "(It's) the checkpoints from the West Bank to the airport that are driving them crazy," the 50-year-old said.

Neighbors warned Ijbar to leave hours early, recounting that they had been directed through multiple checkpoints before being searched and finally allowed to cross. COGAT, the Zionist defense ministry body responsible for civil affairs in the occupied West Bank, said security checks are conducted at crossings and anyone with a tourist visa can pass.

The visa waiver program has so far focused on those with ties to the West Bank but was on Monday extended to the Zionist-blockaded Gaza Strip. Palestinian-Americans travelling to Gaza face more restrictions than those

for innovative solutions to overcome challenges that have hindered attaining the objectives of the 2030 sustainable development goals.

In line with its responsibility of boosting joint international action, Kuwait, through Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, has drawn up a better future for the Middle East in particular and the world in general. Sheikh Jarrah said, alluding to KFAED's record of aiding more than 153 states and institutions. Kuwait aspires, within its approach to implement its 2035 development strategy, to invest in human resources, namely the youth, he said, and accordingly, it has taken concrete steps to achieve digital transformation and good governance. — KUNA

in the West Bank, under the rules announced by the US embassy. There has been disappointment among Gazans living in the United States, who from Monday can fly to Tel Aviv but not travel onward to the coastal territory.

Lara Abu Hamda, 18, tried unsuccessfully in July to cross from Jordan to the Zionist entity for the onward land journey to Gaza. "I don't get it," she said. "I am American. Even though I was born in Gaza and I have a Gaza ID, why would it matter?" The Zionist entity's immigration authority said entry has been denied to 10 Gazan-Americans, who were not yet included in the scheme, as well as three US citizens from the West Bank.

A Gazan artist living in Chicago, who requested anonymity due to security concerns, said he was held at a detention facility outside Tel Aviv airport. He ultimately underwent thorough security checks, before being escorted to a flight without any belongings except his credit cards. In his 30s, the artist said he was still trying to "detox from all the stress and anxiety that I've gathered in those 48 hours, being treated like a suspect".

For those living in Gaza, obtaining permission to leave through the Zionist entity is incredibly difficult. As a result, most make the arduous and costly journey across Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. Now, another way has potentially opened for those with US citizenship. In Gaza City, Saeed Araf Shaath said his family is "very, very excited" at the prospect of finally being able to enter the Zionist entity through the Erez crossing as Palestinian-Americans, and fly out from Ben Gurion airport.

Americans living in Gaza must still apply for a travel permit, which COGAT said allows them to travel onwards through "any international border crossing". Shaath's 23-year-old daughter Zainah described why she wants to be able to cross through Erez and board a plane in Ben Gurion: "We need our own freedom, and to have a normal life." — AFP

Iran thwarts commemoration...

Continued from Page 1

him leaving, the groups added in separate statements. "Amjad Amini is under house arrest... Security forces are preventing him from visiting his daughter's grave," said IHR. Official news agency IRNA described reports of the father's brief detention as "false", adding they were aimed at "inciting the population to protest".

Amjad Amini was already summoned by intelligence officials last week after his announcement he planned to hold a memorial ceremony. One of Amini's uncles, Safa Aeli, was detained in Saqez on September 5 and remains in custody. There was no sign of the ceremony taking place at her grave at the Aichi cemetery in Saqez, with the rights groups saying security forces had blocked access.

Kurdish-focused group Hengaw said a young man named Fardin Jafari was in a critical condition in hospital after being shot in the head near the cemetery.

International

Kim inspects key weapons with Russian defense chief

Moscow 'interested in buying N Korean ammunition' to continue fighting in Ukraine

MOSCOW: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un met Saturday with the Russian defense minister in Vladivostok, where he inspected state-of-the-art weapons including a hypersonic missile system on the latest leg of a rare visit outside his country.

Upon arriving in Vladivostok, a Pacific port city near the Chinese and North Korean borders, Kim was greeted by Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and an honor guard. The pair were seen smiling as they inspected some of Russia's nuclear bombers at an airfield before boarding a warship, a video released by the Russian defense ministry showed. Kim's extended tour of Russia's far eastern region, which began on Tuesday, has focused extensively on military matters, as evidenced by his own officer-dominated entourage, a symbolic exchange of rifles with President Vladimir Putin and a tour of a fighter jet factory in Komsomolsk-on-Amur.

Historic allies, Russia and North Korea are both under rafts of global sanctions — Moscow for its Ukraine assault, Pyongyang for its nuclear tests. Kim's first official visit abroad since the coronavirus pandemic has fanned Western fears that Moscow and Pyongyang will defy sanctions and strike an arms deal. Moscow is believed to be interested in buying North Korean ammunition to continue fighting in Ukraine, while Pyongyang wants Russia's help to develop its internationally condemned missile program. The Kremlin has said no agreement has or will be signed. After meeting Kim on Wednesday at the Vostochny cosmodrome, roughly 8,000 kilometers (5,000 miles) from Moscow, Putin talked up the prospect of greater cooperation with North Korea and the "possibilities" for military ties. "These aircraft form the air component of Russia's strategic nuclear forces," the defense ministry said in a statement.

According to footage released by Moscow, Kim was shown carefully listening to senior representatives of the Russian military and inspecting the aircraft. Russian officials also showed the reclusive leader a range of fighter jets as well as a hypersonic, air-launched



KNEVICH, Russia: In this handout photograph distributed by the Russian Defense Ministry, North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un (second left) and Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu (right) visit Knevichi aerodrome near Vladivostok, Primorsky region on September 16, 2023. — AFP

Kinzhal missile system. Kim and Shoigu then boarded the Marshal Shaposhnikov, an anti-submarine destroyer, where the head of the Russian navy, Admiral Nikolai Yevmenov, explained the characteristics of the warship and the weapons it carries including Kalibr cruise missiles. Russia uses Kinzhal and Kalibr missiles to assault Ukraine. Later in the day Kim watched a production of The Sleeping Beauty, one of the most popular classical ballets, in the company of Russian officials.

'Troubling' cooperation

Kim is visiting Russia as Putin seeks to bolster alliances with other world leaders ostracized by Western countries. Kim and Putin's gifting each other rifles at the spaceport summit on Wednesday further fuelled speculation that an arms export deal could be on the table, despite Western warnings. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry

Peskov told reporters on Friday that no agreements had been signed during Kim's trip, and "there was no plan to sign any". While meeting Kim, Putin accepted an invitation to visit North Korea, according to the Kremlin, and offered to send a North Korean to space, which would be a first.

Moscow also mentioned the possibility of helping North Korea manufacture satellites, a prospect that has alarmed Washington. The cooperation announced during Kim's Russia trip is "quite troubling and would potentially be in violation of multiple UN Security Council resolutions", US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller told reporters after the leaders' summit. North Korean satellites, he noted, have been used to develop Pyongyang's ballistic missiles. Pyongyang recently failed twice in its bid to put a military spy satellite into orbit. — AFP

US woman among 18 staff detained in Afghanistan

KABUL: Afghanistan's Taliban authorities have arrested at least 18 staff of an international NGO, including an American woman, accusing them of carrying out Christian missionary work, the country's leaders said Saturday. The International Assistance Mission (IAM) confirmed its staffers were picked up from its office in Ghor province, central Afghanistan, and taken to the capital Kabul. Security and intelligence forces had been observing the group for some time, Abdul Wahid Hamas Ghori, a government spokesman for the province, told AFP.

"Documents and audios were obtained that showed they were inviting people to join Christianity," he said, without providing further details. He said 21 people were arrested, including an American woman. IAM said in a statement earlier that 18 people, including a "foreigner", were being held and that it had no information about the nature of the allegations. The American woman and two Afghan staff were the first to be detained on September 3, followed by 15 more Afghan employees on Wednesday.

"Should any charges be lodged against our organization or any individual staff member, we will independently review any evidence presented," it added.

IAM's website says the organization is founded on Christian values, but that it does not provide aid according to political or religious belief. "We value and respect local customs and cultures," the Swiss-registered group said in a statement on Saturday. IAM has operated in Afghanistan since 1966 — through previous royal, communist and Taliban governments — when it specialized in eye care, later branching out into other areas of health and education. In 2010, 10 IAM medics, including eight foreigners, were shot dead in an attack in remote northern Afghanistan. At the time, competing theories emerged over the motive for the attack, with police saying it was likely a robbery. However, two militant groups claimed responsibility, including Taliban leaders who said the medics were Christian missionaries and accused them of working as military spies. Dozens of foreigners — including several Westerners — have been detained by the Taliban authorities since the group's return to power in August 2021. — AFP

South Africa holds state funeral for Zulu leader Buthelezi

ULUNDI, South Africa: Thousands of people, some holding spears and dressed in traditional warrior clothes, on Saturday attended the funeral of South Africa's divisive Zulu leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi, who was implicated in a wave of deadly violence that marked the country's emergence from apartheid.

Mourners crowded a small stadium in Ulundi, the ancient capital of the Zulu kingdom in eastern South Africa, to pay tribute to the founder of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), who died on September 9 aged 95. Family members dressed in black, followed by men holding shields and spears, led a coffin covered by an animal skin and an IFP flag across a red carpet inside the stadium before it was placed under a black canopy on the pitch.

Earlier, members of the IFP Women's Brigade chanted "He has led us this far" in Zulu as guests including President Cyril Ramaphosa and his predecessor Jacob Zuma arrived at the venue, sitting under white marquees opposite an altar. "He treated all of us Zulus as one person. That is why I am here," said Bonga Makho-

ba, 31, who said he drove 150 kilometers (90 miles) and slept in his car to attend the ceremony.

"I just respect him and I want him to... rest in peace," Ramaphosa, who ordered flags to be flown at half staff across the country, was to deliver a eulogy during the service celebrated by the head of South Africa's Anglican Church. "Buthelezi has been an outstanding leader in the political and cultural life of our nation, including the ebbs and flows of our liberation struggle," Ramaphosa had said when announcing Buthelezi's death last Saturday. Buthelezi was once a rival of Ramaphosa and his former boss Nelson Mandela, as the pair led negotiations to end white rule in South Africa, and for years was locked in a bitter rivalry with the ruling African National Congress (ANC). The party was his political home until he broke away to form the Inkatha movement in 1975. Born of royal blood, he was to some the embodiment of a proud and feisty Zulu spirit, while to others he often acted as a warlord.

As premier of the "independent" homeland of Kwa-Zulu, a political creation of the apartheid government, Buthelezi was often regarded as an ally of the racist regime. He was dogged by allegations of collaborating with the white government to fuel violence and derail the ANC's liberation struggle — a claim he furiously denied. Violence between Inkatha supporters and rival liberation groups claimed about 12,000 lives, as unrest between the ANC and IFP escalated in the run-up to the democratic elections in 1994. — AFP



HAVANA: Handout picture released by the Argentine Presidency shows Argentina's President Alberto Fernandez (left) delivering a speech during the G77+China Summit at the Convention Palace in Havana on September 15, 2023. — AFP

G77+China summit in Cuba calls for new global order

HAVANA: The G77+China, a group of developing and emerging countries representing 80 percent of the world's population, kicked off a summit in Cuba Friday with a call to "change the rules of the game" of the global order.

The meeting comes at a time of growing frustration with the Western-led world order amid widening differences over the Russian war in Ukraine, the fight against climate change, and the global economic system. "After all this time that the North has organized the world according to its interests, it is now up to the South to change the rules of the game," Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel said at the opening of the summit.

Diaz-Canel said that developing countries were the main victims of a "multidimensional crisis" in the

world today, from "abusive unequal trade" to global warming. United Nations chief Antonio Guterres is joining some 30 heads of state and government from Africa, Asia and Latin America at the two-day summit in Havana. At the opening of the meeting he called for a world that was "more representative and responsive to the needs of developing economies", stressing that these countries were "trapped in a tangle of global crises."

The bloc was established by 77 countries of the global South in 1964 "to articulate and promote their collective economic interests and enhance their joint negotiating capacity," according to the group's website. Today it has 134 members, among which the website lists China although the Asian giant says it is not a full member.

Cuba took over the rotating presidency in January. Latin American leaders such as Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro, Colombia's Gustavo Petro, and Argentina's Alberto Fernandez were present at the summit, alongside Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, Angola's Joao Lourenco and Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi. Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva arrived Friday night. — AFP

News in Brief

Flooding, lightning strikes kill 8 in war-hit Yemen

SANAA: Flooding and lightning strikes in Yemen have killed eight civilians, an official and a doctor told AFP on Saturday, underscoring the threat of extreme weather in the war-ravaged country. The lightning strikes occurred on Friday in the Al-Layha and Al-Zahra districts of Hodeida governorate on the Red Sea coast, said Hamza Saied, a doctor at the hospital in Al-Layha. "Six women and a man were killed, and three others were injured," he said. The area is controlled by Huthi rebels who seized the capital in 2014, prompting a Saudi-led coalition to intervene the following year and setting in motion a brutal conflict that has created what the United Nations describes as one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. — AFP

London police settle with man struck by officer at 2010 protest

LONDON: London's Metropolitan Police has apologized and reached a settlement with a man who sustained a brain injury after an officer hit his head with a baton during a protest more than a decade ago. Alfie Meadows was injured on December 9, 2010, when he was a 20-year-old student at a protest against university tuition fee hikes. He was later accused of violent disorder during the demonstration in central London before being unanimously acquitted by a jury. The Met Police said in a statement that Meadows received "very serious injuries" when an officer "struck him on the head with their baton". — AFP

Erdogan accuses EU of 'distancing itself' from Turkey

ISTANBUL: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday accused the European Union of pulling away from Turkey, whose efforts to join the bloc have stalled amid criticism of Ankara's efforts to address democracy and rule of law concerns. Erdogan secured a pledge from Brussels to resurrect the membership talks first started in 2005 in exchange for lifting its blockade of Sweden's drive to join the NATO military alliance in the wake of Russia's Ukraine invasion. Earlier this month, the EU's enlargement commissioner Oliver Varhelyi travelled to Turkey, saying that while membership had "huge potential", the bloc needed to see action on human rights issues before talks resume. — AFP

US pressured him to interfere in vote, says S Leone president

WASHINGTON: The president of Sierra Leone on Friday accused the United States of pressuring him to interfere in his country's June 24 election count, a statement in stark contrast to the concerns Washington has leveled regarding the fairness of the poll. "When the elections were at the height — of calling the results — this is when the problems started," President Julius Maada Bio said during a speaking event at American University in Washington. The Election Commission of Sierra Leone (ECSL), he said, "had done all their calculations, collations, all the processes. I was now requested to stop them from calling the result by the United States. So I don't know who is accusing who of interference." — AFP

Indian opposition to boycott 'hate-filled' cable news anchors

NEW DELHI: Indian opposition parties have pledged to boycott several television news anchors they accuse of spreading hate and of partisanship towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government.

Activists and rights groups have sounded the alarm on press freedoms since Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) took office in 2014. Opposition politicians have accused India's clamorous cable news shows of being in thrall to the BJP's agenda, including polarizing segments on Muslim and Christian minorities. "We do not want to legitimize this hate-filled narrative which is corroding our society," Congress party spokesman Pawan Khera said in a Thursday video statement.

"We will not partake in these showrooms of hate," Congress is in an alliance of more than two dozen parties that are hoping to provide a unified alternative to the BJP ahead of national elections next year.

Modi's party is widely expected to win. The opposition bloc said its members would not appear on the programs of 14 anchors, including some of India's most popular TV news personalities. Raucous and combative debate programs are a staple of Indian cable news, with sometimes a dozen or more panelists battling onscreen for a sliver of attention.

Opposition parties have long accused networks of failing to adhere to basic standards of impartiality and of unfairly casting their activities in a negative light. Sudhir Chaudhary of broadcaster Aaj Tak, one of those named in the boycott, ridiculed the alliance for lashing out at hosts who "refused to lick their boots". But he also cautioned that the refusal of opposition lawmakers to face critical questions had put news outlets in a "dangerous situation". — AFP



ULUNDI, South Africa: The coffin of the Zulu prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi, traditional prime minister of the Zulu Monarch and Nation and founder of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), is carried during his funeral proceedings in Ulundi, on September 16, 2023. — AFP

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2023

Fitch affirms Kuwait at 'AA-'; outlook stable

Kuwait's sovereign net foreign asset position to average 505% of GDP in 2023-24



Kuwait's fiscal and external balance sheets remain among the strongest of Fitch-rated sovereigns.

LONDON: Fitch Ratings has affirmed Kuwait's long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating (IDR) at 'AA-' with a stable outlook.

Key rating drivers

Fundamental rating strengths and weaknesses: Kuwait's 'AA-' rating balances its exceptionally strong fiscal and external balance sheets against a political context that makes fiscal consolidation and other reforms difficult, evidenced by the absence of meaningful fiscal adjustment and the absence of legislation since 2017 to authorize debt issuance.

Fiscal and structural challenges stemming from heavy oil dependence, a generous welfare state and a large public sector and low governance indicators (below the 'AA', 'A' and 'BBB' medians) also constrain the rating.

Exceptionally strong external assets: Kuwait's fiscal and external balance sheets remain among the strongest of Fitch-rated sovereigns. We forecast Kuwait's sovereign net foreign asset position will average 505 percent of GDP in 2023-24, remaining one of the highest among all Fitch-rated sovereigns and more than 10x the 'AA' median. The

Structural fiscal challenge: Nearly 80 percent of government spending consists of sticky current spending, including salaries and subsidies, and about 84 percent of Kuwaiti nationals in the labor market are employed in the public sector. The fiscal break-even oil price (excluding investment income) will remain high (at an average of around \$90/bbl in FY23-FY25) and the non-oil primary deficit/non-oil GDP is extremely weak at around 90 percent, significantly worse than regional peers.

Fresh attempt for debt law: The government is seeking to pass a new debt law to allow relaunching government debt issuance, which has been halted since 2017. We incorporate the assumption in our forecast, notably for government debt, that a debt law is passed in FY24, despite considerable risks of further delays. In the absence of a debt law, Fitch assumes the government would still be able to meet its limited debt service obligations in coming years given the assets at its disposal. However, the difficulties in passing the law forced the government in recent years to rely on stop-gap measures, unusual for Kuwait's rating level, to replenish the liquid assets of the GRF. The government cannot directly access the FGF's assets without parliamentary approval.

Budget deficits to return: The budget recorded a surplus in FY22 due to surging oil revenue, marking its first surplus in the past nine years under the government's reporting convention, which does not include KIA's investment interest income in revenue. The fiscal surplus was KD 6.4 billion (12 percent of estimated GDP), following a deficit of KD 4.3 billion (10.1 percent of estimated GDP) in FY21.

Fitch's budget calculations include an estimate for investment interest income, which is not officially disclosed. We forecast a return to budget deficits-to-GDP ratios of 0.7 percent and 0.9 percent in FY23 and FY24, respectively, as oil prices fall, spending pressures persist, and progress with fiscal reforms remains limited. Excluding investment income, the deficits would average 9.7 percent of GDP, marking a substantial increase in financing needs.

Large expenditure increase: The FY23 budget proposes an expansionary fiscal policy, with spending up 17 percent over the FY22 outturn, despite the assumption of lower revenues due to a lower average oil price and further oil production cuts. The budget projects salaries to rise by about 14 percent over FY22, reflecting the costs of nearly 22,000 new public sector hires and increased employees' allowances, while subsidies (including temporary electricity subsidies) are set to rise by 35 percent to cushion the impact of rising cost of living on Kuwaitis.

Oil assumptions and dependence: Our forecasts assume an average oil price of \$77/bbl for FY23, down 23 percent from FY22, while oil output is likely to fall by 4.1 percent to 2.612 million bbl/d in FY23, due to OPEC+ supply cuts. In FY24, we assume Kuwait's average oil price falls to \$72/bbl and that Kuwait's crude output will return to 2.676 million bbl/d as per outlined OPEC quotas. Kuwait aims to boost capacity to 3.15 million bbl/day by FY27, with increases both onshore and in the neutral zone.

Budget outcomes are highly sensitive to chang-

es in oil price and production. A \$10/bbl change in our oil price assumption for 2023 would affect the budget balance by 4.8 percent of GDP, other things equal. A change of 100,000 bbl/day of production affects the budget balance by 1.5 percent of GDP.

ESG - governance: Kuwait has an ESG Relevance Score (RS) of '5[+]' for both Political Stability and Rights and for the Rule of Law, Institutional and Regulatory Quality and Control of Corruption. These scores reflect the high weight that the World Bank Governance Indicators (WBG) have in our proprietary Sovereign Rating Model. Kuwait has a medium WBG ranking at the 51st percentile reflecting low scores for voice and accountability, and middling scores across other governance indicators.

Rating sensitivities

Factors that Could, Individually or Collectively, Lead to Negative Rating Action/Downgrade

- Structural features: Signs of greater pressure on GRF liquidity, for example, as a consequence of the continued absence of a new debt law or other extraordinary measures to ensure that the government can continue to make good on its payment obligations, including but not limited to debt service.

- Public and external finance: Significant deterioration in fiscal and external positions, for example, due to a sustained period of low oil prices or an inability to address structural drains on public finances.

Factors that could, individually or collectively, lead to positive rating action/upgrade

- Structural features/public finances: Strong evidence that Kuwait's institutions and political system are able to tackle long-term fiscal challenges, for example, through actions to implement a clear deficit reduction plan that is resilient to lower oil prices, as well as adopt a transparent and sustainable government funding strategy.

Sovereign rating model

Fitch's proprietary SRM assigns Kuwait a score equivalent to a rating of 'AA' on the Long-Term Foreign-Currency (LT FC) IDR scale. Fitch's sovereign rating committee adjusted the output from the SRM to arrive at the final LT FC IDR by applying its QO, relative to SRM data and output, as follows:

Structural Features: -1 notch to reflect political constraints on enacting key economic and fiscal reforms, as illustrated by the difficulties in passing a debt law and the lack of progress on addressing structural public finance challenges stemming from heavy oil dependence, a generous welfare state and a large public sector.

We have removed the previous -1 notch on public finances as the SRM output declined from 'AA+' to 'AA' and we assessed that the model, combined with the -1 notch on the structural features, now better captures Kuwait's structural and fiscal rigidities.

Fitch's SRM is the agency's proprietary multiple regression rating model that employs 18 variables based on three-year centered averages, including one year of forecasts, to produce a score equivalent to a LT FC IDR. Fitch's QO is a forward-looking qualitative framework designed to allow for adjustment to the SRM output to as-

sign the final rating, reflecting factors within our criteria that are not fully quantifiable and/or not fully reflected in the SRM.

Country ceiling

The country ceiling for Kuwait is 'AA+', 2 notches above the LT FC IDR. This reflects strong constraints and incentives, relative to the IDR, against capital or exchange controls being imposed that would prevent or significantly impede the private sector from converting local currency into foreign currency and transferring the proceeds to non-resident creditors to service debt payments.

Fitch's country ceiling model produced a starting point uplift of +2 notches above the IDR. Fitch's rating committee did not apply a qualitative adjustment to the model result.

Sources of information

The KIA's assets are not officially reported by the government. Fitch estimates these assets by compounding the government's transfers into the KIA, using assumptions about returns and asset allocations that are informed by discussions with the KIA. Fitch benchmarks government transfers into the KIA and KIA investment income against the balance of payments. Fitch has sufficient confidence in these estimates to maintain the rating.

ESG considerations

Kuwait has an ESG Relevance Score of '5[+]' for Political Stability and Rights as World Bank Governance Indicators have the highest weight in Fitch's SRM and are therefore highly relevant to the rating and a key rating driver with a high weight. As Kuwait has a percentile rank above 50 for the respective Governance Indicator, this has a positive impact on the credit profile.

Kuwait has an ESG Relevance Score of '5[+]' for rule of law, institutional & regulatory quality and control of corruption as World Bank governance indicators have the highest weight in Fitch's SRM and are therefore highly relevant to the rating and are a key rating driver with a high weight. As Kuwait has a percentile rank above 50 for the respective governance indicators, this has a positive impact on the credit profile.

Kuwait has an ESG relevance score of '4' for human rights and political freedoms as the voice and accountability pillar of the World Bank governance indicators is relevant to the rating and a rating driver. As Kuwait has a percentile rank below 50 for the respective governance indicator, this has a negative impact on the credit profile.

Kuwait has an ESG relevance score of '4[+]' for creditor rights as willingness to service and repay debt is relevant to the rating and is a rating driver for Kuwait, as for all sovereigns. As Kuwait has track record of 20+ years without a restructuring of public debt and captured in our SRM variable, this has a positive impact on the credit profile.

Except for the matters discussed above, the highest level of ESG credit relevance, if present, is a score of '3'. This means ESG issues are credit-neutral or have only a minimal credit impact on the entity, either due to their nature or to the way in which they are being managed by the entity. Fitch's ESG Relevance Scores are not inputs in the rating process; they are an observation of the materiality and relevance of ESG factors in the rating decision.

FitchRatings

bulk of the assets are held in the Future Generation Fund (FGF) managed by the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), which also manages the assets of the General Reserve Fund (GRF), the government's treasury account.

Low government debt: Gross government debt/GDP is low, at 8.7 percent of estimated GDP in the fiscal year ending March 2023 (FY22; gross government debt includes liabilities by government entities that borrow separately from the Treasury). However, assuming the passage of a debt law in FY24, limited fiscal reform and lower oil prices, we forecast government debt will more than double to 24 percent of GDP in FY25 and rise further in subsequent years, owing to projected fiscal deficits. Nonetheless, during the forecast period, we expect debt levels to remain well below the projected 2025 'AA' median of 43.6 percent of GDP.

Opposition dominates new parliament: Politicians critical of government policies retained a majority of elected seats after parliamentary elections in June 2023, the third since December 2020 and the seventh since 2012. The gridlock between government and parliament has undermined the government's ability to pass key legislation and implement significant reforms.

Fitch believes that while a joint committee bringing together the government and the national assembly has been set up and a new speaker elected unanimously, it is unclear if this will be sufficient to unlock the legislative process. Even if there is progress, opposition MPs may also not want to pass some laws without concessions on their populist demands, preventing speedy reform of fiscal rigidities.

NBK RISE: Advancing women's empowerment in the region

MEED honors NBK RISE with 'The Best Initiative for Women in Business' award

- The program offered the opportunity and a comprehensive set of skills for women to pave the way to become CEOs and board members in the future
- NBK RISE established collaborations with esteemed universities worldwide to create unique training content tailored specifically for the program

- Graduates will be given the opportunity to mentor future female candidates, thereby establishing a sustainable cycle for the program
- The program is conducted annually, inviting participants from Kuwait and diverse regions across the world



KUWAIT: Shaikha Al-Bahar poses for photograph with the participants of the NBK RISE program.

KUWAIT: Since it was first introduced, "NBK RISE," a women-led leadership global initiative aimed at empowering and supporting women leaders while fostering a supportive environment for their skill development and readiness for leadership roles, has achieved remarkable success and garnered significant attention in Kuwait and the region. The program has embraced the task of breaking down barriers and propelling the advancement of a culture of women's empowerment within private sector organizations. Furthermore, it aspires to create a ripple effect, inspiring other institutions to prioritize diversity and inclusivity in their leadership ranks.

The program, unveiled by Shaikha Al-Bahar, Deputy Group CEO of National Bank of Kuwait, signifies a stride towards consolidating endeavors aimed at empowering women to achieve their full potential. This initiative aligns with the bank's belief in the pivotal role of diversity and inclusion in securing the future sustainability of all organizations.

In a relatively brief period, NBK RISE has achieved significant success in active-

with Alia Abu El-Fath, Head of Corporate Communications, NBK Capital and Global Wealth Management. They contribute their communication expertise and the knowledge gained throughout their professional journeys to create an exceptional leadership program. This program is developed in partnership with renowned educational institutions, experts, and specialists in the field. Its primary goal is to provide training and development opportunities for female candidates aspiring to assume leadership roles.

Over the course of nine months, NBK RISE offered a structured framework aimed at fostering the growth and professional advancement of participants not only from NBK Kuwait but also from other organizations involved in the program. Throughout this period, participants received valuable guidance and support from seasoned leaders, along with specialized leadership training to enhance their skills and capabilities.

On this notable occasion, Najla Al-Sager, a key contributor to the program's development, remarked, "Within NBK Group, we have a substantial num-

ber of female professionals who possess the potential and talent for leadership. Furthermore, these female trainees already hold key positions within the bank's organizational structure. Therefore, the program was meticulously crafted to cater to the unique needs and aspirations of these candidates."

Al-Sager also emphasized that at NBK RISE, their mission is to foster an environment that encourages the growth of these women and provides a supportive atmosphere. They aim to inspire these aspiring female leaders to excel and continue learning, offering them the opportunities and skillsets required to potentially assume the roles of CEOs and break down board room barriers in the future. "What is truly unique about this program is that it is not limited to NBK. The organization has commitments from multiple organizations such as Al-Shaya, Saudi Telecom (STC), Burgan Bank, Commercial Bank of Kuwait, and

EQUATE," she noted. She further elaborated that these institutions nominated program participants under the complete sponsorship of NBK Group. The initial group comprised twenty-one participants, including ten from NBK Kuwait, six from the bank's international branches, and five from other companies. The diverse group composition demonstrates their dedication to realizing their goals of diversity and inclusivity.

Al-Sager also noted that the participants came from all the countries where NBK has a presence, as well as from different departments within the bank. This diversity extends to external participants as well, ensuring a rich exchange of backgrounds and practical experiences. Al-Sager highlighted that NBK has forged partnerships with prestigious universities worldwide to enrich the program's training content. These collaborations include renowned business schools such as INSEAD, Franklin Covey, and IE Business School, which have crafted customized leadership training modules explicitly tailored for NBK RISE. She emphasized that NBK RISE was designed

Skills development

The 9-month program is structured into modules, each focusing on specific aspects of leadership. These modules are meticulously crafted to prepare and develop female candidates for senior management roles, equipping them with essential leadership, strategic, and technical competencies. A total of 21 participants, hailing from various professional backgrounds, took part in the program. They represented NBK Kuwait, NBK international branches, and partner groups. Here is a breakdown of the program's participants:

Preparations were undertaken to deliver four training modules to program participants, which are outlined as follows:

- The first module, in collaboration with "IE Business School," emphasized technical development. During this phase, participants received instruction on various educational topics, including key trends, growth strategies, creativity and innovation, and effective decision-making, among other subjects.
- The second module, in collaboration with Franklin Covey, concentrated on enhancing personal skills and self-discovery by applying the principles of the seven habits of highly effective leaders.
- The third module, in cooperation with INSEAD, placed an emphasis on leadership skills and the ability to lead change effectively. It also addressed certain standards and behaviors that can impede women's progress in leadership and drive change. This unit provided practical exercises and training on overcoming obstacles to change and implementing strategic initiatives, covering the entire process from planning to execution.
- The fourth module, in collaboration with "IE Business School," centered on behavioral skills with the objective of improving self-awareness, honing comprehensive leadership abilities, and mastering negotiation and communication skills.

The program encompassed a total of approximately 140 training hours, covering a wide range of topics such as growth strategies, creativity and innovation, and effective decision-making.

Best initiative for women

NBK RISE achieved significant recognition by receiving two prestigious awards in 2023. It was honored as the Best Initiative for Women in Business and the Best Implementation of Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives at the MEED MENA Banking Excellence 2023.

- The program's objectives are to foster a nurturing environment for female talents and prepare women leaders for future roles
- In its inaugural session, NBK RISE achieved remarkable success in assisting women on their paths to higher leadership positions
- It marked a significant stride in consolidating efforts to empower women to realize their full potential

Training material

Svenja Weber, Professor of Organizational Behavior at INSEAD Business School, said, "It was a delightful experience collaborating with the participants in NBK RISE program. INSEAD Business School conducted a 4-day training segment of the program, which is designed to support high-potential women in excelling in their current roles and expedite their advancement into future leadership positions. The module dedicated equal focus to the common challenges encountered by all leaders while also addressing the specific hurdles that women might confront. The training sessions provided a platform for participants to exchange their leadership experiences within a conducive learning environment."

Meanwhile, Eliana El-Hage, Vice President of Business Development - IE Center for Leadership Development and Innovation (MEA Region), remarked, "NBK RISE program is underpinned by a common belief in the significance of women occupying senior leadership roles. In partnership with NBK Group, we have established a training program to closely monitor the progress of participants and fulfill the program's objectives. The training offered valuable insights into leadership and equipped participants with practical tools and techniques that they can readily apply in their respective roles within their organizations."



KUWAIT: Shaikha Al-Bahar during a discussion session.

ly bolstering and advocating for women's leadership not only in Kuwait but also across the region and on a global scale. It has achieved this by engaging, inspiring, and motivating women from diverse geographical areas, sectors, and fields of expertise. Additionally, the program has aimed to establish a community of women leaders committed to the ongoing advancement and sustainable development of this initiative.

The program has proven to be an inspiring initiative that extends beyond NBK's efforts. It has also engaged several prominent organizations in Kuwait, as they jointly signed a pledge to enhance the representation of women in leadership positions. This action demonstrates their strong dedication to collaborating to achieve the goals of this global program.

Najla Al-Sager, Head of Talent Management, NBK Group Human Resources, manages the initiative in collaboration

with Alia Abu El-Fath, Head of Corporate Communications, NBK Capital and Global Wealth Management. They contribute their communication expertise and the knowledge gained throughout their professional journeys to create an exceptional leadership program. This program is developed in partnership with renowned educational institutions, experts, and specialists in the field. Its primary goal is to provide training and development opportunities for female candidates aspiring to assume leadership roles.

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EQUATE," she noted. She further elaborated that these institutions nominated program participants under the complete sponsorship of NBK Group. The initial group comprised twenty-one participants, including ten from NBK Kuwait, six from the bank's international branches, and five from other companies. The diverse group composition demonstrates their dedication to realizing their goals of diversity and inclusivity.

Business

US auto workers, companies face off on day two of strike

Strike threatens to disrupt economy, rock 2024 presidential campaign

WAYNE, US: Workers and management from the iconic "Big Three" auto giants were to face off at the negotiating table on the second day of a strike threatening to disrupt the economy and rock the 2024 presidential election campaign. After a failed last-minute push by General Motors, Ford and Stellantis to produce an agreement before the deadline late Thursday, United Automobile Workers members walked out Friday.

They appeared determined to stick with the action, even as Ford quickly announced that ripple effects from the walkouts meant temporary layoffs of 600 jobs.

UAW President Shawn Fain said late Friday that it wasn't true "negotiations have broken down." However, he added that "our members and allies are standing strong at the picket lines. Anyone who wants to stand with us can grab a sign and hold the line."

"Tomorrow, we expect to be at the bargaining table," he said. "All three companies have received a comprehensive counteroffer from our union, and we await their response." Only about 12,700 of the 150,000 workers repre-

sented by the UAW are on strike. However, the decision by the rival companies' employees to act in unison sent a powerful message in their battle for pay increases of 40 percent.

The upheaval in the crucial sector, involving brands like Jeep, threatens the US economy in a period of strong growth and inflationary pressure. President Joe Biden, who is seeking reelection next year, gave his backing to the strikers, saying he understood their "frustration."

Speaking on live TV from the White House, Biden said workers had not been able to benefit from enormous corporate profits, which exceeded \$20 billion for the three giants in just the first half of 2023. "The companies have made some significant offers but I believe they should go further to ensure that record corporate profits mean record contracts for the UAW," the Democrat said.

Underlining the unions' political clout, leftist Senator Bernie Sanders and Michigan's Democratic governor, Gretchen Whitmer, addressed a crowd of strikers late Friday. "This is the richest country in

the history of the world and families in this country and families in the auto industry should not have to live under this kind of stress," Sanders said.

Hourly workers left behind

Fain said the union would strike at one plant at each company: a GM factory in Wentzville, Missouri; a Stellantis facility in Toledo, Ohio; and a Ford plant in Wayne, Michigan, but only in the final assembly and paint operations. The threat however was clear that the strike could expand.

Many hourly workers say the auto giants must produce significantly better packages to make up for what they call meager wages and benefit cuts after the 2008 financial crisis, when both GM and Chrysler, now part of Stellantis, underwent bankruptcy reorganizations.

"This company has been making money off of us for years," said Paul Sievert, who has worked at Ford's Wayne plant for 29 years. "I think it's time that we got back."

Sticking points also include raising pay and benefits for junior employees to match the level of more seasoned



DETROIT: Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer speaks to members of the United Auto Workers (UAW) union during a rally in Detroit, Michigan, on September 15, 2023. — AFP

workers, who currently make a top rate of around \$32 an hour. General Motors upped its offer Thursday, lifting a proposed wage increase to 20 percent. The company had previously proposed an

18 percent rise, according to the UAW. In a statement Friday, GM said it would "continue to bargain in good faith with the union to reach an agreement as quickly as possible." — AFP

Gulf Bank concludes 'Points, Cash and Summer Splash'

KUWAIT: As part of its keenness to reward its customers, Gulf Bank has concluded the "Points, Cash and Summer Splash" campaign for all credit and prepaid cardholders, enabling customers to accumulate more points for their purchases and expenditures during the summer – locally and internationally – in addition to chances to win cash prizes up to KD 20,000.



Mohammed Taqi

The campaign lasted from July 1, 2023, until September 15, 2023, with three draws to select 50 winners with prizes of KD 20,000 for the one winner, 25 winners of KD 1,000 each, and 24 winners of KD 500 each. The last and final draw to be held on 24 September. Chances of winning were open to all Gulf Bank customers, including credit and prepaid cardholders. Every customer earned one chance to enter the draw for every KD 10 spent in Kuwait, and three chances for every KD 10 spent internationally, during the campaign period. Additionally, customers earned double chances for transactions made using digital wallets such as Google Pay, Apple Pay and Samsung Pay, with a minimum spend of KD 100 during the campaign period to qualify for the draw.

In parallel with the valuable prizes obtained by customers, customers will continue to collect points, within the best and fastest points program in Kuwait, which can be exchanged for free airline tickets, hotel accommodation and special travel offers.

Gulf Bank's Assistant General Manager of Consumer Banking, Mohammed Taqi, said: "We would like to congratulate all the winners as Gulf Bank continues to provide its customers with the most tailored products and services to enhance their customer experience. Taqi further mentioned that Gulf Bank's credit cards carry many advantages that customers can benefit from, including offers across various sectors such as restaurants, hotels, travel and tourism, entertainment, health and beauty, car rentals, and others.

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.

Lebanon failed to adopt reforms: IMF

BEIRUT: The International Monetary Fund renewed its criticism of Lebanon Friday for failing to enact reforms demanded by creditors in return for releasing billions of dollars in emergency bailout loans. "Lebanon has not undertaken the urgently needed reforms, and this will weigh on the economy for years to come," said the IMF's Ernesto Ramirez Rigo in a statement at the end of a visit to Beirut.

Since late 2019, Lebanon has been mired in an

economic crisis the World Bank has described as one of the worst in recent world history, pushing most of the population into poverty.

In April 2022, Lebanon and the IMF reached conditional agreement on a \$3-billion-dollar loan package to bail out the economy. But politicians have yet to enact the painful reforms demanded to begin the 46-month financing program. A seasonal uptick in tourism has increased foreign currency inflows, Ramirez Rigo said. Most tourists are Lebanese expatriates returning home for the summer holidays.

"It gives the impression that the economy has bottomed out of the crisis and is leading to complacency. However, receipts from tourism and remittances fall far short of what is needed," he said. The IMF deal is conditional on a series of measures, including passing a 2024 budget, unifying Lebanon's multiple

exchange rates, restructuring the banking sector and implementing formal capital controls.

Lebanon has taken some steps, including a belated 2023 budget, but the IMF has said repeatedly that they are not enough. On July 31, Lebanon's former central bank chief Riad Salameh, who is wanted for alleged financial crimes in several European countries, left office with no designated successor in place.

First vice-governor Wassim Manssour has taken over on a temporary basis, but divided politicians have failed to agree on a permanent replacement, creating another power vacuum in a country that also has no president and is ruled by a caretaker government. In late June, the IMF warned that Lebanon's failure to implement reforms could have "irreversible" consequences for its economic and social stability. — AFP

Apple to update iPhone 12 in France over radiation

PARIS: Apple said on Friday it would update the iPhone 12 in France after regulators raised concerns over electromagnetic radiation emitted by the devices.

France had ordered a halt to sales of the device, released in 2020, on Tuesday after finding that the model emitted more electromagnetic waves than permitted. "Apple has assured me that it will implement an update for the iPhone 12 in the next few days," said France's digital minister Jean-Noel Barrot in a statement to AFP.

Both the firm and Barrot insisted there was no danger to public health from the radiation. "This is related to a specific testing protocol used by French regulators and not a safety concern," Apple said in a statement, adding that the device complied with rules on emissions all around the world.

"We will issue a software update for users in France to accommodate the protocol used by French regulators."

EU unafraid of trade war with China

SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA, Spain: The EU insisted on Friday that its economy could survive any retaliation from China, after Beijing warned that Brussels' probe into Chinese electric car subsidies would harm trade relations. Europe put itself at risk of a trade war when European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen announced the anti-subsidy investigation on Wednesday, accusing China of keeping car prices "artificially low by huge state subsidies".

The investigation could see the European Union try to protect European carmakers by imposing punitive tariffs on cars it believes are unfairly sold at a lower price.

The day after von der Leyen's announcement,

The US tech giant had been given two weeks to issue an update to its phone, which was coming to the end of its career as a front-line Apple product.

Barrot said the agency in charge of testing, the ANFR, would quickly assess the update and decide whether to lift the ban on sales.

The World Health Organization points out that several studies in the field have failed to find adverse health effects caused by mobile phone use. And there are no specific illnesses linked to such radiation. But exposure to more than 40 watts per kilogram (W/kg) of electromagnetic radiation does increase body temperature. European regulations allow only 4 W/kg for such devices and the iPhone 12 exceeded that level by 1.7 W/kg.

Apple has endured an unusually tough week. Its launch of new products was overshadowed by an announcement that it was replacing its

the Chinese commerce ministry hit back at the EU's "naked protectionism", and said the measures "will have a negative impact on China-EU economic and trade relations".

Trade with China makes up around 2.5 percent of eurozone GDP, but economy commissioner Paolo Gentiloni appeared to be unfazed by the warning when asked about whether the bloc's economy could survive any tariffs. "I'm confident, but we have to address this issue very seriously. I think there is no specific reason for retaliation but retaliation is always possible," he said, before a meeting of eurozone finance ministers in the Spanish city of Santiago de Compostela.

The probe comes after France pushed Brussels to take stronger action to defend European industry against growing threats from China and the United States. French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire made a passionate defense of the EU's strength as he rejected accusations of protectionism.

"We don't have to fear any country. We are the EU... We are one of the most powerful economic



This illustration photograph taken on September 13, 2023 in Paris with a macro lens shows reversed information of an iPhone 12 reflected in the Apple logo of an iPhone, as French regulators ordered Apple to halt sales of the iPhone 12 and to fix existing handsets for emitting too much electromagnetic radiation. — AFP

proprietary "lightning" charging ports with standard USB-C ports on the latest generation of iPhones, a measure demanded by EU regulators.

And Chinese officials denied claims that they had banned iPhones in gov-

ernment buildings before taking a swipe at the firm. Foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said officials were following "many recent media reports exposing security incidents relating to Apple mobile phones". — AFP

EU hits TikTok with big fine over child data

LONDON: A European Union regulator hit Chinese-owned social media platform TikTok with a 345-million-euro fine over child data breaches on Friday, in the bloc's latest salvo against the business practices of tech titans.

The fine, equivalent to \$369 million, is the culmination of a two-year inquiry by Ireland's Data Protection

Commission (DPC). The Irish watchdog, which plays a key role in policing the EU's strict General Data Protection Regulations, gave TikTok three months "to bring its processing into compliance" with its rules.

The DPC in September 2021 began examining TikTok's compliance with GDPR in relation to platform settings and personal data processing for users aged under 18 years old.

It also looked at TikTok's age verification measures for persons under 13 and found no infringement, but found the platform did not properly assess the risks to younger people registering on the service.

The regulator highlighted in its

ruling Friday how children signing up had TikTok accounts set to public by default, meaning anyone could view or comment on their content. It also criticized TikTok's "family pairing" mode, which is designed to link parents' accounts to those of their teenage offspring, but the DPC found the company did not verify parent or guardian status.

Ireland is at the centre of the GDPR regime because Dublin hosts the European headquarters of TikTok and the likes of Google, Meta and X, formerly Twitter. In May, the DPC fined Meta a record 1.2 billion euros for transferring EU user data to the United States in breach of a previous court ruling.

TikTok, a division of Chinese tech giant ByteDance, is extremely popular among young people with 150 million users in the United States and 134 million in the EU.

TikTok 'respectfully disagrees'

In response to the fine, TikTok said it "respectfully disagrees" with the verdict and was "evaluating" how to proceed. "The DPC's criticisms are focused on features and settings that were in place three years ago, and that we made changes to well before the investigation even began, such as setting all under 16 accounts to private by default," a TikTok spokesperson told AFP. — AFP



BRUSSELS: This picture taken on April 26, 2023 in Toulouse, southwestern France, shows a screen displaying the TikTok social media platform's logo and the European flag. — AFP



Umbrellas on display at Komiya Shoten, a company which has made handcrafted umbrellas for rain or shine for nearly a century, at the Higashi-Nihombashi area of Tokyo. — AFP photos



Employees working on umbrellas for Komiya Shoten.



HEAT BRINGS HOPE FOR TOKYO'S HANDMADE UMBRELLA MAKER



An employee reflected in a mirror while making an umbrella for Komiya Shoten.



An employee checking on an umbrella for Komiya Shoten.



Employees working on umbrellas for Komiya Shoten.



An employee cutting up material to make umbrellas for Komiya Shoten.

One of Tokyo's last handmade umbrella shops has weathered many storms and is now thriving thanks to booming demand for parasols as Japanese summers get hotter, including increasingly from men. "You'll feel cool under a parasol... Once you use it, you can't let go," promised Hiroyuki Komiya, the owner of Komiya Shoten, on a recent sweltering day.

The 54-year-old's grandfather started the business 93 years ago. It used to be one of 70 shops selling handmade umbrellas in Nihonbashi, an area that was once the core of old Tokyo. Now only Komiya Shoten and a handful of others remain in the whole city, pushed out of business by cheap made-in-China plastic products on sale in every convenience store.

Unlike these mass-manufactured rival products, Komiya Shoten uses quality textiles made in Japan. The umbrellas are handmade by in-house craftworkers with techniques in use since Japan's Meiji era (1868-1912). "You need at least five, six years to master umbrella making," craftsman Ikko Tanaka said, as he carefully attached the navy fabric onto the carbon fibre umbrella ribs. But their products

also use modern technology, coating the fabric with materials that block the light nearly 100 percent. They last longer but do not come cheap, costing several hundred dollars.



An employee working on an umbrella for Komiya Shoten.

Paper and oil

Traditionally Japanese umbrellas were made of wood, bamboo and paper called washi coated with oil to repel Japan's often torrential rain, and took weeks to make. But the import of Western umbrellas — as we know them today — began in 1859 after the country

ended its 220-year-old isolation policy, according to the Japan Umbrella Promotion Association.

Western ones were an expensive fashion accessory but they spread



A pedestrian (top) walks past umbrellas on display in the window of Komiya Shoten.

across Japan in the Meiji period as local makers spotted a gap in the market. Komiya's grandfather was one of them, moving to Tokyo to become a craftsman and starting the company in 1930. "Everyone who wanted to be chic dreamed of having one," his grandson said.

Blown away

But the business peaked in the late 1960s as cheaper rivals started flooding in from other Asian countries. Many Japanese makers went out of business and Komiya Shoten was almost turned inside out too. "You can buy plastic umbrellas at 500 yen or 100 yen. We sold ours at 20,000 yen. We couldn't compete."

However, the family business has found a niche in making "luxury" umbrellas, building a slick-looking website and social media presence extolling their skills. The business started to turn around 10 years ago and their products were officially recognized as traditional crafts by the Tokyo government in 2018.

And although volumes are small with fewer than 10 craftworkers, sales are going up, including for parasols. "We're experiencing hot summers, probably because of global warming and more people are using parasols to stay cool," Komiya said. "The number of male customers has increased significantly," he said. — AFP

India's Tarsem Singh brings dark love story to Toronto film fest

Indian director Tarsem Singh Dhandwar, known for his award-winning music videos and visually arresting fantasy features, unveiled his first movie in eight years at the Toronto film festival — a shocking true-crime story about love, class and murder in 1990s Punjab. "Dear Jassi" is Singh's first-ever film set in his home country and, in an interview with AFP, he explained how he waited for just the right time to make it. The 62-year-old Singh first heard the real-life tale of star-crossed love — a Canadian-born girl from a

wealthy Punjabi family meets a rickshaw driver while visiting relatives in India — more than 20 years ago, and the idea never left him.

"I gave my brother a call and said, 'We either make the story right now, or we wait at least two decades for it to become retro.' This was not a subject matter that was going to get solved quickly," he told AFP. At that time, Singh was already a known commodity in Hollywood: his dreamlike video for REM's seminal hit "Losing My Religion" won six MTV Video Music Awards in 1991, including Video of the Year.

He went on to direct Jennifer Lopez in the sci-fi horror flick "The Cell" (2000) and other features including "The Fall" (2006), the Snow White-based "Mirror Mirror" starring Julia Roberts in 2012, and "Self/less" with Ryan Reynolds (2015). But the heartbreaking tale of Jassi and Mithu remained on his to-do list, and a meeting just before Covid-19

hit with screenwriter Amit Rai, who he said was "possessed" with the story, resulted in a script.

Singh insisted on not using stars in the film — Pavia Sidhu (Jassi) had some acting experience, and Yugam Sood (Mithu) is a university student making his screen debut. "They would have liked for me to use somebody from Bollywood. They would have liked for me to make it in Hindi," Singh said. "But I said, 'It just needs to be this.' (...) It's in Punjabi and it's small."

Singh turns the ripped-from-the-headlines drama into something of a folk tale — the film starts and ends with narrative verses from singer Kanwar Grewal. The format is akin to Shakespeare's narrator in "Romeo and Juliet," and Singh molds his story to fit the broad strokes of the classic play — Jassi speaks to Mithu from a balcony, and there is even a sleeping potion. — AFP

Hugh Jackman and wife separating

"Wolverine" star Hugh Jackman and his wife of 27 years are to separate, a statement carried by US media said Friday. The Australian actor, 54, met fellow performer Deborra-Lee Jackman on the set of an Australian TV series in 1995, and the pair wed a year later. "We have been blessed to share almost (three) decades together as husband and wife in a wonderful, loving marriage," a joint statement first reported by People magazine said. "Our journey now is shifting and we have decided to separate to pursue our individual growth.

"Our family has been and always will be our highest priority. We undertake this next chapter with gratitude, love, and kindness." The couple have two children together. Jackman, a Golden Globe winner for his role in "Les Miserables," has juggled his image as a muscle-bound superhero, with ventures into music and dancing during a varied career.

"We greatly appreciate your understanding in respecting our privacy as our family navigates this transition in all of our lives," the statement continues,

adding that no further information will be released. In a social media post to mark the couple's silver wedding, Jackman described their marriage as "natural as breathing."



Australian actor Hugh Jackman and his wife Australian director Deborra-Lee Furness arrive for the screening of the film "The Son" presented in the Venezia 79 competition as part of the 79th Venice International Film Festival at Lido di Venezia in Venice, Italy. — AFP



Indian director Tarsem Singh poses for a photo during the Toronto International Film Festival in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.



Actor Kanwar Grewal poses for photographers at the premiere of "Dear Jassi" at the Toronto International Film Festival.



Actor Pavia Sidhu arrives for the premiere of "Dear Jassi" during the Toronto International Film Festival. — AFP photos

Lifestyle



A mannequin wearing a head piece is displayed during the preview of the exhibition "REBEL: 30 years of London Fashion" at the Design Museum, in London. - AFP photos



Mannequins wearing: the Swan dress designed by Marjan Pejoski (second left), a dress from Charles Jeffrey Loverboy Spring/Summer 2018 collection show (center) and the inflatable latex suit designed by Harri (right), are displayed during the preview of the exhibition "REBEL: 30 years of London Fashion" at the Design Museum, in London.



LONDON CELEBRATES ITS 'FEARLESS' YOUNG FASHION DESIGNERS

The story of how British designer Lee Alexander McQueen's legendary first "Taxi Driver" collection was lost after he showed it on a clothes rack at the Ritz Hotel is told in a new exhibition in London. The late McQueen — who used the name Alexander McQueen professionally — was going nightclubbing after the presentation and couldn't afford to put the clothes in left luggage. Instead, the prodigiously talented young designer stuffed the pieces back into the black plastic rubbish bags he'd used to transport them and "secreted them next to a dumpster outside the club and completely forgot about them," said exhibition co-curator Rebecca Lewin.

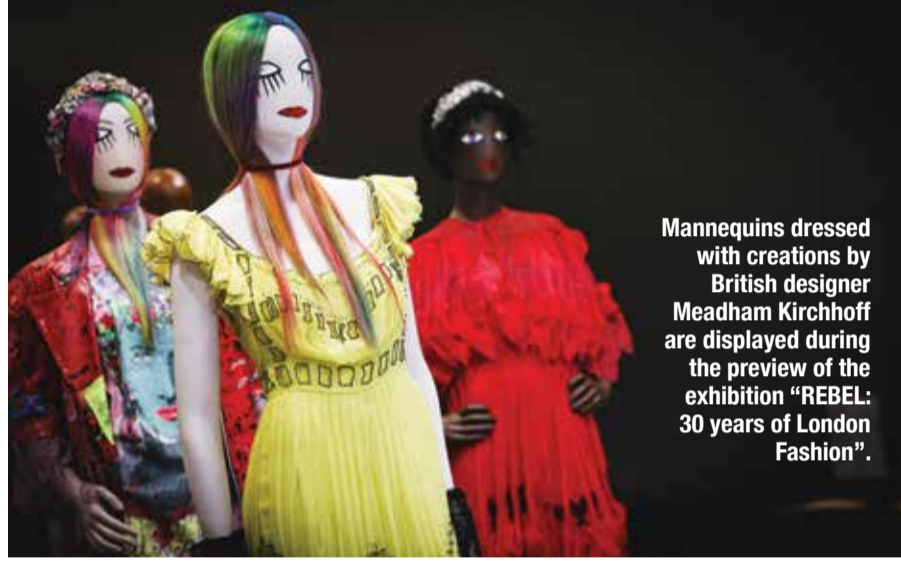
McQueen, who took his own life in 2010, went home without them later only to find they'd been cleared away when he returned the next day. The 1993 collection, which debuted McQueen's famous "bumster" low slung trousers, has never been recovered. "REBEL: 30 Years of London Fashion" at the city's Design Museum celebrates the hundreds of "fearless" young designers who were part of the NewGen scheme which supports designers at the start of their careers. McQueen was one of the first to be helped by the initiative in 1993, becoming the stand-out talent of the first cohort.



A mannequin dressed with an outfit from the brand "The Knit Monster", a knitwear fashion label created by British designers Sid Bryan, Joe Bates and Cozette McCreery.

'Man Stink'

According to his friend and collaborator Simon Ungless, young designers were badly hit by the UK recession of the early 1990s. "There were no jobs, our goals of heading off to Europe or off to New York straight after graduation just weren't happening," the print designer revealed in an audio interview included in the exhibition. "So it was a



Mannequins dressed with creations by British designer Meadham Kirchhoff are displayed during the preview of the exhibition "REBEL: 30 years of London Fashion".

time to make things happen ourselves so that's what we did," he added.

Even though money was tight, Ungless recalled how the pair would go out almost every night and the exhibition uses archive footage, photographs and nightclub posters to evoke the London of the early 1990s. One of McQueen's favored haunts was Man Stink in Kings Cross where he lost his collection.

"It was a continuous circle of every day laughing and draping and working and doing all the things that we loved," he said. Eventually McQueen started to make an impact and found himself

billed in media articles as one of a new breed of up-and-coming British designers able to combine creativity with commercial nous. But he had to hide his face in photographs for newspaper and magazine articles for fear of losing his unemployment benefit which he was still relying on to pay the bills.

Bjork's swan dress

Lewin said McQueen's story of talent that might have been stifled by financial struggles illustrated the importance of NewGen, just as the UK is facing renewed economic hardship

with the worst cost-of-living crisis in a generation. She said the start of the scheme was also a "really important moment" in London's journey to becoming a major fashion capital. In the early 1990s, however, London didn't have the profile it does today and there was little support for designers graduating from art school.

As a result, most would try to go to Paris, Milan or New York to get started. Designers who caught the attention of the British Fashion Council's NewGen scheme include Erdem, J.W. Anderson and Simone Rocha.

Pieces from all three are among around 100 looks from couturiers who benefitted from the initiative showcased in the exhibition. Many of their creations have entered pop culture history such as the now iconic swan dress worn by Bjork at the 2001 Oscars by Macedonian-born designer Marjan Pejoski.

The avant-garde Icelandic singer accessorized with a trail of eggs that she "laid" as she made her way down the red carpet prompting widespread mockery at the time. Others include Sam Smith's inflatable latex suit by Harri for this year's BRIT Awards and Harry Styles' Steven Stokely-Daley outfit from his video for "Golden". — AFP



British fashion designer Phoebe English poses in her studio in Deptford, south of London. — AFP photos



Leftover pieces of cotton and linen are seen in the studio of fashion designer Phoebe English in Deptford.

Princess Diana's 'Black Sheep' sweater sells at auction for \$1.1 million

An iconic red sweater worn by Princess Diana shortly after her engagement to then-Prince Charles, featuring rows of fluffy little sheep, sold at auction for \$1.1 million following a frenetic bout of final bidding, Sotheby's announced Thursday. The 19-year-old sported the knit garment — which includes one black sheep amid dozens of otherwise white woolly creatures — at a June 1981 polo match during her whirlwind days as a shy royal-in-the-making.

The playfully patterned "Black Sheep" sweater became one of the most emblematic articles of clothing worn by Diana, which in hindsight seems to foretell her troubled journey as a member of the British royal family. The garment nabbed \$1.1 million — after a fierce battle by internet bidders. The total was over ten times more than Sotheby's initial estimate of between \$50,000 to \$80,000.

Due to an avalanche of bids, the auction house extended the sale by several minutes, with the price leaping astronomically from \$190,000 to \$1.1 million in the final 15 minutes. According to Sotheby's, it is the highest price ever paid at auction for a garment belonging to Princess Diana — eclipsing her Infanta-style ball gown sold in January for \$604,800 — as well as the most valuable sweater ever sold at auction.

The sweater was created by then-little-known designers Sally Muir and Joanna Osborne and their knitting company Warm and Wonderful, which was subsequently catapulted to fame. Weeks after Diana was photographed



The "Black Sheep Jumper" designed by Sally Muir and Joanna Osborne.

in the top, the designers received a letter explaining that one of the sweater's sleeves had suffered damage, and asking if it could be repaired or replaced.

The designers sent her a new one and had assumed the original was repaired and sent to a customer, but in March 2023 Osborne found the sweater in a small box in her attic. In addition to the sweater, the auction included the letter requesting repair, as well as a thank you note from Diana's private secretary, Oliver Everett.

Diana was seen wearing the replacement at a June 1983 polo match. Some 40 years later "Black Sheep" was re-released for sale in 2020 in a collaboration between the fashion brand Rowing Blazers and its original designers, Muir and Osborne. The sweater was so iconic that it even appeared (via replica) in the fourth season of Netflix drama "The Crown," chronicling the House of Windsor's recent history. — AFP

UK DESIGNER REJECTS 'FAST FASHION' TO PROTECT PLANET

Driven by a passion to protect the planet, Phoebe English hasn't bought a centimeter of fabric or a single plastic button for her collection at London Fashion Week. The fashion industry is one of the most polluting, accounting for up to 10 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, according to World Bank estimates. "Fast fashion", where clothes are bought for a few dollars and then discarded after a few wears, leads to a high volume of waste, which often ends up in illegal landfills in the Global South.

It's an issue that preoccupies English, a 37-year-old designer who graduated from London's prestigious Central Saint Martins arts college in 2010. "We are producing too much too quickly, in quite an unnecessary way, and we need to really think about it," she told AFP. "Is that something that can actually continue with the planetary boundaries that we have?"

Like millions of people, she admits to a degree of "eco-anxiety" that at first glance is difficult to reconcile with her profession. But it has prompted her to take radical action: a blouse made from bed linen salvaged from a luxury hotel is an item typical of her collection. She found the fabric for a crepe blouse in a wedding dress store.



Scissors, pens and sewing needles are seen in the studio of fashion designer Phoebe English in Deptford.

"We spend the year collecting textile waste, so that might be in the form of off-cuts from other businesses," she explained. Several wedding dress manufacturers send her scraps of fabric "that usually just go in the rubbish".

The non-uniform and often small nature of the off-cuts makes the work transforming them into garments to wear "quite technical and complicated", she added. Given the self-imposed constraints focusing on slow and sustainable clothes, she only presents one collection per year at fashion week, which starts on Friday, while most designers present at least two. "We can't do it at the same speed that potentially other companies can," she added.

Afterlife

"What we're aiming for is to work in less damaging ways," she said. "We don't use plastic components in our clothes. Our buttons are corozo nut or milk casein, both natural materials, and we use organic cotton sewing thread where possible."

English thinks about the afterlife of the garment so that it is easy to sew and repair once worn and is biodegradable, should it end up being disposed of in a natural environment. The collection is monochrome and refined: the clothes are either black or white with no prints or embroidery.

"We work with the shape and the form and the cutting and the draping, rather than necessarily the decoration," she explained. Many pieces are also gender neutral. Everything is done with a small team in her east London studio, or outsourced elsewhere in England. It is a "very niche company", she said.

English has sold her creations in Japan, the United States and several locations in Europe and has built a loyal clientele, who order items directly from her on the internet. Among her clients are many artists and people curious about her approach.

While most fashion brands now say they are acting to protect the environment, many are accused of "greenwashing". "There's quite a lot of misinformation," said English, calling for "clear legislation to help mitigate some of the damaging practices". The British Fashion Council, which organizes fashion week, has just announced a joint program with the British textile industry to clean up the sector. They will attempt to reduce waste and overproduction of clothing and work to support the UK's net-zero strategy and wider climate targets. — AFP



Rolls of fabric lean against a wall in the studio of fashion designer Phoebe English in Deptford.



A staff member poses with the "Black Sheep Jumper" designed by Sally Muir and Joanna Osborne and worn on several occasions by Britain's late Princess Diana, during a press view at Sotheby's auction house in London. - AFP photos



Residents split as Bulgaria town averts UNESCO downgrade

Once one of the most important Byzantine cities on the western shores of the Black Sea, residents of Nessebar say life these days in Bulgaria's UNESCO-listed ancient town is far from idyllic. The UN's cultural organization UNESCO had been mulling labelling Nessebar an at-risk site, citing inadequate protection since it was given World Heritage status 40 years ago. But at a meeting late Thursday, the body stopped short of downgrading the town.

paid employee who's forced to drive a Mercedes and maintain it."

Illegal construction

A former Thracian settlement nestled on a rocky peninsula, Nessebar became a Greek colony and nowadays features the remains of Hellenistic architecture, medieval churches and typical 19th-century wooden houses. In recent years, a number of new buildings have been sprouting up in the town of 1,700 inhabitants, threatening the integrity

adopted in 2021, which favors tourism over preserving the site. Contacted by AFP, the municipality declined to comment.

Defying the scorching September heat, large groups of mostly day-tourists have made their way to the archeological monuments, passing by stalls of cheap souvenirs and snacks that line the cobbled streets. Marie Hrubá, a 20-year-old Czech tourist, said she took a last-minute flight to Bulgaria, and that contrary to her expectations, she was astonished by Nessebar's beauty.

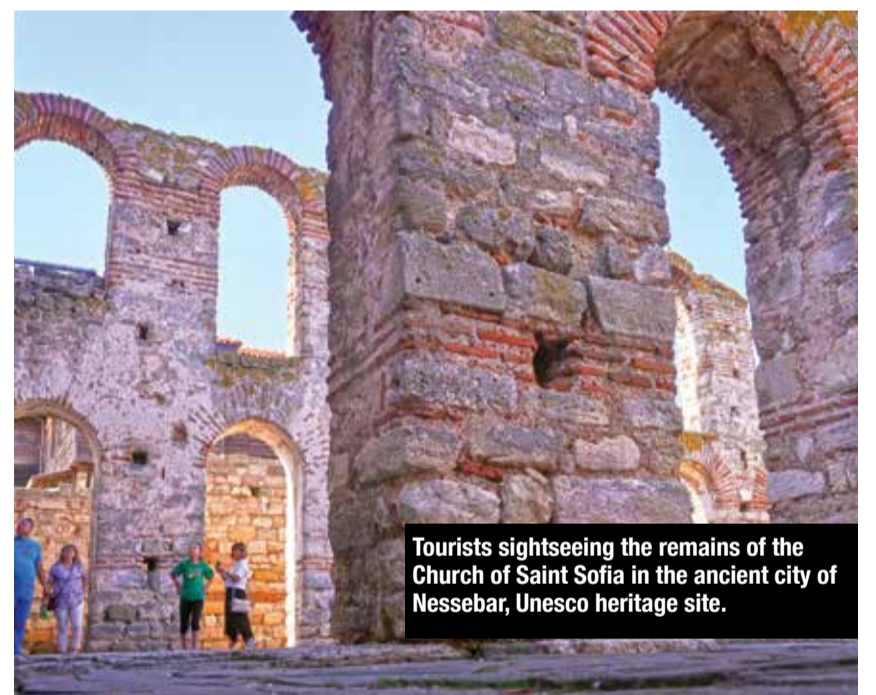
Downgrade 'inevitable'?

But the picture-perfect facade is fragile. "Historical houses are falling apart, repairs cost a fortune and there's no help from anywhere," said Maksimov, accusing politicians of embezzling funds. "Politicians don't care about anything but stealing." "Everything the municipality makes looks cheap, while millions were paid for it," said café owner Georgy Shishmanidov, 55, who also runs an association representing the old town's residents.

He believes that a downgrading of Nessebar is "inevitable", deploring corruption and what he called the "grave incompetence" of national bodies charged with preserving the country's cultural heritage — though he hopes it is not too late to save the town. Local restaurant owner Nikolay Balevski, 38, fears that a potential downgrade could result in a sharp decline in tourists. "If Nessebar is not in UNESCO, tourists just won't come," he said. "There is no other reason to come here — we have no beaches or any other attractions, only its cultural heritage." — AFP



Tourists sightseeing the remains of the Church of Saint Sofia.



Tourists sightseeing the remains of the Church of Saint Sofia in the ancient city of Nessebar, Unesco heritage site.



Tourists walk in the ancient city of Nessebar, Unesco heritage site.

While Venetians breathed a sigh of relief after escaping a heritage downgrade, many in Nessebar would prefer to be delisted altogether. "People are angry, they want to be taken off of any UNESCO lists," said 48-year-old fisherman Veselin Maksimov. "They only tell us what we are not allowed to do," he added, resentful of having to wait over a year to get the permission to fix his leaking roof. "We're like some low-

of its traditional architecture. In the past, UNESCO has warned that "illegal interventions" on 19th-century structures were also endangering its status.

Critics say illegal construction in Nessebar is linked to corruption, endemic in many areas of public life in Bulgaria, the European Union's poorest country. On Thursday, UNESCO expressed its concern over Nessebar's new development plan



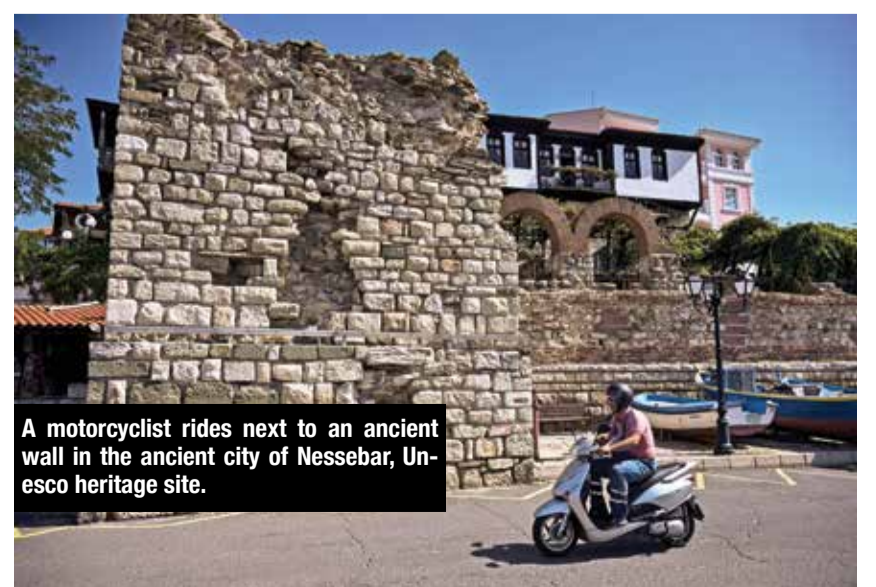
Tourists walk in the ancient city of Nessebar, a UNESCO heritage site, situated on the Bulgarian Black Sea Coast. - AFP photos



This picture shows the statue of the Fisherman and the ancient city of Nessebar.



A general view of the ancient city of Nessebar, a UNESCO heritage with the remains of the Church of Saint Sofia, situated on the Bulgarian Black Sea Coast.



A motorcyclist rides next to an ancient wall in the ancient city of Nessebar, Unesco heritage site.

Sports

Djokovic powers Serbia into Davis Cup quarters

Murray lifts Britain over Switzerland

PARIS: Novak Djokovic returned to the court just five days after his historic US Open title triumph to lead Serbia into the Davis Cup quarter-finals on Friday, while Andy Murray helped Britain edge past Switzerland. World number one Djokovic eased to a 6-3, 6-4 success against Alejandro Davidovich Fokina to give his country an unassailable 2-0 lead in Valencia after Laslo Djere's earlier 6-4, 6-4 win over Albert Ramos-Vinolas. It was Djokovic's first appearance in the team competition since Serbia's semi-final loss to Croatia in 2021. The 36-year-old won a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title last weekend with a straight-sets triumph against Daniil Medvedev in the US Open final.

"I'm on cloud nine with everything that has happened recently on the tennis court," Djokovic said. "Playing for Serbia, for my country, is something completely different. "It's a huge responsibility and pressure, but it's also a privilege and an honor." Djokovic took the opening set against world number 25 Davidovich Fokina with a single break in the eighth game, before bat-

ling back from 4-1 down in the second set with a run of five straight games. Serbia have now secured a spot in the knock-out phase which will be played in Malaga in November, after also seeing off South Korea 3-0 on Tuesday, while Spain are out of the competition.

"It can create some pressure," said Djere on having Djokovic back in the team. "But I try not to put any pressure on myself and use it as motivation. I think I managed quite good in doing so." Djokovic played a starring role when Serbia won their only previous Davis Cup title in 2010. Serbia wrapped up a 3-0 victory in the Group C tie as Nikola Cacic and Miomir Kecmanovic beat Davidovich Fokina and Marcel Granollers 6-4, 7-6 (15/13). They will round off their group campaign against the Czech Republic on Saturday.

Britain post second win

An emotional Murray won the opening rubber of Britain's victory over Switzerland before revealing he had missed his grandmother's funeral to play. "Today is a tough day for me, it's my Gran's funeral to-

day," Murray said after his epic 6-7 (7/9), 6-4, 6-4, win over Leandro Riedi at the Manchester Arena. "I'm sorry to my family that I'm not able to be there but Gran, this one's for you." The 36-year-old had only lost three of his previous 35 singles matches in the competition but needed every ounce of skill and competitiveness to see his way past 21-year-old Riedi, who was making his Davis Cup debut.

The Swiss levelled the tie as veteran Stan Wawrinka quietened the crowd with a 7-5, 6-4 win against Cameron Norrie. But Dan Evans and Neal Skupski brushed aside Dominic Stricker and Wawrinka 6-3, 6-3 as Britain made it two wins from two in Group B after also beating Australia earlier in the week. Britain can secure a last-eight berth if they beat France on Sunday, while even a loss could be enough depending on the result of Saturday's tie between Switzerland and Australia.

Italy bounced back from their surprise opening defeat by depleted reigning champions Canada in Group A, downing Chile 3-0. Youngster Matteo Arnaldi battled past Cristian Garin 2-6, 6-4, 6-3 be-



VALENCIA: Serbia's Novak Djokovic returns a ball to Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina during the group stage men's singles match between Spain and Serbia of the Davis Cup tennis tournament. — AFP

fore Lorenzo Sonego edged out Nicolas Jarry 3-6, 7-5, 6-4. Sonego then teamed up with Lorenzo Musetti for a 6-7 (3/7), 6-3, 7-6 (7/2) doubles victory against

Tomas Barrios Vera and Alejandro Tabilo. Finland kept their hopes of progressing alive with a 2-1 win over Croatia in their Group D clash in Split. — AFP

News in Brief

USM Alger shock Ahly

RIYADH: A penalty converted by captain Zinedine Belaid gave USM Alger of Algeria a shock 1-0 win over Al Ahly of Egypt on Friday in the annual CAF Super Cup match. Nervous and hesitant in the build-up to the spot-kick, Belaid sent goalkeeper Mohamed el Shenawy the wrong way and his kick landed in the corner of the net in the 43rd minute. Even 12 added minutes in the second half was insufficient time for eight-time Super Cup winners Ahly to find an equalizer in Saudi Arabia. The Super Cup pits the winners of the two CAF club competitions - the Champions League and second-tier Confederation Cup - against each other in a single match. This was the first time Ahly lost a Super Cup match when African champions - two previous defeats came after qualifying as winners of secondary CAF competitions. USM were Super Cup debutants, and they emulated compatriots Entente Setif, who beat Ahly on penalties during the previous decade. — AFP

Ferrari of Sainz quickest

SINGAPORE: The Ferrari of Carlos Sainz was quickest in Saturday's final practice session for the Singapore Grand Prix as Max Verstappen and Red Bull again struggled for pace. Verstappen's best was only fourth on the time sheets, 0.313 sec behind Sainz's hot lap of 1min 32.065sec. George Russell's Mercedes and the McLaren of Lando Norris also crossed the line ahead of the runaway championship leader. Verstappen's Red Bull teammate Sergio Perez, who won in Singapore a year ago, was only eighth fastest. The Red Bulls have been unstoppable so far in 2023, winning all 14 grands prix, with Dutchman Verstappen taking the chequered flag 12 times, including the last 10 races in a row. His Mexican teammate Perez has won the other two. But Singapore's Marina Bay street circuit is shaping up as the biggest challenge to Red Bull's unprecedented quest to sweep all 22 races this season. — AFP

Guardiola backs Foden

LONDON: Pep Guardiola insists Phil Foden can play in a number of attacking positions for Manchester City after England boss Gareth Southgate claimed the forward was not able to take a central role for his country. Southgate said people should "speak to Pep" earlier this week after being asked why he seemed reluctant to use Foden in central areas of his attack. Southgate's inference was that, as Foden tends to play largely on the flanks at City, it was difficult for him to deploy the 23-year-old centrally in international games. Foden was below his best at times last season despite City's historic march to Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup glory. Quizzed about Foden's role for his team ahead of the treble winners' trip to West Ham this weekend, City manager Guardiola expressed support for his player. "I have an incredible relationship with Gareth. A comment from me? It looks like I disagree with him and I completely agree with him," Guardiola told reporters on Friday. — AFP

Theegala, Kim lead PGA Tour

SAN FRANCISCO: Sahith Theegala fired an eight-under-par 64 to grab a share of the lead at the halfway stage of the PGA Tour's Fortinet Championship in Napa, northern California on Friday. The world number 37 reeled off seven birdies and an eagle to surge to 12 under after 36 holes, with South Korea's Kim Seong-hyeon joining him at the top of the leaderboard after a five-under-par 67. In perfect conditions at the Silverado Resort's north course, Theegala relied on a red-hot putter and some superb approach play to march up the leaderboard. Theegala and Kim lead by one shot from South Korea's Bae Sang-moon, who is a shot back on 11 under after a six-under-par 66. Eric Cole, who also shot a 66, is a further shot back on 10 under, two off the lead. But the low round of the day belonged to Theegala, who made a blistering start with back-to-back 10-foot putts yielding birdies on his third and fourth holes. — AFP

IGF chief praises Kuwait gymnasts

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: First Deputy Chairman of the International Gymnastics Federation (IGF), President of the Qatari Federation Ali Al-Hatmi, lauded the developed level of gymnastics sport in Kuwait and the results being achieved. Al-Hatmi spoke during the training of the Kuwait Artistic Gymnastics team at the Qatar Federation's hall in Doha. He said he is happy for the return again and that he felt the officials' keenness to revive the sport, which Kuwait is distinguished with at the Arab level. Al-Hatmi also lauded the level of rhythmic gymnastics by girls. Kuwait is witnessing a notable development in this type of gymnastics.

Lyles, Duplantis aim to end 2023 on high

EUGENE: Noah Lyles and Armand Duplantis are among the world champions aiming to end 2023 on a high note as the World Athletics Diamond League concludes in Eugene, Oregon, this weekend. Lyles, who won 100m, 200m and 4x100m gold at the World Championships in Budapest last month, admitted he thought he had nothing left in the tank after he won the 200m in Zurich two weeks ago. He was considering opting out of the season finale but said Friday he decided "I think I've got one more in me."

Lyles will race the 100m for the first time since the World Championships. He'll have little margin for error in a field that includes world silver medalist Letsile Tebogo and former world champ Christian Coleman - who notched a world-leading 9.83sec at the Diamond League in Xiamen two weeks ago. African record-holder Ferdinand Omanyala and Jamaicans Kishane Thompson and Ackem Blake will also line up, all with sub-9.90 times this year.

With a World Championships treble under his belt, Lyles said, he sees every meet as "almost as a victory lap. "It doesn't matter if you win or lose now," he said, "because you already won World Championships. "We've got to treat this like our victory parade. When other teams go back to the city and they're celebrating. This is our celebration."

Duplantis, who retained his world title with a vault of 6.10m in Budapest, said much the same, with the friendly Eugene venue and a reduced field in the season's final event perhaps offering another good chance to beat his own world record of 6.22m. "I know it's a place where I can jump really high," said Duplantis, who has attempted 6.23m four times this year and come up empty. "I feel like I have one good one left in me - not much more than one (but) I think I do have one."

The smaller field could work in his favor because in a



typical pole vault competition "it's a really long day out there. "Especially if you're trying to attempt to record hike ... I think it might have been almost five hours and I'm taking my last jump," he said. "I think I'll just be a little bit more fresh out there," he said. The raft of Budapest gold medalists in action also includes Kenya's Faith Kipyegon, who will seek to extend her Prefontaine Classic dominance in the 1,500m, which she won at the Eugene meeting in 2016, 2017, 2021 and 2022.

Jackson eyes double

Kipyegon, who also won the 2022 world title on the same track, will be up against a field that also includes Budapest silver medalists Diribe Welteji and Olympic silver medalist Laura Muir. Jamaica's 200m world champion Shericka Jackson will tackle both the 100m and 200m. The 100m will pit her against world champion Sha'Carri Richardson, who has won all three of their 100m clashes this season.

Richardson, who owns the world's best 10.65 this season, said that despite finally breaking through for her first world title she's determined to finish out the season strong. "The job's not done," she said. Jakob Ingebrigtsen, who won 5,000m gold in Budapest but settled for silver in the 1,500m behind Britain's Josh Kerr, will contest both the mile and the 3,000m. But his focus is becoming the first man to win three straight editions of the Bowerman Mile. "That's the most important objective of this meeting," said the Norwegian, who smashed the 24-year-old 2,000m world record in Brussels last week.

Ingebrigtsen, who first ran in Eugene as a teenager, was cagey about whether he was targeting another record, but acknowledged that he'd been in discussions about the pace of the race. "I think it all depends on the conditions. I think we all know that Hayward field is a difficult track to manage and to run fast, especially in this event. With 300 meters to go there's always headwind, so that can be a little bit tricky. "It all depends on how we can get lucky for a couple of laps ... I think we're going to have a good race and I think we're going to have to run fast to be able to win." — AFP

Kuwait to host world bowling championship

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: President of the International and Asian Bowling Federations (IBF), Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, said Kuwait will host the world championship in October for both men and women, with 24 men's teams and 12 women's teams participating. Sheikh Talal, who chairs the board of Kuwait Bowling Club, said in a press statement that the major bowling event will start on October 4th until October 15th, adding that hosting the international tournament will place Kuwait on the world's bowling sport map.

He said the organizing committee, which he heads, continues its preparations to receive the world champions. Subcommittees are working hard to complete the necessary preparations in order to guarantee the success of this major event. Kuwait's players are preparing hard to present their best. Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah said the IBF seeks to develop the game by increasing the number of national teams participating in the championships.



Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah

NZ thrash Namibia as Roigard shines

TOULOUSE: Live-wire scrum-half Cam Roigard had a field day to help New Zealand to an 11-try 71-3 thrashing of Namibia in the two teams' second World Cup match in Toulouse on Friday. Roigard scored two tries and set up two more as fly-half Damian McKenzie bagged 26 points to kick start the All Blacks' tournament after an opening 27-13 loss to hosts France in Pool A. That defeat brought to an end a run of 31 consecutive World Cup pool victories by the All Blacks, who also recorded their largest losing margin (14 points).

It also meant that the three-time champions will likely not top their pool, having finished first in all nine previous tournaments. "It's a good feeling getting the win today, especially after last week's result," All Blacks captain Ardie Savea told Sky Sports. "Just very proud of the men for having a good week of prep and then coming here and getting the win like we did. "There were still a few areas where Namibia put us under pressure but we'll take that." There was never any drama against Namibia, who came into the game at the Stadium of Toulouse still searching for a first-ever World Cup victory in their seventh consecutive tournament appearance, having opened with a 52-8 defeat by Italy - their 23rd straight loss. — AFP



Armand Duplantis

Sports

Spain football crisis deepens

Women's World Cup players demand more heads roll

MADRID: The crisis within Spanish football deepened Friday as the women's World Cup winners demanded more heads roll at its scandal-hit RFEF federation whose disgraced ex-boss appeared in court on sexual assault charges. Just hours after Luis Rubiales was quizzed by a judge for kissing midfielder Jenni Hermoso, all but two of Spain's 23 World Cup players said they would not don the national shirt without deeper changes within the RFEF, demanding its current interim head also resign.

The statement came as the squad's new coach Montse Tome was to announce the lineup for two upcoming UEFA Women's Nations League matches against Sweden and Switzerland, which was promptly postponed, federation sources said. "The changes put in place are not enough," said a statement signed by 39 players, among them 21 of the 23 World Cup winners. Demanding "fundamental changes to the RFEF's leadership", they called for the "resignation of the RFEF president" Pedro Rocha, who took over as interim leader when FIFA suspended Rubiales on August 26.

But the federation insisted Rocha would "lead the transition process within the RFEF until the next election", insisting any changes would be made "gradually". A federation source said a leader-

ship election could take place early next year. "This institution is more important than individuals and it's crucial it remains strong. We'll work tirelessly to create stability first in order to progress later," Rocha said in the statement. Despite a string of recent changes, the federation remains in the hands of officials appointed by Rubiales, and the players are demanding structural changes "within the office of the president and the secretary general".

Brought to court by a kiss

The bombshell came after days of optimism within the RFEF that the players would come round after it sacked controversial coach Jorge Vilda, appointed Tome in his stead and pledged further changes, not to mention Rubiales' long-awaited resignation on Sunday. On August 25, 81 Spain players, including the 23 world champions, had started a mass strike saying they would not play for the national team without significant changes at the head of the federation.

Earlier on Friday, Rubiales appeared in court where he was quizzed by Judge Francisco de Jorge who is heading up the investigation into the kiss, which sparked international outrage and saw him brought up on sexual assault charges. At the end of the closed-door hearing, in which Rubiales repeated his claim that

the kiss was consensual, the judge ordered him not to come within 200 meters of Hermoso and barred him from any contact with the player.

At the weekend, the 46-year-old had described the kiss as "a spontaneous act, a mutual act, an act that both consented to, which was... 100 percent non-sexual" in an interview with British broadcaster Piers Morgan. Hermoso, 33, has insisted it was not, describing it as "an impulsive, macho act, out of place and with no type of consent on my part". Speaking to reporters outside court, Hermoso's lawyer Carla Vall said they were "very satisfied" with the hearing. "Thanks to this video, everyone can see there was no consent whatsoever and that is what we will demonstrate in court."

Allegations of coercion

Hermoso herself will also testify before the judge at some stage, who will then have to decide whether or not to push ahead with the prosecution. No date has been given for her testimony. The complaint against Rubiales, which was filed by the public prosecutors' office, cites alleged offences of sexual assault and coercion.

Under a recent reform of the Spanish penal code, a non-consensual kiss can be considered sexual assault, a category



MADRID: Former president of the Spanish football federation Luis Rubiales (left) and his lawyer Olga Tubau, leave the Audiencia Nacional court in Madrid on September 15, 2023. — AFP

which groups all types of sexual violence. If found guilty, Rubiales could face anything from a fine to four years in prison, sources at the public prosecutors' office have said. In their complaint, prosecutors explained the offence of coercion related

to Hermoso's statement saying she "and those close to her had suffered constant ongoing pressure by Luis Rubiales and his professional entourage to justify and condone" his actions. At the hearing, Rubiales also denied coercion. — AFP



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's French forward #07 Kylian Mbappe controls the ball during the French L1 football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and OGC Nice on September 15, 2023. — AFP

PSG slump to first defeat of season

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain slipped to their first loss of the Ligue 1 season despite a Kylian Mbappe double as an impressive Nice secured a 3-2 victory at the Parc des Princes on Friday, with Terem Moffi scoring twice. PSG fell behind less than midway through the first half as Moffi found the net following a poor mistake by Mbappe. The France striker made amends on the half-hour mark, but Gaetan Laborde restored Nice's lead eight minutes after the break and Moffi put another past the ragged hosts.

Mbappe volleyed home to give the reigning French champions hope but Nice held on. Luis Enrique's PSG, who would have usurped Monaco at the top with three points, instead slipped to third in the early table with eight points from five games, one point behind unbeaten Nice. "Throughout the match they were fresher than us," said Luis Enrique after his first loss as PSG coach. "Obviously a defeat hurts, we all have to improve, myself included. But I liked our state of mind."

"Of the three goals, two were deflected. Nice played great football, but I'm not worried and I saw the fans support their team even when they were two goals down." Nice, backed by British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe, are hoping to bounce back this term from a disappointing campaign last season when they could only finish ninth in Ligue 1. "Everything must be perfect to get a result here, the opponents must not be at their level, and we must give a complete performance," Nice coach Francesco Farioli said. "Beyond the tactical aspects, I saw a team of warriors."

Verratti farewell

Before kick-off, the Parc des Princes bade farewell to Marco Verratti after he ended his 11-year stay at PSG to move to Qatari club Al-Arabi. Messages from former teammates including Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Thiago Silva were played on the big screen, while Verratti was allowed a lap of honor around the pitch. The Italian midfielder made 416 appearances for PSG, winning nine Ligue 1 titles and six French Cups, but failed to help the club to a maiden Champions League triumph.

Nice dampened the party atmosphere by taking a shock lead in the 21st minute as PSG played themselves into trouble at the back. Mbappe dropped deep inside his own half to take possession but immediately gave it away in a dangerous area and the ball bounced kindly for Moffi whose shot took a big deflection off Milan Skriniar and spun into the net. The visitors came close to doubling their advantage when Khephren Thuram's shot was well saved by PSG goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma. Mbappe made an impact at the right end of the pitch as he grabbed his sixth league goal in four appearances this season, slamming a powerful shot from Achraf Hakimi's cut-back through a poor attempted save from Nice 'keeper Marcin Bulka. — AFP

Fiji flair players face 'do-or-die' Australia clash

SAINT-ETIENNE: Fiji face a must-win clash with Australia in World Cup Pool C on Sunday in Saint Etienne, according to captain Waisea Nayacalevu. Fiji thrilled with their expansive game last week against Wales but came up agonizingly short in a 32-26 defeat in Bordeaux, meaning they cannot afford to lose again against the Wallabies, who started their campaign with a 35-15 success against Georgia. "It's a do-or-die game for us, so that's our mentality going into this week," said Nayacalevu.

Another defeat would surely end Fiji's hopes of reaching the knockout stages. Fiji dominated statistically against Wales, with more than 60 percent possession and territorial advantage, and carrying for 655 meters compared to 396. Wales made more than 250 tackles in a stubborn rearguard action and held off a rousing finish from Fiji with two tries in the final eight minutes.

"We carried very well, we had a lot of possession but we turned over the ball quite a lot—I think 17 times and nine of them were in the actual contact," said Fiji's head coach Simon Raiwalui. "So we've worked on that, securing that ball and just taking our chances when we have them." That is something Australia are wary of. "They've got that Fijian flair, they've got world class players across the board and they love to throw the ball around anywhere on the field," said Wallaby fly-half Carter Gordon.

Australia have been working on getting numbers around the ball carrier, not just to bring him down but

Leicester fire promotion warning, crush Saints 4-1

LONDON: Leicester powered to the top of the Championship as Jamie Vardy scored after 21 seconds to inspire a 4-1 rout of promotion rivals Southampton on Friday. Vardy stunned Southampton as he opened the scoring at St Mary's with his first league goal this season inside the first minute. In a battle of two teams expected to slug it out for a quick return to the Premier League after both were relegated last term, Kasey McAteer doubled Leicester's lead before Sam Edozie got one back for Southampton. Wilfred Ndidi restored Leicester's two-goal advantage in first-half stop-



LOIRE: Fiji's centre Waisea Nayacalevu (center) warms up with his teammates during the captain's run training session at the Geoffroy Guichard Stadium, in Saint-Etienne on September 16, 2023. — AFP

page-time and Stephy Mavididi completed the demolition after the interval. With five wins from six league games, Leicester sit two points clear of second-placed Preston, who can reclaim top spot with a win against Plymouth on Saturday. It was another bitter blow for seventh-placed Southampton, who were beaten for a second successive game after their 5-0 thrashing at Sunderland. Former England striker Vardy set the tone in his first start since the opening day of the campaign, pouncing in trademark style to convert Mavididi's pass. In the 18th minute, Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall fed McAteer, who controlled and finished past Gavin Bazunu in style.

Che Adams threaded a through ball to Edozie, who calmly clipped in the second goal of his career in the 25th minute to give Southampton hope. But three minutes into stoppage time, Mavididi's vision picked out Ndidi, who prodded in his first league goal since January 2021. Southampton were booed off at half-

18-16 success in Sydney in 1954. They have met in three of the last four World Cup tournaments, with Australia running out winners every time. Australia may have started the second Eddie Jones era with five straight defeats before their win over Georgia in Paris, but Raiwalui has been impressed with the young squad put together by the veteran coach. "They've been playing very well, they've got a young dynamic team, very aggressive on the gain-line: their carries, their cleans, a lot of strike weapons across the field," said Raiwalui. — AFP

time and former Montpellier winger Mavididi compounded the hosts' misery with a clinical finish in the 67th minute. Kamaldeen Sulemana capped a wretched evening for Southampton when the winger was shown a straight red card for jumping in on James Justin deep into added time.

Elsewhere in the English second tier on Friday, Aaron Connolly's late header rescued Hull in their 1-1 draw against Coventry. With Hull short of ideas, Joel Latibeaudiere's first-half headed goal looked set to be the winner at the MKM Stadium. The Jamaica international put the gloss on a fine individual performance after 27 minutes to claim his first goal since joining last year's play-off finalists in the close-season. But Hull's late burst of pressure garnered a well-worked equalizer after 87 minutes. Tyler Morton lofted a cross into the penalty area and Republic of Ireland forward Connolly deftly guided the ball into the bottom corner with the back of his head. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	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
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

Lost

I, Sreejith V K, S/o Govindan Anandan, residing at Building No.26, Street-216, Mahboula, Kuwait, informing to the public that my B Tech (Civil Engineering Degree) semester examination mark lists from the University of Calicut as per the details given below have been irrevocably lost in Kuwait during travel and as such, I intend to apply for the duplicate mark list:

Reg. No. of Ist and IInd Semester (2065 May1985, 409 Oct1985, 217 Apr1986), IIIrd Semester (2061 Dec1985, 2084 Nov1986), IVth Semester (360 Apr1986, 6098 Sep1988, 27070 Nov1989, 8851 Nov1990), Vth Semester (3037 Nov1986, 5913 Nov1989, 5282 May1990), VIth Semester (1309 May1987, 6253 Oct1988, 1182 May1989), VIIth Semester (3428 Jan1988, 7463 Oct1988, 8585Apr1989, 326 Nov1989)

If anybody happens to get the originals, may kindly contact. Sreejith V K, M:+965 60021460

Brighton thump Manchester United 3-1 as crisis mounts

Liverpool top Premier League table; City beat West Ham; Spurs win



WOLVERHAMPTON: Liverpool's Scottish defender #26 Andrew Robertson (center) scores their second goal during the English Premier League football match between Wolverhampton Wanderers and Liverpool on September 16, 2023.

LONDON: Manchester United's crisis deepened on Saturday as Brighton's Danny Welbeck scored in a 3-1 win against his old club while Manchester City beat West Ham to stay perfect in the Premier League. Liverpool had a brief taste of life at the top, beating Wolves 3-1 in the early kick-off, while Tottenham scored two goals in stoppage time to beat Sheffield United. The season is spiraling out of control for Erik ten Hag's United, who started the campaign in buoyant mood after ending their trophy drought and finishing third in the league last season.

Some fans dreamed of a long-overdue title challenge but instead they find themselves trailing leaders City by nine points after a third chastening defeat in five matches. United started brightly at Old Trafford, desperate to put their nightmare start to the season behind them but former youth player Welbeck silenced the home fans in the 20th minute. A 53rd-minute goal by Pascal Gross gave United a mountain to climb and substitute Joao Pedro made it 3-0 before a consolation for Hannibal Mejbri.

Brighton's fourth straight league win against United lifted them to third in the table. Ten Hag, in his second season at Old Trafford, now has a huge job on his hands

to save United's season, besieged by problems on and off the pitch. Jadon Sancho has been exiled from first-team training after a public spat with the manager while fellow forward Antony has been given a leave of absence to address domestic abuse allegations, which he denies. Protests continue in the stands against unpopular owners the Glazer family, who appear to have put their attempt to sell the club on hold.

Champions Manchester City continue to churn out the wins, even though Pep Guardiola's men did not have it all their own way at the London Stadium, trailing to a James Ward-Prowse goal in the first half. Jeremy Doku equalized early in the second period and Bernardo Silva put City 2-1 before Erling Haaland's seventh goal of the season guaranteed a fifth win in five games. City's win lifts them to 15 points, two clear of Liverpool at the top of the table.

Earlier, Jurgen Klopp's men roused themselves after an anaemic first-half display against Wolves, recovering from a goal down following a first period that Wolves dominated. Cody Gakpo scored 10 minutes into the second period and Andy Robertson finished neatly in the 85th minute before an own goal from Hugo Bueno added gloss to the scoreline. It was the third time this season

that Liverpool have come from behind to win. Klopp said his team deserved to win the game after their powerful second-half performance but stressed that they could not afford to keep falling behind.

"Turning games around is helpful in a season but we cannot rely on it, we cannot," he told the BBC. "We have to play better in the first half of games generally. We are not stable yet, that is not possible. Too many things are new." Sheffield United looked to be on track for their first win of the season at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium. But Spurs grabbed an equalizer in the 98th minute when Richarlison headed home Ivan Perisic's corner to set up a grandstand finish, with 12 minutes of additional time at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium and Dejan Kulusevski scored the winner.

Aston Villa scored three late goals to beat Crystal Palace 3-1. The London side led 1-0 courtesy of Odsonne Edouard's first-half goal but Jhon Duran equalized in the 87th minute. Douglas Luiz scored a penalty deep into stoppage time to put Villa in front and Leon Bailey made it 3-1. Fulham's Carlos Vinicius condemned Premier League new boys Luton to a fourth consecutive defeat. Struggling Newcastle host Brentford in the evening kick-off. — AFP



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Portuguese midfielder #08 Bruno Fernandes (left) vies with Brighton's Spanish striker #31 Ansu Fati (center) during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Brighton on September 16, 2023. — AFP photos

Hummels' double inspires Dortmund

BERLIN: Mats Hummels scored goals in each half as Borussia Dortmund came back late to win 4-2 away at Freiburg on Saturday. Hummels put Dortmund in front early but the side again suffered a collective blackout, allowing Freiburg to take the lead in first-half injury time with two quick goals. Donyell Malen gave far too much space to Freiburg's free-kick specialist Vincenzo Grifo, who threaded a ball into the box, allowing Lucas Hoeler to head the home side level.

Just four minutes later, the Dortmund defense again lost track of a free kick, Nicolas Hoeler heading in to give his side the lead. Malen equalized midway through the second half thanks to a clever assist from Germany striker Niclas Füllkrug. Dortmund looked set to drop points for the third straight game before Freiburg goal-scorer Hoeler saw red with eight minutes remaining, giving the visitors a one-man advantage which they duly used.

Hummels scored again, trickling the ball into goal with two minutes remaining, before Marco Reus added a fourth to seal the

win, giving the side a timely boost ahead of Tuesday's trip to Paris Saint-Germain. Hummels' goals meant the 2014 World Cup winner has now scored in 16 consecutive Bundesliga seasons.

Elsewhere, RB Leipzig continued their impressive start to the season, thumping a hapless Augsburg 3-0 at home. Xavi Simons opened the scoring six minutes in and Lois Openda doubled up minutes later, giving the home side a 2-0 lead after 11 minutes, before David Raum swept in a third, his first goal in Leipzig colors. Starting the season with a 3-0 Supercup win over Bayern Munich, Leipzig have scored 16 goals in their opening five matches this season.

Union Berlin suffered a setback ahead of Wednesday's trip to face Real Madrid in their debut Champions League campaign, losing 2-1 at Wolfsburg. Wolfsburg scored early through Jonas Wind, his fifth goal in four matches this season. Union's Robin Gosens pulled one back but Joakim Maehle scored almost immediately to restore the home side's lead. Union have now lost two league games in a row for the first time since February 2022.

Stuttgart's Serhou Guirassy was on target again, scoring a second-half hat-trick to take his side to a 3-1 win at Mainz, with Leandro Barreiro getting on the board for the

home side. Guirassy now has seven goals in four league games this season. Goals from Andrej Kramaric, Florian Grillitsch and Maximilian Beier took Hoffenheim to a 3-1 win at Cologne, Davie Selke pulling one back for the struggling home side, who are winless in four matches this season.

Bayern 2 Leverkusen 2

Meanwhile, Harry Kane's fourth goal in four Bundesliga games was not enough as Bayern Munich were held to a 2-2 home draw by Bayer Leverkusen on Friday, with Exequiel Palacios netting a dramatic injury-time penalty. Kane opened the scoring just seven minutes in, heading home from close range, but Leverkusen hit back shortly afterwards through Alex Grimaldo's superb free-kick.

Germany midfielder Leon Goretzka looked to have secured Bayern the three points when he scored with four minutes remaining, but a VAR review in injury time showed a foul by Alphonso Davies, bringing Palacios to the spot. The Argentinean converted to ensure his side remained unbeaten this season. A frustrated Bayern captain Thomas Mueller approached the referees to complain after the match over "two interesting decisions before the two goals we conceded". — AFP

Iraqi weightlifter criticized for competing with Zionist

BAGHDAD: Iraq's Olympic Committee has criticized an Iraqi weightlifter for taking part at the world championships alongside a competitor from Zionist entity, but the Iraqi weightlifting federation defended its athlete. Iraq, like Iran and some other Middle East states, refuse to recognize Zionist entity and forbid any sporting contact between Iraqi and Zionist athletes. The row concerns Haider Hussein Ali and Zionist lifter Artur Murgurdumov, competing in the 102kg category of the championships in Saudi Arabia.

"The Iraqi weightlifting federation should be conscious of the political context and the positions taken by the government and by the people," the Iraqi Olympic Committee's president Raad Hamoudi told AFP on Friday. Responding to the criticism, Iraq's weightlifting federation stressed its "rejection of all normalization with the Zionist state", but it drew a distinction between weightlifting and other sports in which athletes come into direct contact.

"The competitions in which Haider Hussein Ali is taking part include 11 weightlifters, two of whom are Irani-

ans," the federation's assistant director Saleh Mohamed Kadhim noted. "How can we withdraw from competitions where there is no direct contact? By way of example, he asked: "When the International Olympic Committee holds its General Assembly at which Zionist entity is represented should the president of the Iraqi Olympic Committee withdraw?" At the world championships which run until Sunday and which serve as qualifiers for the 2024 Paris Olympics, Iraq has been represented by six athletes, with one winning a gold medal.

For many Middle East countries, participating in events with Zionist competitors causes a major headache and stirs up debate. Last month an Iranian weightlifter was suspended by the Iranian authorities after shaking hands with Zionist rival at a competition in Poland. While a number of Arab countries have normalized relations with Zionist entity in recent years, Saudi Arabia is not one of them. Yet this month a Zionist delegation participated in a UNESCO meeting in Riyadh, the first public visit by representatives of Zionist entity to the Gulf kingdom. — AFP