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Coed row brews as schools reopen

Education minister tours schools • Roads clear as 300 new traffic bikes deployed



KUWAIT: Pupils gather in the courtyard before heading to their classrooms on the first day of school on Sept 17, 2023. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KUWAIT: Interior Ministry Undersecretary Maj Gen Anwar Al-Barjes and senior security officials inspect the new motorcycles that were put into service on Sept 17, 2023. — KUNA

KUWAIT: First-grade elementary public school students began their academic year on Sunday, with police deployed all across Kuwait to ensure smooth flow of traffic. The schools welcomed the students in a festive atmosphere to help them overcome any fears or inhibitions. All other students of public and private Arabic schools

head back to school on Monday. Meanwhile, students of the law college at Kuwait University are planning to stage a protest against a ban on mixed classes, as university officials said the measure has not disrupted a smooth start of the scholastic year. Several students from the college said

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Kuwaiti tourist attacked in Turkey

KUWAIT: Several MPs on Sunday called on the foreign ministry to take action after a Kuwaiti tourist was beaten by a Turk in the city of Trabzon. Turkish authorities said the assailant was arrested and that the condition of the Kuwaiti tourist is stable. Kuwait Embassy officials rushed to the city to follow up the case of the tourist. Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah called the Kuwaiti citizen to check on his wellbeing. Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait Tuba Nur Sonmez also called the injured citizen and reassured him about his health condition.

Kuwait leads AIDS fight

KUWAIT: According to a report from the United Nations Joint Program on HIV/AIDS, Kuwait has achieved the highest success rates in the Arab world and has outperformed many countries globally in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Kuwait has been recognized for its exceptional efforts and success in combating HIV/AIDS, ranking highest in the Arab world and surpassing many global counterparts in key indicators such as early diagnosis, treatment provision and viral suppression.

Panel approves key laws

KUWAIT: The National Assembly's legal and legislative committee approved on Sunday a number of draft laws calling for the election of the Assembly speaker and deputy to be in the open and not in secret, as has been the case. The panel also approved another draft law allowing the Assembly to hold sessions without the attendance of ministers. Under the current law, the presence of at least one minister is essential to hold Assembly sessions.

PM arrives in New York for UNGA session

NEW YORK: Representative of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah, arrived in New York on Saturday to lead Kuwait's delegation to the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly. He was welcomed by Kuwait's Ambassador to the United States Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah and Permanent Delegate to the UN Tarq Mohammad Al-Banai, as well as the diplomatic staff

of the embassy in Washington and the mission in New York.

In press remarks upon his arrival, HH the Prime Minister spoke highly of the special partnership and close relationship between Kuwait on one hand and the United Nations and its affiliate agencies on the other. "The growing relations with the UN help realize the noble goals of the global organization and contribute to its efforts in maintaining world peace and security," he said.

The Kuwaiti government is committed to UN efforts to promote development, protect human rights, promote amity and peace, mediate in regional and international disputes and provide assistance to disaster-hit countries, HH the Prime Minister added. — KUNA



NEW YORK: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah is welcomed by Kuwaiti Ambassador to the US Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah as he arrives to attend the United Nations General Assembly session on Sept 16, 2023. — KUNA

Tell al-Sultan added to world heritage list

JERICHO: The United Nations' cultural organization inscribed the prehistoric site of Tell al-Sultan, near the Palestinian city of Jericho in the occupied West Bank, on its World Heritage List Sunday. Tell al-Sultan, which predates Egypt's pyramids, is an oval-shaped tell, or mound, located in the Jordan Valley that contains the prehistoric deposits of

human activity. The UNESCO decision, which was posted by the organization on X, formerly Twitter, was taken at its 45th world heritage committee meeting held in Riyadh. "The property proposed for nomination is the prehistoric archaeological site of Tell al-Sultan, located outside the antique site of Jericho," UNESCO's assistant director general, Ernesto Ottone, said at the session.

The site was inscribed following a three-year candidacy "during which no state party raised any objections", said a diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity as he was not authorized to speak to the media. The Zionist entity quit the UN organization in 2019 over accusations it fosters an anti-Zionist bias, but sent a delegation to this year's meeting in Saudi

Arabia. The Palestinian Authority, acknowledged by the United Nations as a non-member observer state, welcomed the listing of Tell al-Sultan site. Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas said he considered the decision to inscribe Tell al-Sultan "a matter of great importance and evidence of the authenticity and history of the Palestinian people". He vowed that the Palestinian authorities would "continue to preserve this unique site for all humanity", according to a statement from his office.

UNESCO's listing shows that the Tell al-Sultan site is "an integral part of the diverse Palestinian heritage of exceptional human value", Palestinian tourism minister Rula Maayah, who was attending

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Saudi confronts heavy toll of desalination

JUBAIL, Saudi Arabia: Solar panels soak up blinding noontime rays that help power a water desalination facility in eastern Saudi Arabia, a step towards making the notoriously emissions-heavy process less environmentally taxing. The Jazlah plant in Jubail city applies the latest technological advances in a country that first turned to desalination more

than a century ago, when Ottoman-era administrators enlisted filtration machines for hajj pilgrims menaced by drought and cholera.

Lacking lakes, rivers and regular rainfall, Saudi Arabia today relies instead on dozens of facilities that transform water from the Gulf and Red Sea into something potable, supplying cities and towns that otherwise would not survive. But the kingdom's growing desalination needs — fueled by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's dreams of presiding over a global business and tourism

Continued on Page 6



RAS AL-KHAIR, Saudi Arabia: Picture taken on March 30, 2023 shows the Ras al-Khair water desalination plant along the Gulf coast. — AFP



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Cigarettes ignite anger of the law

‘Smoking within court premises dishonors the sanctity of the place’



By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: In Kuwait, a lack of adherence to the law has become common among legal professionals who are supposed to uphold the law. This irony has significant negative consequences, especially since legal professionals serve as a unique example of validating the law, ensuring professionalism and public safety based on the legal system. Due to the nature of legal professionals' work, the court is seen as a respectful institution. Thus, smoking within court premises dishonors the sanctity of the place. By smoking in undesignated areas, legal professionals may unintentionally undermine the public's trust in the legitimacy of the judicial system. Multiple lawyers expressed their objection and dissatisfaction with this matter to Kuwait Times, emphasizing on the necessity of enforcing the law.

Smoking inside the courts undermines the dignity of the law

Secretary of Kuwait Environment Protection Society, lawyer Shoug Shabkoun, told Kuwait Times the law serves public interest, individuals and society, and prevails over personal interests. Therefore, certain acts are considered crimes and have deterrent penalties to prevent the spread of negative phenomena in society. Cigarettes, in fact, ignite the anger of the law. Smoking in enclosed and semi-enclosed public places has become a negative and widespread phenomenon. Some smokers disregard the health of individuals and society, causing serious harm to both individuals and the environment.

Recently, this phenomenon has been noticed in courts, where the law should be respected more than anywhere else. The court represents the dignity of the law and issues judgments against the violators of that law. Courts are considered closed spaces where smoking is prohibited, as stated in article 56 of environmental protection law no. 42 of 2014, amended by law no. 99 of 2015. It states that smoking is strictly prohibited in public transportation and enclosed and semi-enclosed public places, except in designated areas according to the regulations determined by the executive regulations of this law.

Article 138 of the same law addresses the punishment for smoking. The smoker is subject to a fine of not less than KD 50 and not exceeding KD 100. Furthermore,

the violator is punished by the police (the palace police). I saw a policeman was also smoking inside the office. I asked him to put out the cigarette as well. He did as I asked, then asked me about the problem. I explained that I wanted the environmental police to come and issue a citation.

“During that time, the emergency line was with me on the call, so the officer asked me to give him my mobile phone and he spoke to the operations and told them that he is a policeman from the palace police and that the matter is under their control and attention, so there is no need for intervention, and ended the call. He then took me to the office of the officer in charge of the courthouse. I explained to him as well that it is necessary to issue a citation to those who violate the law and smoke in closed places where smoking is prohibited, especially since I am one of the individuals affected by this matter.

“That day, I was very busy and couldn't give this issue much time because I had work to complete. But I did what I could, as I made an oral complaint to the security and safety supervisor at the courthouse, and he told me that they have requested the presence of an environmental police office at our location because this is a problem that bothers many individuals. The supervisor did not disregard it, and in the end, I hope there will be a serious stance on this issue.”

Furthermore, Awadhi highlighted the necessity of taking the law and its penalties more seriously, where the violator is



Aisha Al-Awadhi



Laalea Al-Khudairi



Shoug Shabkoun

long as their actions do not harm others. When other individuals are negatively affected by those actions, this freedom will be limited according to social responsibility that secures everyone's benefit. This point was highlighted by international lawyer Bedour Al-Rasheed, who agreed with the abovementioned attorneys. “It is the responsibility of every person to exercise their personal freedom within limits that do not exceed or harm the rights and freedoms of others.

The phenomenon of smoking has spread greatly recently, despite the existence of the general environmental authority law's article 3, which prohibits smoking at government and private facilities. Unfortunately, we see that the law is not enforced and smoking has increased in courts, causing harm to us (non-smoking lawyers) in terms of health and environment, as well as presenting an uncivilized sight of smoking by some colleagues, employees and visitors,” she said.

“Smoking poses a danger to everyone, especially pregnant women, the elderly and children. Those who choose to smoke bear the responsibility for its harms, but what fault does someone have in choosing to live a healthy life and preserve the environment?”

Rasheed further emphasized that smoking in the courtroom affects peoples' health, the environment, and the overall reputation and development of the country. “It should be noted that courts are always crowded with people of all nationalities and social classes, which makes failure to abide by laws within the court very crucial,” she said.

Haya Al-Mutairi, who is also a lawyer, added: “As lawyers, we often find ourselves in courtrooms and prosecution offices on a daily basis, where we encounter visitors from various backgrounds who violate the regulations that are set to organize people's presence inside these enclosed spaces. Also, we sometimes come across violators in the hallways. What makes the matter worse is when a smoking legal professional joins us during the hours of investigation with our clients. These individuals are unaware that some of us suffer from asthma, allergies or respiratory diseases, which can lead to complications or adversely affect those who have quit smoking. Some courts have resorted to employing a police officer within the court to immediately penalize anyone who exhibits such behavior outside the designated smoking areas. This is a commendable practice that we hope will continue and expand.”

Attorney Laalea Al-Khudairi emphasized on this matter: “According to statistics from the World Health Organization, exposure of non-smokers to smoke leads to 600,000 premature deaths annually,



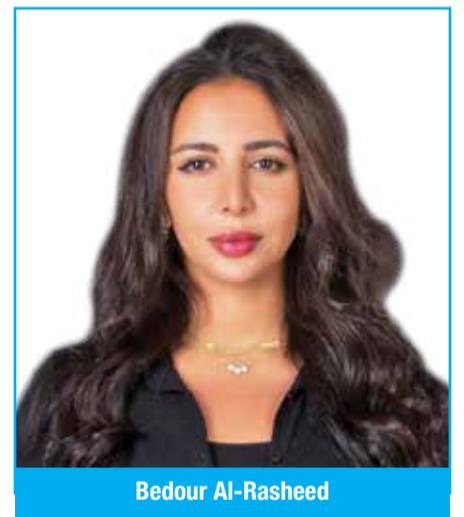
Haya Al-Mutairi



Hmoud Al-Failakawi



Athra'a Al-Rafaie



Bedour Al-Rasheed

with women accounting for 64 percent of these deaths.”

Enforcing the law

Attorney and consultant on the women, family and children committee of the Kuwaiti National Assembly Athra'a Al-Rafaie expressed her objection to smoking inside the court, and further clarified about the laws in this regard, as she said everyone is aware of the damages caused by smoking in enclosed spaces and the resulting health hazards for both smokers and non-smokers. Therefore, legislators paid attention and set environmental protection law no. 42 of 2014, which prohibits smoking in enclosed spaces. They also banned advertising and promotion of smoking and imposed stricter penalties.

Thus, we find legal provisions and executive regulations prohibit smoking in public places and public transportation, and impose penalties of not less than KD 50,000 and not exceeding KD 200,000 for violating the ban on advertising and promoting cigarettes and the ban on smoking in enclosed public places and semi-enclosed places, as well as public transportation, is not less than KD 50 and not exceeding KD 100. The responsibility for the violation also extends to the manager responsible of the establishment, who will face a fine of not less than KD 1,000 and not exceeding KD 5,000.

The law also granted the environmental police the authority to issue penalties to those who commit such violations. However, their absence from court buildings has led some individuals to commit these violations without the slightest respect for those around them. “Therefore, we demand that the authorities enforce stricter measures and send environmental police officers to prevent smoking in court buildings due to the environmental and health hazards it causes for those around them,” Rafaie said.



the law has given the environmental police the authority to issue citations against violators of this law. Despite the existence of a law that criminalizes smoking, some smokers show a lack of social responsibility and do not care about the health of others.

Despite the presence of many designated smoking areas and warning signs indicating the illegality of the act, some individuals refrain from smoking in designated areas and smoke in courtrooms, staircases and corridors without considering the consequences of their selfish actions. They put the health and safety of others at risk, leading to respiratory diseases and exposing them to secondhand smoke, which can cause heart diseases and cancers.

Shabkoun added that for every problem, there is a solution. The solution lies in increasing awareness of the negative effects of this phenomenon and installing surveillance cameras in the areas where smoking is banned by the law to monitor violations and assist judicial police officers,

punished for their unlawful actions. This would have a significant positive impact. She also suggested that the person responsible for this matter should be a non-smoker, as they may be more understanding and responsive to non-smoking people's complaints.

Attorney Hmoud Al-Failakawi also mentioned his suffering and dissatisfaction over people smoking in non-designated areas, especially in courts, which are considered a good example for society. He also expressed his rejection of some environmental policemen who hesitate to enforce violations against smokers in non-designated areas, perhaps out of fear of certain positions or for other reasons. Failakawi then emphasized that everyone must adhere to the law regardless of their position, and it is the responsibility of the police officers to carry out their duties as the law guarantees them the right to confront violators.

Individuals' freedoms and social responsibility

People have the right to enjoy their freedom by doing what they please as



Real-life incident: Disregarding the rules

Aisha Al-Awadhi, a lawyer, shared with Kuwait Times an incident that happened at Kuwait's Palace of Justice: “On my way down the stairs, I came across an employee who has placed a chair for himself to sit and smoke in the hallway. While he was doing so, I passed by and I was bothered by the smell of smoke, so I asked him to put out the cigarette to avoid harming people passing through the hallway. But the smoker replied he will not put out the cigarette and asked me what I would do about it, stating he will not quit smoking and will do whatever he wants. I replied to him that smoking is prohibited by law and if he is not aware of that, I can call the environmental police to prove it.

“At that point, he replied he will come with me to the police station himself. We went together to the police station and while walking there, I called 112 (the emergency line). When I entered the police of-



Local

US-Kuwait Strategic Dialogue to boost relations, address challenges

Embassy prepares for 'Discover America' week

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Chargé d'Affaires of the US Embassy in Kuwait James Holtsnider revealed that his country is excited to welcome the Kuwaiti delegation to attend the United Nations General Assembly in New York this month, discussing an upcoming official meeting with Kuwait on the sidelines of the UN Assembly. Commenting on the US-Kuwait Strategic Dialogue during a roundtable with local media, he said the regular meetings between the two countries represent a significant opportunity to strengthen diplomatic connections, engage in discussions spanning various topics and work together towards common goals. These meetings also provide a platform for addressing regional and global challenges while fostering robust international relations and tackling mutual concerns.

"We are still working on our meeting schedule and hope to hold it before the end of this year. This is an important part of our bilateral relationship. The topics will cover issues in politics, defense, economics and trade and culture. We are always discussing how we can do more for the students, and we hope to further discuss visa issues," Holtsnider said.

Regarding the ruling concern over Khor Abdullah between Iraq and Kuwait, Holtsnider affirmed that the US is in close contact with Iraqi and Kuwaiti partners and encouraged all parties to come to the table and negotiate to resolve outstanding issues of concern. He emphasized the need to conduct diplomatic conversations through appropriate channels.

On the arrival of the new ambassador to Kuwait, he noted that the confirmation process is still ongoing, and they are looking forward to welcoming her to enhance the relationship with Kuwait. He praised Kuwait's important multilateral role as it is going to the UN General Assembly, affirming that the US will continue to work with Kuwaiti partners on issues around the world.

Responding to a question about the US stance toward Saudi Arabia restoring ties with Iran, he said: "President Joe Biden was very clear that the US government welcomes anything that helps and supports the growth or development of the people in the Middle East. We welcome the step Saudi Arabia has taken, but I think we also remain very clear about Iran's destabilizing behavior and Iran's long tradition of causing problems in maritime security. We contin-

ue to stress that they need to stop their destabilizing activities in the Gulf."

About the UN General Assembly's priority topics, Holtsnider commented: "We have partnered with Kuwait on many issues around the world, whether mediating issues in Yemen, dealing with humanitarian and terrorism issues in Syria, or responding to the crisis in Africa and around the world. I think we will discuss Morocco and the floods in Libya. We have seen the Kuwaiti Red Crescent Society's great appeal for that, and we have been partnering and working with Kuwait on that matter as well."

He revealed that the United States will engage in discussions concerning the G7 and G20, but will also explore avenues for collaboration with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) on similar issues. Furthermore, Kuwait can anticipate a more comprehensive unveiling of details about the global infrastructure initiative, which will be linked to the economic corridors in India, the Middle East and Europe. The discussion will also encompass topics related to food security and artificial intelligence.

Notably, there are ongoing dialogues about establishing voluntary ethical standards and regulations for AI in the future, and several leading American AI companies have convened to contribute to this discourse. Paul Dean, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Office of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance (AVC), has engaged in conversations with Kuwait and other Gulf nations in the region on that topic. The GCC is an exceptionally dynamic and promising group, and the United States remains committed to maintaining its focus on the region.

About China's role in the region, he said that President Biden's goal is not to contain and confront China but to have a positive agenda within the international system and rules with China. "The US and the international community are focused on a free, open and stable environment where we have a positive agenda. We want to focus on areas to work together. Places where we can succeed, that is why we are talking about infrastructure, health, climate and containing illegal drugs," Holtsnider explained.

Commenting on GCC and Brexit, Holtsnider said that it shouldn't come as a surprise that the Middle East is expected to actively participate, adding that the GCC is globally active and dynamic, so



KUWAIT: US Chargé d'Affaires James Holtsnider addresses journalists during a roundtable meeting with the local media.

their involvement is natural. "Any organization we consider should have a constructive and productive role on the global stage. In this regard, Brexit could potentially be a useful and positive development for the G20," he said.

Meanwhile, he pointed out that the US Embassy is frequently discussing human trafficking with Kuwaiti partners, noting that the two countries aim to strengthen their cooperation in preventing human trafficking and providing assistance to victims. "On the military level, we have the fourth largest military presence in Kuwait. We often engage in bilateral and multilateral exercises where we work with Kuwaiti and other Gulf partners as well. We continue to remain focused on integrating the defense system around the region to enhance the security of our partners, as well as de-escalating tensions in the region at the same time. We can deter threats from any country in the region and

are keen to ensure our Gulf partners' capability to respond to any," Holtsnider affirmed.

Regarding studying in the US, Holtsnider said the US Embassy is keen to ease the process of obtaining visas for students. "We are one of the fastest countries in the world to process student visas, with most visas ready in a few days, and our team is always ready to help. Kuwait has terrific young people, and we want to offer them great universities and terrific education opportunities. The United States has the best education," he said.

Meanwhile, Holtsnider announced preparations for 'Discover America' week in Kuwait. "It is an important week for the US Embassy to showcase the great aspects of the relationship, whether in music, business, culture or food. We are still working to confirm the details, but it may start in the third week of October and run for more than a week," he revealed.

Do ethical controls contradict the concept of freedom?

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Over the past decade, there has been a global shift towards supporting the cause of freedom, ranging from basic rights to the minutiae of people's lives. This includes freedom of speech, lifestyle choices and particularly the freedom of women, which continues to be a contentious issue in some communities. This ongoing debate about freedom has become a critical issue, especially in conservative communities, where the importance of maintaining ethical boundaries alongside the practice of freedom is emphasized. This has raised questions about whether these ethical boundaries contradict the very essence of freedom.

Kuwait Times conducted a survey to gauge public opinion on whether it is appropriate to regulate liberated behaviors within the framework of ethical controls and whether these controls are at odds with the concept of freedom. Additionally, the survey sought to identify recent developments in key freedom-related issues.

Farah Ali, an expatriate, believes that there is confusion between the concept of freedom and the ethical and social norms that individuals must adhere to, based on the society they live in. She emphasized that the openness of today's world and easy access to information have led many young people to adopt morals from media and open societies while still being influenced by their parents' guidance. According to Farah, parental guidance plays a crucial role in distinguishing between unrestricted freedom and freedom within ethical boundaries. She lamented that many adults view ethical control over their lifestyle as regressive thinking.

Citizen Omar A, who leans towards a progressive and open lifestyle, sees ethical controls as a form of mental manipulation. He believes that if any rules are to be followed, they should be self-imposed rather than enforced by the community. He acknowledges that ethical controls aligned with liberated behavior may be acceptable but argues that in conservative societies that reject the very idea of



freedom, these controls become a way to indirectly pressure individuals who choose to live differently.

Mona Al-Ajmi, who hails from a conservative tribe, asserts that ethical and social norms are what distinguish one community from another. She stresses that abandoning these controls would have different consequences for conservative communities compared to liberated ones and could lead to social chaos, especially when dealing with sensitive issues.

Expat Alex Mohammad, drawing from his experience of living abroad, notes that

regional communities have made significant progress in embracing freedom. However, he also highlights the importance of having ethical and social controls that align with the practice of a liberated life. According to him, the liberated life imposed abroad led to a loss of the freedom to choose a balanced lifestyle.

In summary, people generally agree that there is a growing concern about the rapid changes in unrestricted freedom, particularly among younger generations, who are increasingly exploring gender-related religious choices.

Kuwait eyes digital transformation and industrial revolution

KUWAIT: Ushering rapid digital transformation, bolstering cybersecurity, and implementing the fourth industrial revolution are integral goals within Kuwait's Vision 2035, said the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (SCPD) on Sunday. In an interview with Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) prior to the UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York on September 18-19, Secretary General of SCPD Dr. Khaled Mahdi said that implementing digital transformation would smooth the path for Kuwait to be part of the fourth industrial revolution.

He added that government services in Kuwait would make huge leaps through digital transformation, noting that sustainable development in all aspects would boost the capital of human resources and help future generations excel. There would be no development without investing in future generations, and this matter is within Kuwait's 2035 Vision, as pointed out by Mahdi. Sustainable development is not a recent development; Kuwait has been working on it since establishing the Future Generations Fund in the era of the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in 1979, a step aimed at ensuring the prosperity of future generations, added the official.

In regards to the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Dr. Mahdi affirmed that Kuwait was eager to contribute to the 17-point plan ranging from eradicating poverty worldwide to providing proper health care and more. Kuwait's 2035 Vision is in line with the SDGs, said Mahdi, revealing that Kuwait had taken considerable strides into realizing its own development goals through the involvement of the SCPD.

In regards to digital transformation and the fourth industrial revolution, which is integral to the Kuwait Vision 2035, Dr. Mahdi stressed that Kuwait had made an important jump in transforming paper government transactions into digital. He added that the "Sahel" and "Hawiyati" government applications transformed how government transactions were carried out; however, this

was just the beginning of seeking better digital transformation. Mahdi went on to say that the infrastructure for digital transformation was laid down in Kuwait through the use of fiber optic cables and communication towers throughout the country to ensure smooth phone services and internet access.

Cybersecurity was among the state's top priorities, said Mahdi, who pointed out that the recent agreement with Google Cloud would boost security and help citizens and residents better protect their digital information and assets. Digital transformation had been implemented in the health sector in Kuwait via using "robot surgeons" in surgery, indicated the official, adding that such transformation was also used in environmental sustainability via constructing various eco-friendly buildings and structures in Kuwait.

He went on to say that technology was used to improve regulations for residency in Kuwait and, more importantly, to boost the country's economy. He indicated that media played a crucial role in Kuwait's Vision 2035, lauding on this occasion the Ministry of Information and Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) for their contributions to the state's development vision. One of the major goals to achieve digital transformation was in the economy, where Kuwait was eager to collaborate with foreign investors to achieve mutual goals, the SCPD chief said.

For example, Kuwait had extended its hand in cooperation with China by signing in 2018 an agreement to develop the northern region of the country as part of the Harir "Silk" project, which includes the Mubarak seaport, new residential areas, industrial cities, and more. In 2009, Kuwait was also among the first countries in the Middle East to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with China, as the latter country was embarking on its Belt and Road initiative of 2013. The upcoming 2030 Sustainable Development Summit in New York will look into what has been achieved in regards to the plan launched in 2015. — KUNA



Dr Khaled Mahdi

KUFPEC, Equinor to develop Eirin natural gas field in Norway

KUWAIT: The Norwegian Ministry of Petroleum and Energy (MPE) has awarded Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPEC) a new exploration license via its Norwegian subsidiary KUFPEC Norway AS to develop Eirin fields in Norway. A statement by KUFPEC said that the license is in cooperation with an international energy company (Equinor) to develop the Eirin field, which was discovered in 1978, as a subsea facility tied to the Gina Krog platform in the North Sea.

Recoverable reserves in the field are estimated at 27.6 million barrels of oil equivalent, most of which is gas, the statement added. Eirin Field is a subsea facility tied to the Gina Krog platform in the North Sea, and with partial electrification of Sleipner, production from Eirin will have low emissions, the statement said. KUFPEC CEO Mohammad Salem Al-Haimer stated that working on this project aims at developing KUFPEC's status in the fields of development and operation and maintaining its status in the market to enhance its capital returns.

Extending Gina Krog's productive life also gives the opportunity to mature additional new reserves in the area with good profitability and low CO2 emissions from production, he added. Condensate from the Eirin gas will be exported to Sleipner A via a planned oil pipeline from Gina Krog to Sleipner A. Rich gas will be transported by pipeline to the Sleipner A facility

Kuwait FM and senior US official discuss ties, Iraq

NEW YORK: Kuwait Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Sunday met with US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Barbara Leaf on the sidelines of the 78th United Nations General Assembly meetings. During the meeting, the two sides touched on the bilateral ties and cooperation between Kuwait and the US, as well as discussing the recent ruling by the Iraqi Federal Supreme Court, which rescinded the agreement on maritime navigation at Khor Abdullah. — KUNA



for further processing, Al-Haimer added.

The license partners are Equinor (78.2%) and KUFPEC Norway (21.8%), with production expected as early as 2025 with a total investment cost of USD 108.4. KUFPEC is an international upstream company engaged in the exploration, development, and production of crude oil and natural gas outside the State of Kuwait and is a wholly owned subsidiary of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation. — KUNA



KUFPEC CEO Mohammad Al-Haimer



Gina Krog offshore platform

21.7m transactions done on Sahel app

KUWAIT: More than 21.7 million transactions by 1.4 million users have been made through the government's Sahel smartphone app since its launch two years ago, Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of Communications Fahad Al-Shula said on Sunday. The app gives users access to 334 state services offered by 34 state departments, which can be completed online.



Fahad Al-Shula

Speaker receives UAE envoy, UNHCR reps



KUWAIT: Kuwait National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun on Sunday received the UAE Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Matar Hamed Al-Niyadi. The speaker also received the UNHCR Representatives in Kuwait Nisreen Rubaian, External Relations Officer Loulwah Al-Turkait and Protection Officer Amal Al-Beedh. — KUNA

Photo of the day



Pupils gather in the courtyard before heading to their classrooms on the first day of school on September 17, 2023. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



A parent takes a picture of her child on the first day of school.



Education Minister Dr Adel Al-Mane tours a school. — KUNA



Children attend a class on the first day of school.

China opens cultural center in Kuwait to symbolize extraordinary relations

Center will contribute to building a Chinese-Arabic community



Library with hundreds of books.



Chinese tea

KUWAIT: The Chinese Embassy in Kuwait on Sunday opened a cultural center that includes several pavilions that provide cultural and academic services for the Kuwaiti and Chinese communities. Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei said that this center is a new symbol of the extraordinary relations between Kuwait and China, especially on the cultural and civil levels, which will also bring both peoples closer in spite of the vast difference in traditions and language.

The Ambassador noted that this center will contribute to building a Chinese-Arabic community, similar to a station for academic exchange, and cultural resources that will allow the Kuwaiti people to understand the multiple Chinese cultures at the literary, artistic, and sports levels. On his part, Assistant Secretary General for the Art Sector in the National Committee for Culture, Art, and Letters, Musaed Al-Zamel, said that this center is the first of its kind in the GCC.

He said that Kuwaiti people have always loved traveling and exploring, which made Kuwait an important commercial and cultural station in the area used for exchanging goods and culture with the Asian continent. He pointed out that the center will include a number of Kuwaiti-Chinese activities and agreements to translate Chinese books into Arabic and vice versa.



Chinese Ambassador Zhang Jianwei



Musaed Al-Zamel

ities and agreements to translate Chinese books into Arabic and vice versa.

It is also planned that the Chinese city of Hong Kong will host a Kuwaiti cultural week in November in cooperation with the Kuwaiti embassy in China. The opening of the cultural event coincides with the upcoming visit of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the friendly Republic of China later this month. — KUNA



Students attend a class at the center.



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Children traumatized by Morocco 'nightmare' quake

EU chief vows new 'European answer' to illegal migration

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GADAREF: Sudanese queue outside a passport office on Sept 3, 2023. — AFP photos



KHARTOUM: This picture taken on Sept 17, 2023 shows a raging fire at the Greater Nile Petroleum Oil Company Tower in Khartoum.

Battle rages in Central Khartoum

Desperate Sudanese face endless wait for passports so they can flee

WAD MADANI: Flames gripped the Sudanese capital Sunday and paramilitary forces attacked the army headquarters for the second day in a row, witnesses reported, as fighting raged into its sixth month. "Clashes are now happening around the army headquarters with various types of weapons," witnesses told AFP Sunday from Khartoum, while others reported fighting in the city of El-Obeid, 350 kilometers (about 220 miles) south.

Battles between the regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces intensified Saturday, resulting in several key buildings in central Khartoum being set alight. In social media posts verified by AFP, users shared footage of flames devouring landmarks of the Khartoum skyline, including the Greater Nile Petroleum Oil Company Tower — a conical building with glass facades that had become an emblem of the city.

Users mourned Khartoum, a shell of its former self, in posts that showed buildings — their windows blown out and their walls charred or pockmarked with bullets — continuing to smolder. Since war erupted on April 15 between army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy, RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, nearly 7,500 people have been killed, according to a conservative estimate from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project. It has displaced more than five million people, including 2.8 million who have fled the relentless air strikes, artillery fire and street battles in Khartoum's densely-populated neighborhoods.

The millions that remain in the city woke up Sunday to find clouds of smoke obscuring the skyline, as the sound of bombs and gunfire burst through the capital. "We can hear huge bangs," witnesses told AFP Sunday from the Mayo district of south-

ern Khartoum, where the army targeted RSF bases with artillery fire. At least 51 people were killed last week in air strikes on a market in Mayo, according to the United Nations, in one of the deadliest single attacks of the war.

The worst of the violence has been concentrated in Khartoum and the western region of Darfur, where ethnically-motivated attacks by the RSF and allied militias have triggered renewed investigations by the International Criminal Court into possible war crimes. There has also been fighting in the southern Kordofan region, where witnesses again reported on Sunday artillery fire exchanged between the army and the RSF in the city of El-Obeid.

'Anywhere but here'

In Port Sudan, hundreds lined up at dawn to try and get their passports renewed or issued. Passport offices had shuttered their doors since the first signs of shooting on April 15. Since the authorities inaugurated a new passport office in the eastern city of Port Sudan in late August, hundreds of people have lined up all day, every day. They are desperate to obtain paperwork that will allow them to leave Sudan's deadly war behind. Asked where she intended to go, Marwa Omar, who had lined up for 15 hours to no avail, replied: "Anywhere but here. This isn't a country any more."

"There's nothing left. We can't live or put food on the table or educate our children," the mother of four said. Like Omar, many have flocked to the coastal city, which has so far been spared in the fighting and is now home to government officials, the United Nations and Sudan's only functioning airport. "I was in Atbara for two months, but when

I heard they were issuing passports again I came to Port Sudan," said Salwa Omar. But days go by and only a lucky few manage to get inside the building to hand in their paperwork, as others like her wait outside for their turn. "If you know someone inside who will get it done for you quickly, come. Otherwise, don't bother," Marwa Omar said, frustrated by the long wait and poor organization.

'It's all wrong'

Those lucky enough to get inside the building have to enter "a cramped room, terrible heat and no chairs", another applicant, Shehab Mohammed, told AFP. "You have elderly people leaning on their canes for hours or sitting on the floor. It's all wrong." Over the noise of dozens of people trying to push their paperwork through, Fares Mohammed, who came to get a passport for his child, said: "At this rate, we'll be here for months."

Those who could scramble enough money together to make it to Port Sudan are burdened with skyrocketing accommodation and food costs. They also must stump up the fee to issue the passport: 120,000 Sudanese pounds (\$200), which was the average monthly salary before the war. Nour Hassan, a mother of two, is willing to pay whatever it takes to get passports for her children. Every day she waits from 5:00 am until 9:30 pm, clutching her family's file of paperwork. The goal, she told AFP, is to make it to the Egyptian capital Cairo, where she has family. Like many of the more than 310,000 people who have already crossed Sudan's northern border into Egypt, Hassan assures herself it's only "a temporary solution". They will stay only until it's safe enough to come home again. — AFP

North Korea's Kim gifted drones as Russia trip ends



ARTEM: Kim Jong Un waves before boarding a train during a farewell ceremony at the end of his visit to Russia at a railway station in the Primorsky region. — AFP

MOSCOW: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un left Russia on Sunday after a rare six-day visit that appeared to solidify his country's ties with President Vladimir Putin — fanning Western fears that Pyongyang could provide Moscow with weapons for its assault on Ukraine. Kim's tour of Russia's far eastern region, which began Tuesday, has focused intensely on military cooperation, including a symbolic exchange of rifles with Putin and an inspection of state-of-the-art Russian weapons. Kim's first official visit abroad since the coronavirus pandemic has sparked concerns that Moscow and Pyongyang will defy Western sanctions to secure an arms deal that could help the Kremlin continue its assault against Ukraine.

Before departing Vladivostok, the Far East Russian city just over the border with North Korea, Kim was presented with five explosive drones, a reconnaissance drone and a bulletproof vest as gifts from the governor of the Primorye region, which borders China and North Korea. He also visited the Far Eastern State University and appeared particularly pleased as he watched a walrus show at a local oceanarium.

Summing up the North Korean leader's visit, Russian Natural Resources Minister Alexander Kozlov, who accompanied him on his last day, said "a lot" had been discussed. "Kim Jong Un was very interested in and paid attention to minute details," Kozlov said. He made no mention of any agreements concerning military matters but said the two sides discussed increasing supplies of grain and the resumption of regular air travel. The two countries also discussed reviving long-muted infrastructure projects, he said.

Greater cooperation

Government officials from the two countries also agreed to meet in Pyongyang in November, Kozlov added. At the end of Kim's visit, official Russian video footage showed him waving goodbye from his heavily armored train to a Russian delegation, before the Russian march "Farewell of Slavianka" was played as the train departed.

On Saturday, Kim met Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu in Vladivostok, where he inspected state-of-the-art weapons including a hypersonic missile system. The pair were seen smiling as they inspected some of Russia's nuclear bombers at an airfield before boarding a warship. North Korean news agency KCNA later published pictures of a broadly smiling Kim wearing a traditional Russian fur hat and raising a glass of vodka with Shoigu and their delegations.

On Wednesday, Putin and Kim held talks at Russia's new Vostochny cosmodrome, roughly 8,000 kilometers (5,000 miles) from Moscow. After the meeting Putin talked up the prospect of greater cooperation with North Korea and the "possibilities" for military ties. 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. — AFP

One week after Libya flood, aid effort gains pace

DERNA: A week after a tsunami-sized flash flood devastated the Libyan coastal city of Derna, sweeping thousands to their deaths, the international aid effort to help the grieving survivors slowly gathered pace Sunday. Search-and-rescue teams wearing face masks and protective suits kept up the grim search for bodies or any survivors in the mud-caked wasteland of smashed buildings, crushed cars and uprooted trees.

Traumatized residents, 30,000 of whom are now homeless in Derna alone, are in dire need of clean water, food, shelter and basic supplies amid a growing risk of cholera, diarrhea, dehydration and malnutrition, UN agencies warn. "In this city, every single family has been affected," said one resident, Mohammad al-Dawali.

Another, Mohamed al-Zawi, 25, recounted how he saw "a large mountain of water bringing with it cars, people, belongings ... and pouring everything out into the sea". Emergency response teams and relief goods have been deployed from France, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, with more on the way from multiple other nations. The aid effort has been hampered by the political division of Libya, which was plunged into years of war and chaos after a 2011 NATO-backed uprising led to the overthrow and killing of veteran dictator Muammar Gaddafi.

The oil-rich North African country now remains split between two rival governments — a UN-backed administration in the capital Tripoli, and one based in the disaster-hit east. Britain's foreign secretary, James Cleverly, said "the big challenge with Libya" was that, unlike Morocco and Turkey which were hit by major earthquakes this year, it lacks a fully functioning government to coordinate with. "Sadly, in the eastern part of Libya, we just don't have that, and that is why we are not seeing the international support on the ground ... we would wish," he told the BBC. "I'm not gonna say it is impossible, of course not. But it is so much harder."



DERNA: This picture shows destruction in the aftermath of flash flooding caused by Storm Daniel in Libya's eastern port city of Derna on Sept 17, 2023. — AFP

Amid the chaos, the true death toll remained unknown, with untold numbers swept into the sea. The health minister of the eastern administration, Othman Abdeljalil, has said that 3,252 people were confirmed dead in Derna, where corpses wrapped in blankets and in body bags have lined squares and streets. Libyan officials and humanitarian organizations have warned that the final toll could be much higher with thousands still missing. Questions are being asked about whether the disaster could not have been prevented, as cracks in the dams have been reported since 1998.

A week on from the disaster, bodies are still washing up on the sea shore, along with vast amounts of household items and debris. A rescue crew from Malta's Civil Protection Department said it had discovered a beach strewn with hundreds of bodies on Friday, the Times of Malta newspaper reported. A Libyan rescue

team in an inflatable boat reported seeing "perhaps 600 bodies" at sea off the Om-al-Briket region, about 20 kilometers (12 miles) east of Derna, according to a video shared on social networks. The United Nations has launched an aid appeal for more than \$71 million.

The aid being sent to Libya includes water, food, tents, blankets, hygiene kits, medicines and emergency surgical supplies as well as heavy machinery to help clear the debris, and more body bags. The scale of the devastation in Derna and surrounding areas has prompted shows of solidarity across divided Libya, as volunteers in Tripoli have collected aid for the flood victims. The International Committee of the Red Cross warned of another risk in the flood area — unexploded landmines and other ordnance left over from the war that may have been washed into areas previously free of weapon contamination. — AFP

International

EU chief vows new 'European answer' to illegal migration

Emergency plan to help Italy handle record arrivals after Lampedusa surge

LAMPEDUSA: The European Union presented Sunday an emergency plan for Italy to help it handle migrant arrivals after a record number of people landed on its island of Lampedusa over the past week. The surge in asylum seekers on the Italian island of Lampedusa has rekindled a fierce debate in Europe on how to share responsibility for the tens of thousands reaching the continent each year.

"Irregular migration is a European challenge and it needs a European answer," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said during a visit to Lampedusa, offering a 10-point plan to help Rome deal with the crisis. Since Monday, around 8,500 people — more than the island's entire local population — have arrived in around 200 boats, according to the UN migration agency. Lampedusa, Italy's southernmost island, has long been a landing point for migrant boats from North Africa. But this week officials said its migration center, built to house fewer than 400 people, was overwhelmed.

"We are doing everything possible," Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said at a press conference with von der Leyen on Lampedusa. It is "the future that Europe wants for itself that is at stake here, because the future of Europe depends on Europe's capacity to face major challenges," Meloni said.

The Italian Red Cross, which runs the overcrowded Lampedusa migration center, said Sunday that 1,500 migrants remained there despite having a capacity for just 400. Transfers of migrants to Sicily and the mainland have not kept up with the flow of new arrivals, although further transfers were expected to be made Sunday, the Red Cross said.

Burden sharing

Von der Leyen said her aid plan for Italy included increased support for the European Agency for Asylum (EAAA) and the EU's Frontex border control agency to register new arrivals. The increased measures include ensuring that fingerprints are taken and conducting interviews to make sure people are directed toward the proper authorities.

The EU will also step up aid for transporting asylum seekers from Italy to other EU members, under a voluntary scheme for sharing responsibility for migrants — in particular women and unaccompanied minors. But the EU programme for sharing the burden of new arrivals has met resistance in several bloc members, with right-wing governments in Poland and Hungary the most strongly opposed to the plan.

This week, EU heavyweight Germany said it had stopped accepting migrants living in Italy under the



LAMPEDUSA: Migrants sit outside the operational center called "Hotspot" on the Italian island of Lampedusa, on Sept 16, 2023. — AFP

European solidarity scheme, saying Rome was failing to honor its obligations under EU rules. Under the bloc's so-called Dublin procedure, irregular migrants must be registered in the EU country they first enter. If they later travel to another nation in the bloc, they can be returned to their first EU port of call.

"That is why we have sent a signal to Italy," a German government spokesman said Friday. But Mediterranean countries like Italy have argued that the rules place an excessive burden on border nations,

particularly since new arrivals often want to move on and live in other EU countries.

127,000 this year

More than 127,000 migrants have arrived on Italy's shores so far this year, almost double the number in the period last year. Ships operated by NGOs including Doctors Without Borders (MSF) have rescued nearly 500 migrants in 11 operations in the Mediterranean in recent days

and are headed for major Italian ports.

But dozens of small boats also continue to make the perilous sea-crossing to Lampedusa — just 90 miles (145 kilometers) off the coast of Tunisia. In July, von der Leyen — with Meloni's strong backing — struck an agreement with Tunisia aimed at curbing the flow of irregular migration from the North African country. Over 2,000 people have died this year crossing from North Africa to Italy and Malta, according to the UN migration agency. — AFP

Watchdog slams EU over Tunisia migration pact

BRUSSELS: The EU Ombudsman demanded last weekend that Brussels explain how it will ensure that its pact with Tunisia to curb migration will not breach human rights standards. The Ombudsman, Emily O'Reilly, is an independent overseer employed to handle complaints about the work of EU institutions and agencies and to investigate alleged administrative failures. "Where fundamental rights are not respected, there cannot be good administration," she said.

In July, the European Union signed a deal to provide financial assistance and practical cooperation to Tunisia — the main launchpad for undocumented migrants making the dangerous sea crossing to Ita-

ly. European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen, Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and the Netherlands' Mark Rutte hailed the deal as a way to fight "networks of smugglers and traffickers".

But international human rights organizations and some MEPs have criticized Brussels for forming an anti-migration partnership with President Kais Saied's increasingly authoritarian regime. In recent months hundreds of migrants arrested in Tunisia have allegedly been dropped off in the desert near the Libya border and left to fend for themselves. Against this backdrop, O'Reilly said von der Leyen's European Commission has some explaining to do.

"Did the Commission carry out a human rights impact assessment of the MoU before its conclusion and consider possible measures to mitigate risks of human rights violations," the ombudsman asked, in a letter to von der Leyen. "If yes, could the Commission make this impact assessment public, along with the mitigating measures? If not, please set out the rationale for this."

O'Reilly noted that she had raised these concerns when Brussels signed a similar pact with Turkey, and warned the EU regulations stipulate that any funding provided to partner countries must not be spent in ways that breach migrants' human rights. "How does the Commission plan to ensure that actions undertaken by Tunisia under the Migration and mobility pillar of the MoU and financed using EU funds will comply with the applicable human rights standards?" she asked.

Earlier last week, the European Commission was forced to defend the Tunisian migration pact in parliament, where it has come under fire from MEPs from the left and the Greens. "This is an investment in our shared prosperity, stability, and in the future generations," commissioner Oliver Varhelyi told the European Parliament in Strasbourg. He said it reinforced cooperation that has already seen the Tunisian coast guard intercept nearly 24,000 boats headed for Europe this year, compared with some 9,000 last year. But the row flared up again on



LAMPEDUSA: European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (left) and Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni during a press conference on Sept 17, 2023. — AFP

Thursday when Tunisia barred entry to a fact-finding delegation from the European Parliament, following a non-binding resolution condemning the government's "authoritarian drift". — AFP

Coed row brews as schools...

Continued from Page 1

the urgent and late decision to impose segregated classes has disrupted registration of subjects and some said they could lose a year as a result.

The decision was issued last Wednesday, just three days before the start of studies on Sunday. Students still plan to stage a sit-in against the decision. But acting director of Kuwait University Fayez Al-Dhafiri said more than 95 percent of students have successfully registered their subjects for the new academic year. He added more than 2,770 new seats have been added to the College of Law, allowing students to register easily.

The Kuwait University Teachers Association criticized the university administration over the ban and called on MPs and others to stop political interference in Kuwait University. The Islamist Students Coalition Group, which has been leading the university union for more than 40 years, surprisingly criticized the decision, describing it as "ill advised" and called for delaying it until next year.

As part of his recent inspection visits aimed at monitoring the education sector and ensuring a successful start to the new academic year, Education Minister Dr Adel Al-Mane conducted tours of several schools to assess the progress on the first day of classes for first-grade students for the 2024/2023 academic year.

Mane extended his congratulations to parents, students, and all members of the ministry of education on the commencement of the new school year. He stressed the significance of this year being a success and a productive one, underscoring the importance of nurturing students' talents and abilities, supporting gifted and high-achieving students, promoting innovation and encouraging participation in creative and educational activities.

Mane emphasized that educational development begins within the educational field, requiring collaboration from all elements of the educational process. He reaffirmed his commitment to continue his inspection visits to address any issues and needs in the educational process and to ensure the provision of all necessary resources and solutions to enhance performance.

The ministry of education is welcoming 423,251 students at the start of the new academic year, distributed across

various educational stages. This includes 41,763 in kindergarten, 159,895 in primary school, 129,751 in intermediate school, and 91,842 in secondary school, spread across approximately 875 schools in various educational regions.

Col Nawaf Al-Hayan, director of the traffic awareness department at the Traffic Department, urged drivers to refrain from stopping on roads and blocking traffic in the event of minor accidents. Speaking on the first day of school for first-grade students, he stressed the importance of promptly heading to the nearest police station to allow traffic patrols to handle any serious accidents that may occur.

Hayan explained that the traffic plan involved deploying 500 security and traffic patrols, along with 300 new motorcycles to assist in managing traffic congestion in specific areas. He noted that the first day of school did not witness significant traffic congestion, thanks to the rapid response of traffic patrols to monitored locations. He called on parents to cooperate with security personnel and monitor their children's arrivals and departures from school to ensure the success of the traffic plan and a safe school year.

Interior Ministry Undersecretary Maj Gen Anwar Al-Barjes, along with senior security officials, inspected the new motorcycles that were put into service on Sunday. These motorcycles are expected to facilitate traffic management, particularly in areas that are challenging to access with regular patrols and in locations with heavy traffic, especially near schools and vital sites.

Despite the smooth main roads leading to Sabah Al-Salem University City (Kuwait University), entering the university campus during the early hours of the school day was challenging due to the convergence of new students, faculty members and administrative staff at the same time, causing traffic congestion within the campus.

Despite Kuwait University's extensive preparations to accommodate over 43,000 students, along with faculty members and administrative staff, the issue of intersection planning within the university campus posed a significant obstacle to smooth traffic flow. The timings of intersections and traffic lights were not coordinated according to traffic flow in all directions, resulting in congestion and traffic disruptions within the campus.

Regarding parking, students utilized remote parking lots and waited for internal buses to reach their respective colleges. Additionally, there was a lack of a dedicated security and safety department within the university to regulate traffic and prevent traffic violations that impeded traffic flow. Furthermore, there was a deficiency in traffic awareness among students within the campus.

Tell al-Sultan added to world...

Continued from Page 1

the meeting in Riyadh, said in a statement. Given Tell al-Sultan's "importance as the oldest fortified city in the world... it deserves to be a World Heritage Site," she said. "A permanent settlement had emerged here by the 9th to 8th millennium BC due to the fertile soil of the oasis and easy access to water," UNESCO said on its website.

UNESCO said the "skulls and statues found on the site" testify to cultic practices among the neolithic population there, while the early bronze age archaeological material shows signs of urban planning. "Vestiges from the middle bronze age reveal the presence of a large Canaanite city-state occupied by a socially complex population," UNESCO added.

The Tell al-Sultan site has been under excavation for over a century and is billed as the oldest contin-

Saudi confronts heavy toll of...

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hub — risk clashing with its sustainability goals, including achieving net-zero emissions by 2060.

Projects like Jazlah, the first plant to integrate desalination with solar power on a large scale, are meant to ease that conflict: officials say the panels will help save around 60,000 tons of carbon emissions annually. It is the type of innovation that must be scaled up fast, with Prince Mohammed targeting a population of 100 million people by 2040, up from 32.2 million today.

"Typically, the population grows, and then the quality of life of the population grows," necessitating more and more water, said CEO Marco Arcelli of ACWA Power, which runs Jazlah. Using desalination to keep pace is a "do or die" challenge, said historian Michael Christopher Low at the University of Utah, who has studied the kingdom's struggle with water scarcity.

uously inhabited settlement on the planet, Palestinian official Wafa news agency reported. It is the fourth Palestinian site to be listed on UNESCO's world heritage list, alongside the Church of the Nativity and the Old City of Hebron.

The Zionist entity has occupied the West Bank — now home to some three million Palestinians — since the 1967 Six-Day War, when it also seized the Gaza Strip, the densely populated coastal enclave it has since withdrawn from. The Palestinians want these territories for their future state, along with annexed east Jerusalem as its capital. Jericho is one of the oldest inhabited cities on the planet and is a major tourist destination in the Palestinian territories.

UNESCO urged for the protection of other archaeological sites in Jericho. "The other archaeological sites located in Jericho, covering among other Jewish and Christian heritage, also have important historical interest and deserve to be preserved as well," said Ottone. Archaeology is a highly political subject in the Zionist entity and the Palestinian territories, and some discoveries have been used to justify the territorial claims of each people. — AFP

"This is existential for the Gulf states. So when anyone is sort of critical about what they're doing in terms of ecological consequences, I shake my head a bit," he said. At the same time, he added, "there are limits" as to how green desalination can be.

The search for potable water bedeviled Saudi Arabia in the first decades after its founding in 1932, spurring geological surveys that contributed to the mapping of its massive oil reserves. Prince Mohammed Al-Faisal, a son of King Faisal whom Low has dubbed the "Water Prince", at one point even explored the possibility of towing icebergs from Antarctica to quench the kingdom's growing thirst, drawing widespread ridicule.

But Prince Mohammed also oversaw the birth of the kingdom's modern desalination infrastructure beginning in 1970. The national Saline Water Conversion Corporation (SWCC) now reports production capacity of 11.5 million cu m per day at 30 facilities. That growth has come at a cost, especially at thermal plants running on fossil fuels. By 2010, Saudi desalination facilities were consuming 1.5 million barrels of oil per day, more than 15 percent of today's production. — AFP

International

Children traumatized by Morocco 'nightmare' quake

Students reeling from losing classmates as adults worry for future



IMI N'TALA: Youths look at the rubble of destroyed houses amid ongoing rescue operations in the village of Imi N'Tala, near Amizmiz, on Sept 12, 2023. — AFP photos

IMI N'TALA: Nine-year-old Moroccan girl Ibtissam Ait Iddar was fortunate to have been rescued from under the rubble, but like other children she remains traumatized by the earthquake that devastated her village. "My father called me and I cried back 'I'm here, I'm here,'" Ibtissam recalled five days after the disaster that left nearly 3,000 people dead and more than 5,600 injured.

The magnitude 6.8 earthquake — Morocco's strongest ever — flattened entire villages like Ibtissam's hometown of Imi N'Tala and left tens of thousands of people homeless. A week after it struck on September 8, Ibtissam and her family sought refuge nearby with dozens of other families, living out of a tent. But two of Ibtissam's friends, Mouna and Zineb, are

not among the survivors. "We used to go to school together even though we were not in the same class," she said.

Ibtissam's four-year-old sister and both her grandmothers were also killed in the quake, and now her mother, Naima Benhamou, says she is now "worried" about her daughter. The girl wakes up often at night crying and shouts "Get me out, I've fallen", said Benhamou, expressing concern about her daughter's psychological state. Ibtissam was pulled out from the rubble by her father and her uncle after their home was crushed by huge rocks that the quake caused to roll down the mountainside.

Imi N'Tala is located at an altitude of more than 1,400 meters (5,600 feet) near Mount Toubkal in the High Atlas mountains. The village's houses are built on a

narrow and winding road that runs the length of the mountain range, about 75 kilometers (46 miles) south of Marrakesh. Survivors in the village, once home to 400 people, have said the quake killed 84 residents, including 20 children. The stench of death fills the air, they have said. On Wednesday, rescuers pulled a body from under rubble and struggled to search for five more.

'Stuck under rubble'

Youssef Ait Raiss, 11, remembers how his family home "crumbled". "We were stuck under the rubble," said the boy whose parents were away when the quake struck. "We were with our grandmother. It was like a nightmare," added his brother Zakaria, 13. The grandmother

has since died while an older brother aged 16 is fighting for his life in a Marrakesh hospital.

Two of Youssef's classmates, Taoufik and Khaled, were also killed. "We went to school together. We played together," he said. His school near the village was badly damaged and classes have been suspended, a measure that has been taken in around 40 communities in the nearby provinces of Al Haouz, Chichaoua and Taroudant.

The UN's cultural organization UNESCO has expressed concern over the immediate future of education in Morocco following the devastating quake. "The earthquake affected a particularly rural and isolated area, encompassing a school population of around one million pupils and a teaching staff of more than 42,000

professionals," it said in a statement.

Ibtissam has said she was "shocked" to see her school damaged, according to her mother. "She told me that if she cannot go back to school then we must leave here as soon as possible," Benhamou added. But Ibtissam's uncle Mohamed Ait Toulikh vowed to make sure she goes to school. "I'll do everything possible to send her to Marrakesh. It is important that she continues to study," he said. Nearby a team of rescuers dug through the rubble to retrieve the body of Khadija Ouhssine's father-in-law. Ouhssine, 32, also lost two of her children and her mother-in-law, all killed by the quake. "Losing one's children is a feeling that no word can describe," she said, standing outside her flattened house. — AFP



Children draw inside a tent at a camp for earthquake victims in Amizmiz on Sept 15, 2023.

Teachers rally for protection from abusive parents

SEOUL: For weeks, a young South Korean teacher was bombarded with texts and calls from parents irate at how their child had been treated. Then she was found dead in her classroom. The suicide of the 23-year-old woman, in just her second year of teaching, has triggered an outpouring of grief and rage and set off widespread protests, including a rare strike, as teachers push back against what they call untenable working conditions.

For decades, physical abuse by teachers was tacitly tolerated in South Korean schools, experts say, but in the early 2000s the country launched a major drive to stamp it out, culminating in sweeping 2014 legislation on child abuse. This, teachers now say, has caused the pendulum to swing too far the other way.

They say the legislation, instead of protecting vulnerable pupils, has stripped institutional and legal protections from teachers and empowered pushy parents to bully them. "I felt an overwhelming weight and wanted to let it all go," the late teacher wrote two weeks before her death in her journal, which was released posthumously by the Seoul Teachers' Union.

One of her first-grade students slashed another child in the face with a pencil and, after the teacher intervened, telephone records show she was subject to repeated calls and messages including on her personal phone by the perpetrator's parents.

"I couldn't breathe," she wrote in one of her final entries. Multiple teachers told AFP her experience deeply resonated with them: that they were subject to relentless, angry exchanges and threats of child abuse complaints from parents. They also described non-stop pressure to expunge records of school bullying or any blemish that might mar a child's prospects for top-tier universities — a crucial consideration in South Korea's hyper-competitive, education-obsessed society.

'Branded a child abuser'

Every weekend since the teacher's July 18 suicide, teachers have gathered in central Seoul to protest demanding better protection for their profession and an end to parental bullying. Choi Jun-hyuk, a 27-year-old elementary school teacher who has joined the rallies, told AFP that educators were currently in an impossible position.

He has been subject to explicit, foul language from one of his third-grade students, but when he confronted the boy, he rudely pushed back. "I should have disciplined him, but the fear of being branded a child abuser hung over me, so I let him off the hook," he said.

Another teacher told AFP she had no way to prevent unruly students from disrupting an entire class. "If I separate them from other students, for example, asking



SEOUL: A photo taken on Sept 4, 2023 shows protesters holding up signs reading "Revealing the truth is the way to pay respect" during a rally demanding the protection of teachers' rights. — AFP

them to stand in the hallway, I could be accused of child abuse," Seo Chan-yang, who has taught elementary students for 15 years, told AFP.

Parental demands are often absurd, she said, describing a case where she wrote in a report that a student had a "fairly good academic performance". The parents demanded she revise the report, claiming it could affect the child's future university prospects. The child was seven years old, she said.

Innocent until proven guilty

The issue, teachers say, is that the 2014 law defined "child abuse" broadly but re-

quired that it be immediately reported to police. Parents now feel empowered to accuse teachers of "emotional abuse" over what are, they say, normal classroom disciplinary measures.

Any police report triggers months of investigation and potential sacking for teachers, with educational authorities often suspending them pre-emptively. "The principle of innocence until proven guilty does not apply," teacher Seo told AFP. Even Seoul's education superintendent, Cho Hee-yeon, has acknowledged the imbalance, with teachers "viewed as being guilty from the beginning" when parents complain. — AFP

Back-to-school costs weigh on Gabon parents

LIBREVILLE: Justine Ndoumba and her two daughters wander round the aisles of a school supplies shop carrying a long list of items required to start the new term in the Gabonese capital Libreville. "The prices have increased and it's a bit difficult for us," she admits.

Even with the country's new military strongman declaring an end to enrollment fees for state and religious schools this year, it is still shaping up to be a tough time for families feeling the pinch from rising prices. And it will make no difference for Ndoumba's daughters who attend a private school.

President Ali Bongo Ondimba, who was ousted on August 30, left behind a national education system so ill-equipped that parents will risk everything to get their children into the private sector. The senior army officers now in charge in the oil-rich central African nation have made schools a priority. "With 30,000 CFA francs (45 euros, \$48) today, you can buy just three or four notebooks," says Ndoumba, a 38-year-old pharmacist. "A school bag which used to cost 15,000 (23 euros), today costs 35,000 or 40,000."

Twenty-three-year-old Charlene Mabika has three children and is shocked at how much prices have gone up over the last year. "This year it really is too expensive," she says, pointing to "40,000 (60 euros) for a bag." The minimum wage is 150,000 francs a month — about 230 euros.

Corruption
Gabon has abundant oil reserves, manganese and timber, but lives off imports. Its wealth is in the hands of a small elite. A third of the population lives below the poverty line — two euros a day — despite the country ranking among the richest in Africa, according to the World Bank.

Coup leader General Brice Oligui Nguema, who put an end to 55 years of rule by the Bongo dynasty and is now the transitional president, has accused successive administrations of massive corruption and disastrous management. Justine Ndoumba keeps totting up the costs — the school supplies alone will come to 180,000 francs (270 euros). "I cannot spend that amount," she says, deciding to buy items gradually until the end of January. The new school year begins on Sept 18 but people have already been queuing outside schools in the week before to enroll and pay the first instalment of tuition fees.

Confusion

Oligui won praise for his September 8 announcement of free school enrollment — but it also led to confusion. Many people believed that school fees had also been lifted and some refused to pay them. Education Minister Camelia Ntoutoume Leclercq appeared on TV last Thursday to try to clear up the misunderstanding.

At the Batavea primary school in the heart of the capital, Benoit Ndong, 38, is enrolling his two children for free — a saving of 20,000 francs. "But that doesn't change anything for the new school year" which he estimates will cost him a total of 200,000 francs CFA (300 euros). "We will manage, we have to make do. Life in Gabon is very expensive, school costs a lot of money," says the teacher, who has not had a pay rise in eight years.



LIBREVILLE: People look at textbooks and school supplies in a shop in Libreville on Sept 13, 2023. — AFP

Impatient

Free enrollment won't change much either for 43-year-old Hella Ada Biteghe, a mother-of-four. "It's really minimal" compared with the overall cost, she says. "We have to buy books, we have to buy exercise books, we have to buy uniforms."

Gabon's new military rulers have been celebrated as national saviors, liberating the population from the Bongo clan's greed. Oligui has announced a raft of measures to help the poor and promised to hand over power to civilians after elections, although he has yet to set a timeframe. But he has also raised expectations — and some are already showing signs of impatience. Strikes and small gatherings have been held by public servants and private employees demanding sometimes months of back pay — including in the education sector. — AFP

In silence, Russians volunteer to help Ukraine refugees

SAINT PETERSBURG: For a year and a half Galina Artyomenko had been raising funds to help refugees from Ukraine after the Kremlin sent troops to the pro-Western country. Then in July the 58-year-old resident of Saint Petersburg in northwestern Russia discovered that one of her bank cards as well as those of two other volunteers had been blocked.

"According to the bank, our 'collections' were for 'questionable purposes'," said Artyomenko, insisting that she can justify "every ruble spent". After President Vladimir Putin sent troops to Ukraine last year, the authorities ramped up a crackdown on dissent, with those criticizing the assault facing long prison terms.

Like other volunteers helping Ukrainians, Artyomenko is careful not to express an opinion on the ongoing conflict as even humanitarian operations can sometimes be viewed with suspicion in Russia. Despite the obstacles she has faced, she collects donations online and uses the money to buy clothes, medicine and food for people forced to flee to Russia or Russian-controlled territory in Ukraine. She regularly welcomes Ukrainians arriving in Saint Petersburg by train, helping them find accommodation, work, or arrange for their onward travel to the European Union from Russia.

'Prefer not to talk'

Artyomenko said that "thousands of people" in Russia were helping Ukrainians. "But they prefer not to talk about it, for security reasons," she said. "Even if no law prohibits helping people who have fallen into misfortune." Many volunteers refuse to speak about Moscow's offensive in Ukraine or their help to refugees, for fear of attracting the attention of the authorities who regularly arrest people accused of collaborating with Kyiv or "discrediting" the Russian army.

Lyudmila, a 43-year-old volunteer who preferred to withhold her last name, said many such people are "pacifists" who cannot openly express their position and ease their conscience by helping the victims of the conflict. "We cannot stand idly by, we must help those who are in a worse situation than us and who are suffering," said Lyudmila. Artyomenko added: "This is the only way left for us to exist. That's all we can still do."

Millions of refugees

According to the United Nations, nearly 1.3 million refugees from Ukraine were recorded in Russia as of December, 2022. According to Russia's estimates — disputed by NGOs — the count stands at more than five million. Some of those people are in transit, particularly in north-west Russia, which borders the European Union. Others say they want to stay in Russia. Kyiv has accused the Kremlin of having deported Ukrainians to Russia and of pushing them to obtain Russian passports. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2023

Slack CEO is ready to ride AI wave

Recourse to new AI tools works for summarizing all types of content: Jones

SAN FRANCISCO: Artificial Intelligence is transforming Slack, the widely used workplace messaging platform, its CEO told AFP just nine months after taking on one of the most high profile jobs in Silicon Valley. Lidiene Jones was handed the reins to Slack after the departure of its co-founder and CEO Stewart Butterfield who exited two years after his company's acquisition by Salesforce, the San Francisco-based enterprise software giant.

Life at Slack after the blockbuster \$27.7 billion transaction was not always smooth sailing and Jones, a former Microsoft executive who shot up the ranks in just a few years at Salesforce, was made chief executive to bring stability. Jones took the job in January, only a few weeks after the launch of ChatGPT made the world aware of the superpowers of AI, and Slack has moved quickly to not fall behind, especially against its archrival Microsoft.

"It's amazing what has happened to the world," Jones said of this AI moment that has captured the imagination of Silicon Valley and the world. "We've launched more features in the last nine months than in the several years before." Brazilian-born and living in the Boston area, Jones was in San Francisco for "Dreamforce", Salesforce's big annual event to plug its new products and AI was on everyone's mind.

Many believe that tools such as Slack are first in line to be profoundly transformed by generative AI, which can produce texts, images and sounds on request in everyday language.

Originally designed to facilitate teamwork and internal communication, Slack, along with its equivalents such as Teams from Microsoft, have rushed out new versions supercharged by AI to act as something close to an online assistant. "When I got back from

my two-week vacation this summer, I had mountains of messages from customers and colleagues to catch up on," Jones said.

"I asked 'Slack AI' to summarize everything and in two hours I was up to date, instead of spending a whole day, or even the week." She said this recourse to new AI tools works for summarizing all types of content or for fully automating complicated administrative tasks, like approving expenses or connecting users to in-house expertise.

Data is strength

Unlike Microsoft, users can also speak to generative AI chatbots directly within Slack from several providers, such as Claude from start-up Anthropic, and soon ChatGPT, from OpenAI. This availability of a wide range of third-party apps and tools "is our strength", said Jones. "We're quite different from Teams... We're first and foremost a very open platform."

The comparison to Teams is a sensitive one. In 2020, when still a startup, Slack filed a complaint at the European Union against Microsoft for bundling Teams in its hugely popular Office Suite.

With some 300 million monthly users, Microsoft's conversation and videoconferencing app surpasses Slack with its 12 million daily active users, according to data from 2019, the last time they were made public. Microsoft acquiesced to many of Slack's demands in Europe, but the investigation by the EU continues and the Windows giant could yet face more fallout from European regulators. But thanks to its major investments in OpenAI, Microsoft won a head start in generative AI.

But Jones insisted that Slack is equally

tively pushing out disinformation on the topic," the 135-page complaint read. "Their deception caused a delayed societal response to global warming. And their misconduct has resulted in tremendous costs to people, property and natural resources, which continue to unfold each day."

The suit seeks the creation of an abatement fund to pay for future damages caused by climate change-fueled wildfires, flooding and other extreme weather phenomena. "By downplaying the scientific consensus on climate change and emphasizing uncertainty, defendants hoped to delay any regulatory action that might seek to reduce or control (greenhouse gas) emissions, thereby threatening the industry's profits," the complaint added. A spokesperson for API slammed the lawsuit, arguing that climate policy "is for Congress to debate and decide, not the court system."

"This ongoing, coordinated campaign to wage meritless, politicized lawsuits against a foundational American industry and its workers is nothing more than a distraction from important national conversations and an enormous waste of California taxpayer resources," the spokesperson, Andrea Woods, told AFP. Chevron also hit out against the lawsuit, with a spokesperson telling AFP that climate change "is a global problem that requires a coordinated international policy response, not piecemeal litigation for the



SAN FRANCISCO: Lidiene Jones, CEO of Slack Technologies, speaks during a keynote at the 2023 Dreamforce conference in San Francisco, California, on September 14, 2023. — AFP

sued to excel in AI thanks to the quality of its data, the key ingredient in the technology's magic formula. "We have all of a company's knowledge on the platform... staff are collaborating across different departments, all of that unstructured data is there," she said. "That makes our AI capabilities so powerful, because it has so much context," she added.

For the time being, Slack has no plans to develop its own language model, the systems at the heart of generative AI that have made OpenAI a household name. "We don't feel we need to reinvent the wheel,"

Jones joked, while reserving the possibility of one day designing a more specialized model.

On an even more distant horizon, Slack may one day develop highly personalized AI agents, sort of digital secretaries that know users down to their most personal detail. "It is definitely a plausible future. And, look, I have a family, I work, it's very busy... Isn't it amazing to think that a system can track all of it in one place?" "But it's gonna take time" to make people comfortable to do that, she said. "I think there's a possibility and desire, but the trust boundary is going to take a while for us to get there." — AFP

California sues oil giants over fossil fuel risks

LOS ANGELES: The US state of California sued five of the world's largest oil companies on Friday, alleging the firms caused billions of dollars in damages and misled the public by minimizing the risks from fossil fuels, according to a court filing. The suit, dismissed by one defendant as "meritless" and "politicized," follows numerous other cases brought by US cities, counties and states against fossil fuel interests over the impact of climate change as well as alleged disinformation campaigns spanning decades.

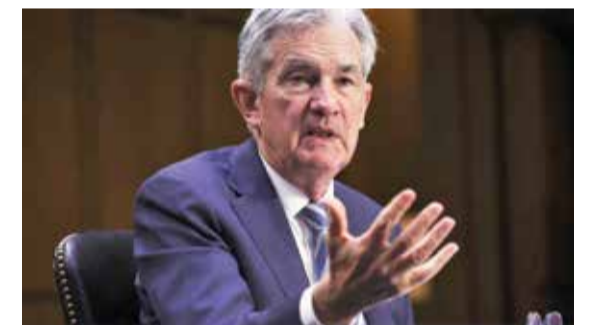
The civil case was filed in superior court in San Francisco against ExxonMobil, Shell, BP, ConocoPhillips and Chevron, which is headquartered in California. The American Petroleum Institute (API), an industry group, is also a defendant in the case.

"Oil and gas company executives have known for decades that reliance on fossil fuels would cause these catastrophic results, but they suppressed that information from the public and policymakers by ac-

benefit of lawyers and politicians." California "courts have no constructive or constitutionally permissible role in crafting global energy policy," the spokesperson added. Shell offered a similar take, with a spokesperson saying the fossil fuel giant agrees "that action is needed now on climate change" but that the courtroom "is not the right venue."

Activists said it was a "watershed moment" in the pushback against oil companies, with the Center for Climate Integrity noting that California "is now the world's largest economy and the first major oil-producing state to take fossil fuel companies to court for their climate deception." "California's move is an unmistakable sign that the wave of climate lawsuits against Big Oil will keep growing and that these polluters' days of escaping accountability for their lies are numbered," the Washington-based nonprofit's president Richard Wiles said in a statement. "For more than 50 years, Big Oil has been lying to us — covering up the fact that they've long known how dangerous the fossil fuels they produce are for our planet," California Governor Gavin Newsom said in a statement on Friday.

"California is taking action to hold big polluters accountable," he added. Since the current wave of environmental litigation against fossil fuel firms began around 2017, the industry has sought to avoid state trials on procedural grounds. — AFP



WASHINGTON: The US Federal Reserve is widely expected to hold interest rates steady on Wednesday after a summer of mixed economic data, while leaving the door open to another hike if needed. — AFP

US Fed likely to pause rate hikes despite inflation

WASHINGTON: The US Federal Reserve is widely expected to hold interest rates steady on Wednesday after a summer of mixed economic data, while leaving the door open to another hike if needed. The Fed has raised interest rates 11 times over the last 18 months, lifting its key lending rate to a level not seen for 22 years as it tackles inflation still stubbornly above its long-term target of two percent.

After falling sharply over the last year, inflation has ticked up again in recent months due to a spike in energy costs, keeping up the pressure on the Fed.

But analysts and traders still broadly expect the US central bank to hold rates steady on September 19-20 in order to give policymakers more time to assess the health of the world's largest economy.

"We think the Fed is done with its tightening cycle," EY Chief Economist Gregory Daco told AFP. "That view has not changed over the past couple of months." "After raising rates in July, we expect the Fed to follow through on strong pre-meeting signals and hold rates steady," Deutsche Bank economists wrote in a note to clients on Friday.

Finding the 'golden path'

The rate-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) now finds itself in a difficult situation as it seeks to address inflation through interest rate hikes while avoiding a recession, a feat that economists call a soft landing. Recent economic data showing strong economic growth in the first half of the year, inflation trending downward, and a softening jobs market suggests the Fed may just be able to pull it off. "I think, in general, the economy is doing relatively well, but we are seeing signs that there is an economic slowdown underway," said Daco from EY.

Analysts at Goldman Sachs recently cut their forecast for a recession in the United States from 20 percent likelihood down to 15 percent, while other economists — including those in the Fed's research team — say they no longer expect the US to enter a recession. "Recent data should leave the Fed encouraged by ongoing disinflation but concerned about re-acceleration in inflation because of the strength in activity," Bank of America economists wrote in a note to clients.

Some FOMC members — including Fed Chair Jerome Powell — have indicated that they see a narrow path for the Fed to achieve a soft landing in the coming months. "I believe there is a golden path opportunity that is unusual, in recent modern Fed history," Chicago Fed President and FOMC member Austan Goolsbee said during a recent interview broadcast on NPR. — AFP



HEMET, US: Plumes of smoke rise as wildfire approaches a home during the Fairview Fire near Hemet, California, in Riverside County. — AFP

Crude oil prices trim gains after hitting records

NEW YORK: Crude oil prices trimmed the gains they achieved on Thursday, after reaching new record levels this year and representing more high levels that we have not seen since mid-November of last year. Spot Brent crude fell to the level of \$93.80 per barrel at approximately 3.30 pm GMT, after reaching the level of \$94.58 at the peak of the rises extending since Thursday at 4 am GMT. While both crude oil prices are heading towards recording a third consecutive week of gains.

The gains for oil markets came after a series of positive data from the Chinese economy. Among the

most prominent data, we witnessed a remarkable, higher-than-expected growth in industrial production by 4.5 percent last August on an annual basis, which is the highest since last April. Also noticeably, we witnessed a higher-than-expected growth in retail sales during the same period and on an annual basis by 4.6 percent, which is the highest since last May, in addition to a slight decrease in unemployment rates to 5.2 percent in August, down from 5.3 percent last July.

These encouraging data came after a previous series of negative ones that included negative signals for various aspects of the Chinese economy. It also came with more government measures and plans to support the private sector, and this time with a cut in the cash reserve requirements for banks, which may provide more liquidity for banks to direct them towards lending in a way that enhances growth again. It also suggested the return of some positive sentiment to the markets after the European Central Bank spoke

about interest rates reaching their peak to combat inflation, after raising them by 25 basis points.

Despite the positive sentiment in the oil markets, there was a negative note from Commerzbank, which believes that oil prices may face further pressure if demand for gasoline in the United States continues to decline, after a higher-than-expected decline last week. While we witnessed a rise in US oil, gasoline, and distillate inventories much more than expected during the past week, according to data provided by the Energy Information Administration.

The refill of inventories comes after a previous series of sharp declines in light of fears of expected supply restrictions, with the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), led by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, continuing to adhere to reducing its oil production, which decided to continue reducing its production of oil by one million barrels per day until the end of this year in order to support the oil markets. — Agencies

Business

NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

US inflation rises above forecasts; ECB hikes to 4%, hinting at peak

China's industrial output data promising

KUWAIT: Driven by rising energy costs, US inflation rose above forecasts in August, likely complicating the Federal Reserve's battle to keep prices under control. Consumer prices rose by 3.7 percent on a yearly basis, up from 3.2 percent in July and beating consensus forecasts of 3.6 percent. On a monthly basis, prices increased 0.6 percent following a 0.2 percent gain the month prior. More than half the monthly increase in price pressures were driven by a recent jump in petrol prices after Saudi Arabia and Russia renewed efforts to push oil prices higher. Brent crude was last seen trading at a 10-month high of \$92.50.

Underlying price pressures were also marginally stronger than expected, but continued to decline year on year, providing the Fed cover to leave interest rates unchanged next Wednesday. The core figure gained a more modest 0.3 percent m/m, slightly above the 0.2 percent rate for July. However on an annual basis, it fell from 4.7 percent to 4.3 percent. After hiking rates 11 times since March 2022 in an effort to bring inflation back towards its 2 percent target, the Federal Reserve is widely expected to keep interest rates steady at its next meeting on September 19-20. Moving forward however, investors are split as to whether the central bank will make another interest rate rise later in the year.

PPI accelerates on gasoline

Prices paid to US producers increased in August, boosted by rising energy and transportation costs. The producer price index rose 0.7 percent last month, marking the largest gain since June 2022. Wholesale goods prices jumped 2.0 percent last month, with a

20 percent surge in gasoline prices accounting for 60 percent of the increase. Excluding volatile components, the core figure nudged up 0.1 percent.

US retail sales picked up in August, boosted by higher gas prices while spending on other items grew modestly. Retail sales rose 0.6 percent m/m, slightly faster than July's revised 0.5 percent gain, marking the fifth straight month of growth. The acceleration was largely driven by spending at gas stations, which advanced 5.2 percent last month. Higher oil prices due to OPEC+ production cuts, strong demand and disruption in Libya have all contributed to higher prices at gas stations. Excluding sales at gasoline stations, retail spending advanced a more modest 0.2 percent in August from July. The data illustrates resilient shoppers despite 11 interest rate hikes by the Federal Reserve.

Britain's economy contracted in July, weighed down by strikes in hospitals and schools as well as unusually rainy weather which hurt output. Gross domestic product shrank 0.5 percent in July from June, worse than the 0.2 percent contraction expected. The figure followed a better than expected 0.2 percent growth in the second quarter of the year, and heightened fears of a recession in the second half of the year. The drop in Q3 output goes beyond sectors affected by strikes and rain. All three major sectors (manufacturing, services and construction) contracted for the first time since the summer of 2022.

Investors' expectations regarding future interest rate rises have edged lower in recent days, but traders still expect the BoE to raise rates at their next meeting to 5.5 percent. Moving forward, inves-

Rates - 17th September, 2023

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.0714	1.0629	1.0768	1.0655	1.0500	1.0800	1.0705
GBP	1.2478	1.2377	1.2547	1.2389	1.2200	1.2600	1.2395
JPY	147.01	145.89	147.96	147.82	145.00	149.00	145.67
CHF	0.8911	0.8895	0.8977	0.8974	0.8800	0.9100	0.8892

tors are split on whether or not that will be the central bank's final rate increase.

ECB hikes rates

The European Central Bank announced its 10th consecutive hike in its main interest rate, as the fight against inflation took priority over a weakening economy. Rate hikes have now taken the central bank's main deposit facility from -0.5 percent in June 2022 to a record 4 percent. The main reason for the hike seems to be upward revisions in macro-economic projections. For the euro area, inflation is seen averaging 5.6 percent this year from a prior forecast of 5.4 percent, and 3.2 percent next year from a previous forecast of 3 percent.

The ECB's statement shook markets as it indicated further hikes may be off the table for now. "Based on its current assessment, the Governing Council considers that the key ECB interest rates have reached levels that, maintained for a sufficiently long duration, will make

a substantial contribution to the timely return of inflation to the target," it said. "The governing council's future decisions will ensure that the key ECB interest rates will be set at sufficiently restrictive levels for as long as necessary."

In a sign that decade-high interest rates have yet to soften demand in the labor market, Australia's employment surged in August. The data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics showed net employment rose 64,900 in August from July, while markets had forecast an increase of around 23,000. The jobless rate held steady at 3.7 percent while the participation rate surged to 67 percent, the highest since records began in 2013. The labor market has proven its resiliency with 410,700 net jobs added in the 12 months to August, despite interest rates climbing 400 basis points to an 11-year high of 4.1 percent. Markets maintained their bets that the Reserve Bank of Australia would keep rates steady next month,

with an about 40 percent chance of one final hike early next year.

Optimistic data out of China

China's industrial output grew 4.5 percent in August from a year earlier, accelerating from the 3.7 percent pace seen in July. Meanwhile retail sales, a gauge of consumption, grew at a faster 4.6 percent pace in August compared to a 2.5 percent increase in July. The figures followed better than expected bank lending data, narrowing in the declines of exports and imports, as well as easing deflationary pressure. The latest bulk of data indicates that the recent support measures may be starting to stabilize a choppy economic recovery. However, the economy remains pressured by an ailing property sector and high youth unemployment.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30840.

NBK holds lecture in partnership with IE Business School

KUWAIT: Continuing to invest in the human capital and increase employees' efficiency, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) organizes a series of lectures and workshops focusing on developing personal and practical skills in areas related to digital transformation, innovation, leadership and effective communication. In this context, the bank held the third of a 6-lecture series in September, which hosted 80 participants. Delivered by Ricardo Perez, Professor of Information Systems, Innovation and Corporate Strategy at IE, the lecture covered the challenges for the banking industry post-digital and implications of the next generation of technologies.

Understanding the developments in digital transformation and its implications for the banking industry is crucial as it directly affects setting policies, business strategies and plans in financial institutions so that they are able to keep pace with developments as they seek to achieve sustainable growth.

Speaking on this, Najla Al-Sager, Head of Talent Management, Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait, said: "Investing in the human capital is instrumental in NBK's strategies and culture, and a key focus for the bank's endeavors to achieve sustainable growth and create a banking generation capable of occupying leadership positions in the future."

"At NBK, we firmly believe that efficient workforce is crucial to delivering high-quality banking services from different types, and that employees' awareness of the changes and developments in the banking industry boosts this efficiency. Therefore, today's lecture comes within our endeavors to enhance the capabilities



Najla Al-Sager



A view of the participants at the lecture.

ties and skills of NBK human capital and provide them with top-tier training programs," she noted. Al-Sager emphasized that NBK harnesses all its capabilities to help develop the career of its employees by providing the best-in-class training and development programs, in collaboration with the world's most renowned educational institutions.

Founded in 1973, IE Business School is one of the largest business schools in the world, consistently ranked among the top international educational institutions by international magazines and newspapers, Forbes, The Economist, Financial Times and Bloomberg.

Ricardo Perez

Ricardo Perez is the Academic Director of the Master in Digital Business at IE, and has participated and managed several research projects, with total funding of more than €1 million, in areas related to corporate innovation. During the last twenty years Ricardo has collaborated in education and consulting projects (mostly dealing with corporate innovation) with companies such as Inditex, Ikea, Banco Santander, Vodafone, SAP, Microsoft; and also with universities in the USA, Mexico, Brazil, and China.

Prof. Perez research is related to how digital technologies are impacting business models in retail, banking and telecom industries, and how these organizations can create organizational mechanisms and develop innovation capabilities to face the changes. He works with multinational corporations in four continents to apply and test these ideas.



NANJING: The Evergrande logo is seen on residential buildings in Nanjing, in China's eastern Jiangsu province on August 18, 2023. — AFP

Authorities have gradually tightened developers' access to credit since 2020, and a wave of defaults have followed—notably that of Evergrande. Another Chinese property giant, Country Garden, has narrowly avoided default in recent months, after reporting a record loss and debts of more than \$150 billion. State-backed developer Sino-Ocean on Friday announced it would suspend payments of offshore debts, the latest company to show signs of trouble. — AFP

Employees of Evergrande arrested

BEIJING: Police in China have arrested several employees of a subsidiary of troubled Chinese property giant Evergrande, authorities said Saturday. Employees at Evergrande's financial subsidiary, Evergrande Wealth Management, were arrested, police in the southern city of Shenzhen said in a statement, without specifying the number of employees or the charges against them.

The statement called on the public to report any cases of suspected fraud to the authorities. Evergrande's enormous debt has contributed to the country's deepening property market crisis, raising fears of a global spillover. The property sector, which along with construction accounts for about a quarter of China's GDP, is a key pillar of the country's growth and has experienced a dazzling boom in recent decades. But the massive debt accrued by the industry's biggest players—Evergrande had estimated debt of \$328 billion (307 billion euros) at the end of June—has been seen by Beijing in recent years as an unacceptable risk for China's financial system and overall economic health.

Gazprom delivers LNG to China in Arctic sea route first

MOSCOW: Russian energy giant Gazprom said Friday it has made a first delivery of liquefied natural gas to China via the Arctic Northern Sea Route as receding ice sheets render the route more viable.

Russian authorities hope the route will help increase oil and gas deliveries to Asia at a time when Moscow's traditional European clients are ramping down their energy dependence on Russia following the conflict in Ukraine. "Gazprom has for the first time delivered its own LNG production along the Northern Sea Route," the company said in a statement.

The Arctic route cuts down the duration of shipments by more than a week compared with using the Suez Canal in Egypt. Gazprom said LNG carrier Velikiy Novgorod, which left the LNG terminal at Portovaya outside the western city of St Petersburg on August 14, finished discharging its cargo Friday at the northeastern Chinese port of Tangshan in Hebei province.

Private group Novatek, number two natural gas producer in Russia behind Gazprom, used the same route to deliver to China in 2018. The route "allows a substantial reduction in the time it takes to make LNG deliveries to Asia-Pacific countries," Gazprom stated.

With Russia hit by Western sanctions over Ukraine, Gazprom, a pillar of the national economy, wants to maintain volume of LNG deliveries after a slump in European deliveries. Gazprom's net profit fell eightfold in the first half of the year to \$3 billion. — AFP



CAPITAL INCREASE SUBSCRIPTION ANNOUNCEMENT

SANAM REAL ESTATE CO. (K.S.C.C)

The commercial register No.: 32700

SANAM Real Estate Company cordially invites qualified shareholders and priority rights holders to participate in the subscription for the offered shares.

Number of Offering Shares	21,649,050 Ordinary Shares
Offering Price	100 Fils Per Share (Free of Issuance Premium)
Total Offering Value	KWD 2,164,905
Subscription Period	Starts on Sunday, September 24, 2023, and ends on Thursday, October 12, 2023 (Inclusive).
Priority Rights Trading Period	Starts on Sunday, September 24, 2023, and ends on Thursday, October 5, 2023 (Inclusive).
Eligible Subscribers	Shareholders of the company listed in the company's shareholder register as of September 21, 2023, or those to whom priority rights have been transferred.
Subscription Website For Inquiries	www.ipo.com Masar Leasing and Investment Company info@masarinvest.com 22277699 - 22277696

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Business

US auto talks at 'critical phase' amid growing political pressure

Obama supports striking auto workers

WASHINGTON: High-wire talks between striking US workers and automotive giants are in a "critical phase," Jeep-maker Stellantis said Saturday, as politicians staked out positions on a labor issue that could have national impact. Stellantis, together with fellow "Big Three" automakers General Motors and Ford, was hit Friday by a limited strike — but one the United Auto Workers (UAW) warns could spread.

Both sides issued cautious statements Saturday. "Our bargaining team continues to work days, nights and weekends" in pursuit of a "reasonable" solution, said the statement from Stellantis, which was formed by the merger of Fiat Chrysler and the French PSA Group. But the automaker warned that if talks took a bad turn, the outcome "will take us backward and endanger the long-term competitiveness of our Company, negatively impacting our workers and our communities."

There was no immediate formal response from the union, but a UAW source told AFP, "we had reasonably productive conversations with Ford today."

Only about 12,700 of the UAW's 150,000 members are currently on strike. But with workers at all of the Big Three coordinating strike action for the first time — including a demand for pay increases of 40 percent over a four-year contract — the automakers could face a far more disruptive stoppage. Underscoring the political stakes of the moment, President Joe Biden quickly lent his support to the strikers Friday, saying he understood their "frustration."

Political lines

And on Saturday, former president Barack Obama lent his backing, with a reference to the 2008-09 financial crisis. "When the big three automakers were struggling to stay afloat, my administration and the American people stepped in to support them," he said on social media. "So did the auto workers in the UAW who sacrificed pay and benefits to help get the companies back on their feet."

"Now that our carmakers are enjoying robust profits, it's time to do right by those same workers." Democratic Senators Gary Peters, from Michigan, and John Fetterman, from Pennsylvania, posted pictures on social media Saturday of the two of them joining UAW workers on a picket line in Michigan.

"Welcome to Michigan @SenFettermanPA," Peters wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter.

"Great to have you join us... standing in solidarity," he added. "I will always have your back," Fetterman posted, saying it was an "honor" to walk with the strikers. But former president Donald Trump, who hopes to face Biden in next year's US presidential election, lashed out at the UAW as over-reaching.

"The auto workers will not have any jobs... because all of these cars are going to be made in China — the electric cars, automatically, are going to be made in China," he said in an interview to be aired Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press." In its statement, Stellantis said the UAW was misrepresenting its proposals. It said its current offer would give employees a 21 percent pay raise over the term of the contract, with 10 percent coming upon ratification.

General Motors upped its offer Thursday, lifting a



DETROIT: Members of the United Auto Workers (UAW) union march through the streets of downtown Detroit following a rally on the first day of the UAW strike in Detroit, Michigan, on September 15, 2023. — AFP

proposed wage increase from 18 to 20 percent, according to the UAW. But hourly workers say the auto giants must produce significantly better packages to make up for what they call meager wages and ben-

efit cuts after the 2008 financial crisis, when both GM and Chrysler, now part of Stellantis, underwent bankruptcy reorganizations. They also want pay boosts for lower-paid temporary workers. — AFP

China retail sales surge in August

BEIJING: Chinese retail sales jumped last month, data showed Friday, beating expectations and fuelling hopes that consumers are helping kickstart the world's second-biggest economy. Sluggish domestic consumption, an embattled property sector and soft overseas demand for China's exports have complicated the country's post-COVID recovery after restrictions were lifted last year.

The retail data, which also revealed a better-than-expected rise in industrial output, is the latest pointing to a stabilization and follows a number of stimulus measures by the government.

Retail sales — the main indicator of household consumption that is closely followed by markets — jumped 4.6 percent on-year in August, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said. That marked a big improvement on July's 2.5 percent and was higher than the three percent forecast in a Bloomberg survey of economists.

Meanwhile, industrial production climbed 4.5 percent on-year, which was also a significant increase from July and more than estimated. The government in recent weeks announced a series of measures to lift the economy, the latest coming Thursday with the People's Bank of China

cutting the amount of cash lenders need to keep in reserve — a move aimed at freeing up cash for loans.

Authorities have also unveiled tax breaks for households and businesses to support consumption, while taking steps to address the crisis in the crucial property sector.

Several major cities, including Beijing and Shanghai, have relaxed their criteria for mortgage loans, while first-time buyers have been granted renegotiation of their loan rates. "China's activity data improved from July's low point, showing tentative signs that we may be past the trough," HSBC economists said in a note. "However, with ongoing headwinds from the property sector and longer term structural challenges such as from local government debt, Beijing will likely need to continue to provide ongoing policy support to build up the recovery momentum."

Struggles ahead

While Friday's data was welcome, some figures highlighted the struggles ahead. Property prices fell again in August, suggesting the government's measures were yet to have an effect. On Thursday, Moody's downgraded the outlook for China's property sector from "stable" to "negative", argu-



BEIJING: Chinese retail sales jumped last month, data showed Friday, beating expectations and fuelling hopes that consumers are helping kickstart the world's second-biggest economy.

ing that the support measures will only have a short-term impact.

And on Friday, state-backed developer Sino-Ocean announced it would suspend payments of offshore debts, the latest company to show signs of trouble. The unemployment rate for the working population as a whole fell slightly in August to 5.2 percent.

Unemployment data no longer includes a breakdown for 16- to 24-year-olds, after a record high in June of 21.3 percent. On Friday, NBS spokesman Fu Linghui said the job market for young people has "clearly improved", but did not provide figures to support that claim.

In China, the unemployment rate is calculated for urban areas only, and

therefore gives only a partial picture of the situation. Fixed capital investment, meanwhile, slowed to 3.2 percent on-year in the first eight months of the year.

That marks the fourth month of decline for the indicator, which reflects spending on property, infrastructure, equipment and machinery — sectors that the government has relied on in the past to stimulate activity. "Some may be of the view that China's economy has already bottomed out, but we remain cautious," wrote Nomura's Ting Lu in a note.

"We believe that the recent raft of supportive measures in the property sector may not be enough to turn things around, and Beijing still needs to ramp up policy support to deliver a more sustainable recovery." — AFP



NEW YORK: A light display created using drones is performed before the city skyline and United Nations headquarters. — AFP

Fading hopes for improving lives on planet at UN

UNITED NATIONS: World leaders meeting in New York next week will try to revive key goals meant to improve the lot of humanity by 2030, plans that are in doubt today as hunger, poverty and other crises persist.

Leave no one behind

In 2015, UN member-states adopted 17 wide-ranging development goals to be met by 2030, which included eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, providing access to drinking water, ensuring gender equality and health care for all. "In thriving economically in the 21st century, you cannot any longer try to do so at the expense of nature, or at the expense of people who are left behind," the head of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Achim Steiner, told AFP. But the 2030 Agenda is in trouble, according to the UN.

"The Sustainable Development goals are in peril," the UN said in a report published in July. In order to meet these goals, governments coming together at the UN General Assembly on Monday are slated to commit to "act with urgency... for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership, leaving no one behind," according to the draft declaration.

Poverty and hunger

Progress has been slow and, in some cases, things are even worse now than they were in 2015. The COVID-19 pandemic has halted progress in combating extreme poverty, defined as living on less than \$2.15 per day. Far from the hoped-for eradication, at the current rate 575 million people will still be living in such conditions in 2030, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa.

And the world has returned to levels of hunger not seen since 2005. Furthermore, 1.1 billion people live in urban areas in slum-like conditions, more than two billion still do not have access to drinking water, 38 out of 1,000 children die before their fifth birthday and the impacts of climate change are increasingly devastating.

Debt burden

Crippled by various world crises, from COVID-19 to the war in Ukraine, many countries are crumbling under the weight of their debt and do not have the means to change course. "Countries are not able to pursue the development they want right now, but they can only opt for a recovery, where they go for the growth they can get," Steiner said.

That, however, is a risky path. "That growth takes us back to the fossil fuel dependency and to greater inequalities, precisely the things that have led to so many tensions, protests on our streets," he added. — AFP

Khaitan Metro pharmacy inaugurated

KUWAIT: The new pharmacy 'Our Metro' from Metro Medical Group, the famous and experienced healthcare providers which has many years of experience in the field of medical in Kuwait, opened in Khaitan. The sixth pharmacy of the Metro Medical Group was inaugurated in connection with the opening of the Khaitan Metro, the new branch of the Metro Medical Group.

On the occasion of the new pharmacy's inauguration, exclusive offers have been made available at Khaitan Metro Pharmacy as well as Metro Medical Group's pharmacies at Farwaniya, Salmiya and Fahheel, the management person said.

Indian Ambassador Dr Adarsh Swaika inaugurated the program and the event was witnessed by Major General Md Ashikkuzzamaan and diplomats from several embassies in Kuwait, business icons, IBPC members, ABCK members and prominent personalities of Kuwait's social and cultural scene.



KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador Dr Adarsh Swaika inaugurates the new pharmacy 'Our Metro'.

Nigeria names new central bank chief

ABUJA: Nigeria's President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has named a US-educated former investment banker as his new central bank chief months after the predecessor was arrested as part of a criminal investigation, the government said on Friday.

Tinubu's appointee, Olayemi Michael Cardoso, is a Harvard graduate and former Citibank director in Nigeria, according to local media reports.

Since the Nigerian leader came to office in May, Tinubu has swiftly imple-



Olayemi Michael Cardoso

mented reforms to attract more investment to Africa's largest economy as part of his "Renewed Hope" agenda. "President Bola Tinubu has approved the nomination of Dr. Olayemi Michael Cardoso to serve as the new Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)," the presidency said in a statement. — AFP

US industrial production keeps expanding

WASHINGTON: US industrial production kept expanding in August, the Federal Reserve said Friday, beating expectations even though the pace of the increase slowed due to sluggish manufacturing growth. Overall industrial production rose by 0.4 percent, up from a revised 0.7 percent a month earlier, the Federal Reserve announced in a statement.

This was above the median expectation of economists surveyed by MarketWatch. The August reading for manufacturing was up just 0.1 percent, "held back" by a five percent

decline in motor vehicles and parts, the Fed said. This marked a sharp turnaround from July, when a jump in motor vehicle production helped spur a 0.4 percent increase in manufacturing, pushing industrial production back into positive territory.

"Overall industrial production rose more than expected in August but manufacturing output matched consensus expectations," High Frequency Economics Chief US Economist Rubeela Farooqi wrote in a note to clients. "Higher borrowing costs and weaker demand for goods are headwinds for manufacturing," she added. Factory output rose by 0.6 percent, while the index for mining was up 1.4 percent from a month earlier. Year-on-year, overall industrial production expanded by 0.2 percent. — AFP

Business

S&P Global affirms Saudi Arabia's 'A/A-1' ratings; outlook stable

Agency commends measures to foster non-oil economic growth

NEW YORK: S&P Global Ratings affirmed its 'A/A-1' foreign and local-currency unsolicited sovereign credit ratings on Saudi Arabia. The outlook is stable. At the same time, the agency maintained its 'A+' transfer and convertibility (T&C) assessment on the sovereign. The stable outlook balances the expectation that the government's reform agenda will continue to underpin the development of the non-oil sector and support non-oil growth and fiscal receipts, against the cyclical nature of a still hydrocarbon-focused economy, with fiscal and societal pressures tied to a growing population.

"We could raise the ratings over the next two years if reforms progress further, alongside strong real per capita economic growth and fiscal discipline. Furthermore, measures to strengthen institutions that, for example, further support the development of domestic capital markets, could be positive for the ratings," the agency said in its report.

"Reforms in the past few years, including measures to drive non-oil economic growth and widen the non-oil tax base, alongside significant social liberalization, should continue to improve Saudi Arabia's economic and fiscal profile," the rating agency said on Friday.

Saudi Arabia's economy grew by 1.2 per cent in the second quarter of this year, a slightly faster pace than the initial estimates, driven by a sharp expansion in the non-oil sector of the Arab world's biggest economy. The kingdom's gross domestic product at current prices reached 970 billion riyals (\$258.66 billion) in the three months to the end of June, the General Authority for Statistics said earlier this month. The non-oil sector grew by 6.1 per cent on an annual basis, beating the Gastat initial estimate of 5.5 per cent expansion in the three-month period.

"We could lower the ratings if real per capita GDP growth were to fall sharply on a sustained basis or we observed significant fiscal weakening, including via an erosion of the government's net asset position, beyond our expectations. A sustained rise in domestic or regional instability could also weigh on the ratings," the report said.

Rationale

The ratings are underpinned by Saudi Arabia's sustained reform momentum in recent years. Reforms have included measures to foster non-oil economic growth, supported by sovereign-wealth-

fund-led non-oil investments; a widening of the non-oil tax base, and significant social liberalization, against a backdrop of a large growing population driving consumption demand. These factors combine with Saudi Arabia's longstanding and unique position as the world's largest swing oil producer (with spare installed production capacity permitting it to cut or raise production levels relatively quickly), its leadership role in OPEC+, and its consequent ability to influence global oil price trends.



After very strong real GDP growth of 8.7 percent in 2022 (the fastest among G20 countries), Saudi Arabia's growth will slow to 0.2 percent in 2023. This comes after global economic conditions, including a subdued rebound in China, led to global oil demand weakening in late 2022 and early 2023, prompting OPEC+ (with Saudi Arabia at the forefront) to cut oil production levels, and resulting in a contraction in the Saudi oil sector. However, this lower production is being partially offset by strong non-oil GDP growth, while recent supply side tightness in the global oil market has led Brent (and Saudi Arabia's Arab-light) prices to edge above \$90 per barrel (/ bbl) in early September. From 2024 onward, we expect higher global oil demand to lead to an increase in Saudi production levels, and this, alongside non-oil growth, will see GDP growth rebound and average 3.4 percent in 2024-2026.

• After 8.7 percent real GDP growth in 2022, we forecast a deceleration to 0.2 percent in 2023, owing to oil production cuts, and then a rebound to 3.4 percent in 2024-2026. We expect current production cuts to remain until the end of 2023.

• The non-oil sector is forecast to remain strong in 2023-2026, with contributions from strong service-sector growth, supported by consumer

demand, significant ongoing social liberalization, and a growing female workforce.

• The economy also continues to benefit from large investment projects in the pipeline, largely funded by the Public Investment Fund (PIF; the country's main sovereign wealth fund with a wide mandate to invest abroad and domestically) and the National Development Fund (NDF).

After very strong real GDP growth of 8.7 percent in 2022 as oil production and prices, alongside strong non-oil GDP, supported growth, Saudi Arabia and OPEC+ began cutting oil production from late 2022 given global economic weakness. In turn, real growth slowed to 3.8 percent year on year in first-quarter 2023 and 1.1 percent in the second quarter, with a 5.5 percent increase in non-oil activities and 2.7 percent decline in government activities, despite a 4.2 percent decline in oil activities as production decreased. Most non-oil activity, except for manufacturing, performed well. Given further significant oil production cuts from July onward, we expect full-year real GDP growth to stand at 0.2 percent in 2023, then average 2.6 percent in 2023-2026. Oil production levels (supported by strong non-oil growth) should then increase in line with higher global demand in 2024.

In May 2023, the Saudi statistics authority announced the final results of the 2022 census: population numbers were below previous estimates, partly due to significant numbers of migrants leaving during the pandemic. The results supported a rise in GDP per capita. Our estimate of Saudi Arabia's GDP per capita fell just below \$23,300 in 2020, down from a pre-pandemic \$27,900 in 2019, but rebounded sharply to \$34,400 in 2022, and we forecast it will average \$32,400 in 2023-2026.

Saudi Arabia's majority state-owned oil major, Saudi Aramco, posted the highest profits of any company in history in 2022. Net income amounted to \$161 billion for the year, up 47 percent from 2021, spurred by higher oil prices and refining margins and increased volumes. Aramco's strong financial performance also supported the government's fiscal position through dividend payments of \$75 billion in 2022, alongside taxes and royalties. After those record-breaking profits, in first-half 2023 the company reported a profit of \$62 billion, a 30 percent decline in net half-year income, owing to softer prices and reduced volumes of production. It also announced a dividend of \$19.5 billion in the second quarter, with

• Reforms in the past few years, including measures to drive non-oil economic growth and widen the non-oil tax base, alongside significant social liberalization, should continue to improve Saudi Arabia's economic and fiscal profile.

• Large cuts in Saudi oil production in 2023 are expected to dampen real GDP growth and drive a fiscal deficit, although increasing production and strong non-oil growth from 2024 onward will lead to a rebound in growth and a return to fiscal surpluses.

• We therefore affirmed our 'A/A-1' unsolicited ratings on Saudi Arabia. The outlook remains stable.

another \$19.5 billion expected in the third quarter, and plans to continue delivering performance-based dividends. Aramco aims to spend about \$50 billion per year on supporting domestic oil and gas production and overseas activities.

Saudi oil production averaged 10.6 million barrels per day (mmbbl/d) in 2022, compared with an average of 9.1 mmbbl/d in 2021, 9.2 mmbbl/d in 2020, and 9.8 mmbbl/d in 2019. Given cuts in production it is now forecast to average 9.6 mmbbl/d in 2023, and rise slowly in the forecast period. After averaging \$72/bbl in 2021, Brent oil prices averaged \$102/bbl in 2022, and S&P Global Ratings forecasts \$82/bbl in 2023 and \$85/bbl in 2024-2026 (for more information, see "S&P Global Ratings Lowers Hydrocarbon Price Assumptions On Moderate Demand," published June 22, 2023, on RatingsDirect). Prices for 2025 and 2026 are forecast to be significantly higher on average than what we had at our previous review in March, supporting our outer-year economic forecasts.



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2023

(965) 22 675 140
Al-Safat Tower, Hawalli, Beirut St.
alsafatinvest.com
research@alsafatinvest.com
alsafatinvestment
al-safat-investment-company

Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	33,097	7,705.16	0.2%	0.1%	-5.1%	333,052,275	121,305,091	27,102	18.0	1.2	77.7%
Main Market	9,517	5,755.00	0.6%	1.1%	2.8%	487,118,596	54,351,035	22,621	12.9	0.8	22.3%
All Share	42,614	7,029.12	0.3%	0.3%	-3.6%	820,170,871	175,656,125	49,723	14.1	0.8	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Banking	25,545	1,708.54	0.5%	0.6%	-4.8%	123,867,117	60,623,519	11,386	17.8	1.1	59.95%
Basic Materials	485	860.19	-1.2%	-2.3%	-0.6%	6,788,121	4,779,066	1,404	9.7	2.0	1.14%
Consumer Discretionary	1,036	1,541.95	-1.1%	-3.6%	3.7%	29,852,336	9,672,581	3,911	12.7	0.9	2.43%
Consumer Staples	188	619.59	1.9%	1.8%	29.1%	3,497,679	1,742,997	328	78.6	1.1	0.44%
Energy	206	984.70	-1.2%	-1.1%	-13.5%	5,288,028	291,065	371	9.7	0.6	0.48%
Financial Services	4,519	1,278.47	0.6%	0.7%	1.7%	398,180,855	52,195,801	14,251	28.1	0.8	10.60%
Health Care	239	482.72	2.8%	0.0%	4.5%	4,050	1,847.95	9	12.6	1.0	0.56%
Industrials	3,263	939.39	-0.6%	-0.1%	-12.9%	60,859,716	21,792,540	7,016	14.4	0.9	7.66%
Insurance	902	2,210.13	-0.4%	-1.9%	42.5%	885,921	304,918	231	10.2	0.9	2.12%
Real Estate	2,616	1,220.78	0.9%	0.5%	1.0%	174,342,163	15,985,740	7,752	14.8	0.6	6.14%
Technology	8	560.17	-0.5%	-3.8%	-19.5%	1,150	87.94	4	NM	0.7	0.02%
Telecommunications	3,392	1,109.80	-0.8%	0.5%	-6.1%	14,841,783	7,924,966	2,829	10.4	1.4	7.96%
Utilities	215	513.16	1.6%	0.5%	3.7%	1,761,952	340,997	231	15.7	1.8	0.50%

Top Gainers

Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
EQUIPMENT	32.9	29.02%	14,831,932	468,112	796
AGHC	499	16.59%	16,630,212	7,936,163	1,774
CGC	430	10.26%	7,545,179	3,092,403	574
ATC	479	9.86%	4,050	1,848	9
AMAR	60.9	9.73%	5	0	1

Top Losers

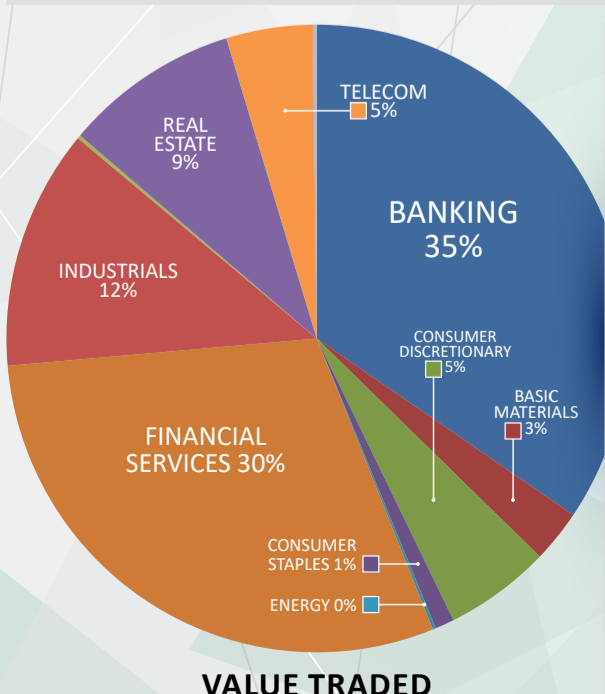
Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
TAMINV	486	-9.83%	202,345	103,906	15
ALOLA	49.2	-9.56%	4,796,345	250,466	345
NICBM	158	-9.20%	378,975	60,799	34
SULTAN	110	-8.33%	697,133	78,203	121
GFC	54	-7.69%	10,100	585	8

Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
ASIYA	56	2.00%	44,626,091	2,510,422	905
MASAKEN	32.7	6.86%	42,628,967	1,489,613	1,369
ARZAN	168	1.20%	42,353,524	7,111,412	853
IFA	198	1.54%	39,704,363	7,859,795	974
MANAZEL	30.1	2.73%	39,519,662	1,224,611	990

Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	747	-0.27%	33,770,554	25,242,847	4,462
NBK	925	0.65%	21,013,467	19,332,522	2,700
AGHC	499	16.59%	16,630,212	7,936,163	1,774
IFA	198	1.54%	39,704,363	7,859,795	974
ARZAN	168	1.20%	42,353,524	7,111,412	853



Market Summary:

• Premier market volume and value dropped 16% and 5%, while the Main market increased 27% and 2%, respectively.

• The Premier index is relatively stable and moving horizontally, while the Main index is showing strength and dragging on an uptrend.

• Technically, the All Share index closed at 7029, with support levels at 7000, 6981, and 6959, while resistance at 7041. The Premier index closed at 7705, with support levels at 7701, 7657, and 7639, while resistance at 7030. The Main index closed at 5755, with support levels at 5750, 5723, and 5696, while resistance at 5780.



Models present creations for British fashion label JW Anderson during the catwalk presentation for their Spring/Summer 2024 collection, during London Fashion Week in London. — AFP photos



Models pose for pictures and have their final preparations made backstage ahead of the catwalk presentation for London-based label Labrum's Spring/Summer 2024 collection.



Models present creations for British designer Feben.



Bora Aksu

FROM STREETWEAR TO RED CARPET, LONDON FASHION WEEK OFFERS CHOICES



From streetwear to elegant evening dresses, the catwalks of London Fashion Week were not short of choices as designers showcased their spring and summer 2024 collections.

JW Anderson and clay

The invitation to the show of fashion label JW Anderson was a block of clay, arousing the curiosity of the guests. The first models walked down the catwalk in Bermuda shorts and hoodies made from play-dough, resembling moving sculptures.

Then followed colorful ensembles from a shiny plastic material, crochet dresses and feathers worn as belts and on sleeves. Jonathan Anderson also showcased oversized bomber jackets, long enough to cover the thighs, and trenchcoats with long skirts. "Using jackets as dresses becomes very simple," Anderson, who is also the creative director of Spanish fashion house Loewe, explained after the show.

His show, a staple of London Fashion Week, attracted celebrities including British actresses Suki Waterhouse and Jenna Coleman as well as actor Ncuti Gatwa of TV show "Sex Education". Vogue's editor-in-chief Anna Wintour was also among the guests, sitting next to Edward Enninful, the outgoing editor-in-chief of British Vogue.

Enninful will be stepping down in January to take on a global advisor role at Vogue publisher Conde Nast. Media reports have suggested a power struggle between the two but it did not show in front of the cameras.

Red carpet fashion

London-based designer David Koma is known for his contouring dresses. At his show, models walked the runway to the music of Beyonce, who lists among the clients of the Georgian designer. His collection was dominated by dark colors, especially black, but there were also designs in yellow, orange and even neon pink. Some of the dresses were asymmetrical, short in the front and long at the

back, and were worn with tall, over-the-knee boots.

Evening dresses were also at the show of designer Feben, a recent graduate of London's Central Saint Martins university. Among her collection were largely transparent dresses made entirely of beads with long fringed skirts.

Eudon Choi, the impressionist

The collection of South Korean designer Eudon Choi was inspired by the works of French Impressionist painter Berthe Morisot. Models of all ages walked the runway at his show with some of Choi's designs presented by older women. The collection, presented in the garden of a church in central London, was elegant and refined. The designer wanted to freeze a moment in time in the way Morisot, the 19th-century artist, had done in her paintings.



The looks were often monochrome with a neutral color palette. The tones evolved from a soft powder pink to anthracite grey. With the colors, the outfits transitioned from daytime to evening wear, combining transparent



and opaque fabrics. Choi also used floral patterns and the contrast of black and white.

Roksanda and Serbian monasteries

Roksanda Ilincic, the founder of fashion brand Roksanda, was inspired by the monasteries of her native Serbia. Tall head-dresses worn by models at her show resembled those worn by Orthodox priests.

The straight, almost austere lines of some pieces were countered by a vibrant pop of color or heels with tassels. Silk dresses and capes were accessorized with large jewelry items, which blended in to become part of the garment. The silhouettes were sometimes straight and narrow, sometimes fluid and moving, sometimes imposing and rigid.

Labrum, 'designed by an immigrant'

British label Labrum's collection was inspired by a nomoli, a figurine from Sierra Leone, where founder and creative director Foday Dumbuya was born. The winner of this year's prestigious Queen Elizabeth II Award for British Design opened his show with ex-footballer Ian Wright walking the runway in a double-breasted suit and Adidas Samba sneakers.

The collection continued mixing casual and formal elements, with designs featuring mixed



textures and high-contrast patterns. Male and female models walked to music by singer-songwriter Tawiah, with piano accompaniment. Dumbuya chose the Four Seasons as his venue to bring the people of Brixton "into a world where they think they don't belong", he told AFP.

"The story I'm telling is about population movements, migration," added the designer, whose brand is known for the unofficial slogan "designed by an immigrant". London Fashion Week continues on Sunday with showcases from Ukraine-born Masha Popova and fashion house Erdem, among others. —AFP



Models present creations by London-based Turkish designer Bora Aksu during a catwalk presentation for his Spring/Summer 2024 collection, during London Fashion Week in London.

Lifestyle

Jann Wenner axed from Rock hall of fame board

The cofounder of Rolling Stone magazine, Jann Wenner, has been ousted from his seat on the board of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Foundation for comments blasted as racist and sexist, US media reported Saturday. Wenner's removal from the board of the foundation came only a day after his remarks were published in The New York Times, generating wide criticism. "Jann Wenner has been removed from the board of directors of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Foundation," a short statement from the foundation said, according to industry sheet Variety.

The 77-year-old Wenner cofounded Rolling Stone magazine in 1967, and in subsequent decades he celebrated a multitude of rock legends in its pages in lengthy interviews. Wenner also set up the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Foundation, which selects artists to be honored, and served as its chairman until 2020.

In the Times report published Friday, Wenner was asked why he didn't feature any interviews with people of color or female musicians in his new book, "The Masters," now in print. Wenner said the seven subjects in the book "were the kind of philosophers of rock" who had deep things to say about the spirit of their generation.

"These are the ones that could really articulate it," Wenner said. The subjects whom Wenner profiles are Bob Dylan, John Lennon, Mick Jagger, Pete Townshend, Jerry Garcia, Bono and Bruce Springsteen, all white men. On women, Wenner said, "Just none of them were as articulate enough on this intellectual level."



Founder of Rolling Stone Magazine and Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Founder, Jann Wenner speaks onstage at the 32nd Annual Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame Induction Ceremony at Barclays Center in New York City. --AFP

"Of Black artists—you know, Stevie Wonder, genius, right? I suppose when you use a word as broad as 'masters,' the fault is using that word. Maybe Marvin Gaye, or Curtis Mayfield? I mean, they just didn't articulate at that level." Wenner voiced awareness in the interview that his remarks would grate on some.

"Just for public relations' sake, maybe I should have gone and found one Black and one woman artist to include here that didn't measure up to that same historical standard, just to avert this kind of criticism," Wenner said. Rolling Stone became the leading music magazine of its time, later expanding into cultural affairs, conducting interviews of top politicians and fostering a style of "new journalism" that brought techniques of fiction writing to the reporting of stories. Wenner sold a controlling stake in Rolling Stone magazine in 2017 in a deal that valued the publication at a reported \$110 million. —AFP

AI 'no substitute' for fashion designers' creativity

AI is transforming the fashion world but the fast growing technology will never be a replacement for designers' "original creativity", according to the head of a pioneering project. Fashion innovator Calvin Wong has developed the Interactive Design Assistant for Fashion (AiDA) -- the world's first designer-led AI system. It uses image-recognition technology to speed up the time it takes for a design to go from a first sketch to the catwalk.

"Designers have their fabric prints, patterns, color tones, initial sketches and they upload the images," Wong told AFP. "Then our AI system can recognize those design elements and come up with more proposals for designers to refine and modify their original design." Wong said AiDA's particular strength was its ability to present "all the possible combinations" for a designer to consider, something he said was impossible in the current design process.

An exhibition at Hong Kong's M+ Museum in December featured collections by 14 designers developed using the tool. But Wong stressed it was about "facilitating designers inspiration" not "using AI to take over a designers job, to take over their creativity". "We must treasure the designer's original creativity," he added. Wong heads up the Laboratory for Artificial Intelligence in Design (AidLab), a collaboration between Britain's Royal College of Art (RCA) and Hong Kong Polytechnic University where he is a professor in fashion.

'Transformational'

RCA vice chancellor Naren Barfield predicted the impact of AI on the fashion industry would be "transformational". "The impact is going to be huge from the ideation and conception stage through to prototyping, right the way through to manufacture, distribution



Fashion designing tools are seen in the studio of fashion designer Phoebe English in Deptford, south of London. — AFP

and then ultimately recycling," he said. So-called personalization is already being used to improve customer experience with better product recommendations and more effective searches, helping shoppers find what they want quickly and easily. But as the technology evolves so too is the range of highly specialized tools being developed.

AiDA was just one of the AidLab projects being showcased in the British capital ahead of London Fashion Week, which started on Friday. Others included the Neo Couture project which aims to use advanced technologies to digitally preserve the specialised skills and techniques used by couturiers. With the UK fashion industry facing a skills shortage, it is creating an AI-assisted training system to help teach couture skills.

Another project aims to increase sustainability to reduce the estimated 92 million tons of clothing that ends up in landfill each year. One potential use of the AI Loupe project is to help designers overcome the problems of using so-called dead stock fabric.

Designers can photograph leftover fabric and then use the tool to get the

missing details to assess its suitability for their designs. "It uses the camera as your index, the material is the QR code that brings the information," said project researcher Chipp Jansen.

Retain control

The future of AI in fashion design, however, is not clear cut. New York brand Collina Strada's founder Hillary Taymour this week admitted that she and her team used AI image generator Midjourney to create the collection they showed at New York Fashion Week. Although Taymour only used images of the brand's own past looks to help generate its Spring/Summer 2024 collection, looming legal issues could keep AI-generated clothes off the catwalks for now.

"In terms of fashion designed by AI, I would expect to hear from designers that there are questions of intellectual property rights," said Rebecca Lewin, a senior curator at London's Design Museum. "Because whatever comes back will have been scraped from published images and to get that regulated will need a lot of work." The RCA's Barfield said the area would be tricky but he expected it to be resolved through test cases and legislation. "I don't know how fast (AI) will be transformational but if it gives companies competitive advantage I think they'll invest and take it up quickly," he said. The only thing currently holding companies back was the "massive investment" in infrastructure required, he said.

"But once they've done that they can take the plunge then they will be making savings on material waste and productivity," he added. As for designers' fears that it might become a substitute for the human creative process, he said the key was who controlled the decision making. —AFP

The goliath grouper, a colossus of a fish that can weigh up to 360 kilograms (nearly 800 pounds), is the delight of divers in Florida, though scientists warn their numbers are down since the US state allowed fishing of the giants to resume. "There's nowhere else you can have an experience with a fish that big while you're diving—and being this close to it," Dr James Locascio, a marine biologist with the Mote Marine Laboratory, told AFP. "And so, really, we feel that the fish is worth a lot more alive than it is dead."



During a sea trip early this month off Boynton Beach, on Florida's Atlantic coast north of Miami, divers were amazed by these giants, which can measure up to 2.4 meters (eight feet) long. With naturally down-turned mouths, these creatures may appear cranky, but some actually allow themselves to be brushed by a human hand.

'Fewer and fewer'

"We were totally amazed about the amount of groupers that show up to the Boynton Beach area," diver Ben Galemno told AFP. Still, he added, "from talking to the locals, (the population) has actually gone down in numbers" in

Huge groupers, the joy of Florida divers, are now 'vulnerable'



recent years. A recent study confirms that trend.

"The diving industry has reported that they are seeing fewer and fewer of these fish," said Locascio, the marine biologist. That could devastate the local diving business. Last year, when researchers with the Mote laboratory repeated a census of spawning sites first conducted in 2013, they

observed significantly fewer goliath groupers in five of the six locations studied.

Overfishing had left the species near extinction in the 1980s, but conservation efforts saved it. Goliath grouper fishing was banned for more than 30 years. But in the past year Florida authorities deemed the population had recovered sufficiently, and al-

lowed 200 of the fish to be caught and killed each year in state waters. Unfortunately, the goliath grouper lends itself to overfishing partly because it grows slowly—it can live as long as 30 years—and takes a relatively long time to reproduce. The goliath is now classed as a "vulnerable" species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, according to Locascio.

Calling the fish "an essential species for maintaining the balance of the ecosystem," he added, "We do not want its population to decline." The huge fish also lives in the waters of the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean, and off the coast of Brazil. —AFP



Atlantic goliath grouper fish swim near Boynton Beach, Florida. — AFP photos



Sports

Finland reach Davis Cup last eight for first time, beat US

Finland write a new page in tennis history

PARIS: Finland wrote a new page in their tennis history on Saturday, beating the United States 2-1 in Split to reach the last eight of the Davis Cup for the first time. Australia and defending champions Canada also qualified while Novak Djokovic played doubles in a losing cause for Serbia against Czech Republic in a dead rubber with both teams already through to the final stages to be played in Malaga in November. Otto Virtanen set the Finns rolling in the winner-take-all match against the Americans with a 7-6 (7/5), 1-6, 7-6 (9/7) win over Mackenzie McDonald.

Emil Ruusuvuori then followed up with a 7-6 (7/1), 6-4 victory against world number 13 Tommy Paul on his fourth match point, sending Finland through with Netherlands from Group D. "You can hear it from the (fans). It means a lot for the whole country, for tennis in Finland. It's a huge thing," 24-year-old Ruusuvuori said post-match. "We're going to Malaga!" Alexis Galarneau saw off Alejandro Tabilo 6-3, 7-6 (7/5) to give Canada an early lead over Chile but the South Americans levelled the tie when Nicolas Jarry strolled to a 6-4, 6-4 win over Gabriel Diallo.

The Canadians won the tie when Galarneau teamed up with Vasek Pospisil to beat Tabilo and Tomas Barrios Vera 6-4, 7-6 (9/7) in the doubles. Chile's hopes of progressing now depend on Italy, who are currently second in the group, losing 3-0 to Sweden on Sunday. Djokovic sat out the singles in Serbia's dead rubber against the Czechs but did not disappoint the crowd in Valencia as he partnered Nikola Cacic in the doubles, losing 7-5, 6-7 (9/7), 10-3 to Tomas Machac and Adam Pavlasek.

Australia booked their place with an emphatic 3-0 win over Switzerland in Glasgow. Thanasi Kokkinakis and Alex de Minaur won their singles matches in straight sets to win the tie but Australia did not stamp their passage to Malaga until doubles duo Matthew Ebden and Max Purcell completed the sweep and guaranteed Australia a top-two finish in Group B. Britain or



Emil Ruusuvuori of Finland

France, who meet on Sunday, will join the Australians in Spain in November.

Format row

Three-time major winner Stan Wawrinka did not take to the court but his comments about the poor crowds in Glasgow earlier in the week has stirred discussion over the future of the current Davis Cup format. Wawrinka posted contrasting videos on his social media of Switzerland's first match against France which showed the stands almost empty and their second against hosts Britain on Friday where the atmosphere was pumping. "We see the difference

between today and three days ago - it's not normal," said Wawrinka. Since 2019, the historic competition has been converted to a World Cup-style event with group stages and matches on neutral soil, with many of the matches played out in front of low crowd numbers. Rising criticism has called for a return to the pre-2019 system of home and away ties in front of partisan crowds supporting their country. Mark Woodforde, who played for Australia in three Davis Cup finals, is chair of the Davis Cup committee and rejects the criticism. "We're fully aware that some players will say, 'Why don't we go back to that home-and-away format?'," he said on Saturday. — AFP

Sainz on Singapore GP pole after Verstappen's 'shocking' qualifying

SINGAPORE: Carlos Sainz took pole position for Ferrari on Saturday for the Singapore Grand Prix, but championship leader Max Verstappen will start from the back half of the grid after a "shocking" qualifying session. Verstappen was eliminated in Q2 after finishing 11th fastest in an "undriveable" Red Bull and then escaped penalties that could have demoted him to last place.

Verstappen faced stewards late on Saturday after being accused of impeding cars in the pit lane and twice more on the track as he tried to create a gap for his qualifying laps. The stewards cleared the driver of one offence and issued reprimands each for the other two, meaning Verstappen retains his place on the sixth row. "I knew it would always be tough to put it on pole. But this I didn't expect," Verstappen told reporters after both Red Bulls were eliminated in Q2 for the first time since the Russian Grand Prix in 2018. "Throughout the weekend we have been struggling. We tried a few more things on the car for qualifying and that tipped it over where it became undriveable again," he added.

Sainz's lap of 1min 30.984 sec pipped the Mercedes of George Russell by 0.072 sec and the second Ferrari of Charles Leclerc who was third, 0.007 sec further back. Sainz will start from pole for the second consecutive grand prix after also being fastest in Italy two weeks ago. "A bit like Monza really, we hit the ground running in F1. I felt very confident all through the sessions and put it together in Q3," said Sainz, who also

topped the time sheets in Saturday's third free practice session. "I just focused on not doing any mistakes on that lap. Keeping it clean in Singapore normally pays off."

Verstappen has won the last 10 races in a row and has a 145-point lead over Sergio Perez, who fared even worse as he spun on his final lap and could not improve on 13th. The Dutchman has never triumphed under the lights in Singapore and faces an almost impossible task to end the drought at the street circuit after a torrid weekend well off the pace. "It's just a shocking experience," he said. Russell will start from the front row for the first time since the Australian Grand Prix at the beginning of April.

Stroll survives huge crash

The Englishman was the last non-Red Bull driver to win a grand prix, in Brazil last year. "Really happy with this weekend as a whole," said Russell. "I felt really confident in the car, the team did a great job with the strategy. "We have an extra set of medium tyres tomorrow which nobody around us has. So to get to Q3 and be on the front row with a strategic advantage tomorrow is an exciting place to be." Perez won in Singapore last year from the front row but will make his 250th grand prix start in Sunday's night race from the back half of the grid.

Verstappen has won 12 of the 14 races this season with Perez the only other driver to take the chequered flag but now the team's prospects of a perfect season are under severe threat on a circuit where overtaking is near impossible. The McLaren of Lando Norris will join Leclerc on the second row of the grid for Sunday's night race. "Everything was super close, Mercedes were really strong today too," said Leclerc. "Unfortunately I missed it just a little bit to gain a few positions. Carlos did a great job. We did not expect to be this competitive on a track like this. This is a good sign for the future." — AFP



SINGAPORE: Ferrari's Spanish driver Carlos Sainz Jr (center) drives in front of the field during the start of the Singapore Formula One Grand Prix night race at the Marina Bay Street Circuit in Singapore on September 17, 2023. — AFP



Rashid Al-Kandary

Triathlon Club's board reelected

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Board of Kuwait Triathlon Club and Federation Rashid Al-Kandary thanked the Club's General Assembly for renewing its confidence in the Board of Directors for the new term 2023-2027 during the elections that took place on Friday at the Kuwait Olympic Committee (KOC) premises in Hawally.

The current board was reinstated. Rashid Al-Kandary kept his post as Chairman; Mohammad Haider (Deputy Chairman); Saud Al-Kandary (Secretary); Shaimaa Al-Hamdan (Assistant Secretary); Saad Al-Ali (Treasurer); Talal Qais (Assistant Treasurer); and Abdulhadi Abdulreda (Board Member). The elections were witnessed by Kuwait Olympic Committee Assistant Secretary Ali Al-Merri and member Fatima Hayat. Rashid Al-Kandary said they will continue to work hard to develop the game. He lauded the support the club and federation are receiving from the Public Authority for Sport (PAS) and KOC.

News in Brief

Krueger wins surprise title

OSAKA: American teen Ashlyn Krueger triumphed over China's Zhu Lin in the final of the 2023 Japan Open on Sunday, winning her first WTA title. The 19-year-old, ranked 123 in the world, came through 6-3, 7-6 (8-6) against her top-seeded opponent at the WTA 250 tournament in Osaka. It was the culmination of an outstanding week for Krueger, who made the final without losing a set. The underdog Texan was playing in the first final of her career and only her 11th tournament on the WTA tour. Lin, for her part, is ranked 35th in the world and was chasing the second WTA title of her career, having bested Ukraine's Lesia Tsurenko in the final of the Thailand Open in February. Lin, who defeated Victoria Azarenka at the US Open last month, was the favorite going into the final, but was hampered by the power of the tall American, who hit seven aces. In the first showdown between the two, Krueger quickly dominated the first set, winning 6-3 in 36 minutes with a break on Lin's first service game. — AFP

N Koreans travel for Games

SEOUL: North Korean athletes have travelled to China for the Asian Games, state media said, signaling an end to the country's more than three-year isolation from global multisport competitions. The country closed its already-tight borders in early 2020 following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and skipped the Tokyo Olympics, which were pushed back to 2021 because of the coronavirus. It was then banned from the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, for failing to take part in Tokyo. But Pyongyang said late Saturday it had sent athletes to the Asian Games, to be held in the city of Hangzhou later this month. "A DPRK team left here on Sept 14 to take part in the 19th Asian Games to be held in China," the Korean Central News Agency reported, using the country's official name. North Koreans are also listed on the Games' website as competing in sports including athletics, gymnastics, basketball, football, boxing and weightlifting. — AFP

Jackson wins Eugene 100m

EUGENE: Jamaica's Shericka Jackson won the women's 100m at the Diamond League finals in Eugene, Oregon, in 10.70sec as world champion Sha'Carri Richardson finished fourth. Jackson, who won 200m gold at the World Championships in Budapest last month, beat Richardson over 100m for the first time this year in their fourth clash of the season. Marie-Josée Ta Lou was second in 10.75 and Elaine Thompson-Herah was third in 10.79. Richardson, who owns the world's season best of 10.65, was beaten over 100m for just the second time this year, finishing fourth in 10.80. "I just wanted to come out here and execute and I think I did pretty good this evening," Jackson said. "I'm grateful. I'm here, I'm enjoying myself and tomorrow is another competition day." Richardson won't race the 200m, but Jackson will be back in action at Hayward Field on Sunday, when the 29-year-old will take another crack at the 200m world record of 21.34 set by Florence Griffith-Joyner in 1988. — AFP

Preston extend winning streak

LONDON: Preston extended their blistering start to the season with a fifth successive Championship victory as Plymouth were beaten 2-1 at Deepdale on Saturday. Duane Holmes gave Preston the perfect start with a first minute goal and Liam Millar doubled their lead before the break. Ryan Hardie pulled one back for the Pilgrims, but the victory lifted Ryan Lowe's side above Leicester to go top of the table. Leicester had taken pole position with a 4-1 win at Southampton on Friday. Ipswich remain third after Conor Chaplin's strike secured a 1-0 win at promoted Sheffield Wednesday, who are still without a win this season. Norwich sit fourth thanks to Jack Stacey's goal in a 1-0 win against Stoke at Carrow Road. In the south Wales derby, Cardiff clinched a 2-0 win against bitter rivals Swansea. Both teams had made poor starts to the season, with Swansea in the relegation zone and Cardiff just above them heading into this weekend. — AFP

Theegala leads at Fortinet

SAN FRANCISCO: Sahith Theegala conjured a back-nine birdie spree to edge into a two-stroke lead after the third round of the PGA Tour's Fortinet Championship in California on Saturday. Theegala, chasing a first ever individual title on the tour, carded a five-under-par 67 to put daylight between himself and the pack heading into Sunday's final round. The bogey-free performance included four birdies in the final seven holes of Silverado Resort's North Course in Napa, with Theegala moving to 17 under after 54 holes. That left the 25-year-old from California to clear of three players locked on 15 under including Justin Thomas, Australia's Cam Davis and South Korea's Kim Seong-hyeon. "My goal hasn't necessarily been to win, but to keep getting better," said Theegala. "Keep putting myself in contention on the back nine come Sunday, and that's what I hope to do tomorrow." Two-time major champion Thomas vaulted back into contention with a superb seven-under-par 65. — AFP



MELBOURNE: Australian human rights campaigner Drew Pavlou (left) is pictured wearing a "Where is Peng Shuai?" T-shirt in Melbourne. — AFP

Women's tennis returns to China after Peng Shuai boycott

GUANGZHOU: Professional women's tennis tournaments return to China on Monday, less than two years after the WTA vowed to boycott the country out of concern for player Peng Shuai and risks to its players and staff. The WTA tournament opening Monday in the southern metropolis of Guangzhou will be the first in mainland China since 2019 - and while no top-20 stars are expected to attend, it is set to attract plenty of attention.

The WTA suspended activities in China in December 2021, when former world doubles number one Peng briefly disappeared after making — and then withdrawing — accusations of sexual assault against a senior Chinese leader. Saying the issue was "bigger than business", the tennis body insisted it would not hold events in China until Beijing guaranteed the safety of Peng. "Given the current state of affairs, I am also greatly concerned about the risks that all of our players and staff could face if we were to hold events in China," WTA chief Steve Simon said at the time.

Peng published a long social media post in November 2021 saying she had been "forced" into sex during a years-long, on-and-off relationship with Zhang Gaoli, a married ex-vice premier of China 39 years her senior. She has since denied she accused anyone of sexual assault and described the situation as a "huge misunderstanding". Peng has not been seen outside China since the allegations were made. In April this year though, the WTA announced the resumption of tournaments, admitting its "principled stand... a powerful message to the world" had not been able "to bring about change".

"It was, in my opinion, a complete capitulation, because it was pretty obvious to anyone who knows anything about China that China wasn't going to offer a free or fair investigation into the sexual assault claims," China-based sports expert Mark Dreyer told AFP. "I really do feel they've undone all that good will that they had gained by taking a principled stance." Dreyer added that the suspension had been largely symbolic as most international sporting events were put on hold during the pandemic under China's strict zero-COVID policy.

China is a crucial market for the WTA, given the quality of local infrastructure and investment as well as TV rights and sponsorship deals with mainland partners. "The choice to return is an economic one," Lionel Maltese, a former member of the executive committee of the French Tennis Federation, told AFP. "The income generated in China has a strong impact on the financing and income of all players." Before the pandemic, the WTA organized 10 tournaments in China each year — with a total of \$30 million in prize money — out of more than 60 tournaments globally. — AFP

Sports

Barcelona demolish Real Betis 5-0

Valencia hammer Atletico Madrid 3-0

BARCELONA: New arrivals Joao Felix and Joao Cancelo struck their first goals for Barcelona in an impressive 5-0 rout of Real Betis on Saturday in La Liga. Earlier Atletico Madrid were hammered 3-0 by Valencia at Mestalla with coach Diego Simeone labeling it the "weakest" performance during his time at the club. Barcelona's five-star display was inspired by Felix, who netted the opener, with further goals from Robert Lewandowski, Ferran Torres and Raphinha and Cancelo. The emphatic victory places the Catalans provisionally top of the table, a point clear of rivals Real Madrid who host Real Sociedad on Sunday.

Barcelona played with a vibrancy they lacked at times last season, even as they lifted La Liga, warming up for their Champions League opener on Tuesday against Royal Antwerp. Xavi handed Felix and compatriot Cancelo their first starts for the club and they quickly impressed home fans and their coach. "We're talking about two players there are absolutely no doubts about in terms of individual quality," Xavi told reporters. "The two bring something different that improves the team. Individual quality is what makes the difference."

Betis, lining up with a back four composed only of former Barcelona players, played with attacking intent, unlike many other teams who will visit the temporary Olympic Stadium home of the Spanish champions. However Barcelona moved ahead after 25 minutes when Oriol Romeu fed Felix. The on-loan Atletico forward controlled the ball, knocked it past goalkeeper Rui Silva and then squeezed home clinically from a tight angle. "I'm very happy to be starting again, the feelings are very good - it's easy to play in this team," Felix told Movistar.

Felix, signed by Atletico Madrid for a club record fee of 126 million euros (\$134 million) in 2019, failed to find consistent form in the capital and was

loaned to Chelsea last season. "I am happy, the change has done me good, me and my family. I am very happy here," he added. Lewandowski doubled Barcelona's lead when he ran onto Andreas Christensen's pass and slotted home, but the goal was crafted by Felix, whose clever dummy allowed the ball to find the Polish striker.

The 'shark' bites

Torres, selected ahead of teen starlet Lamine Yamal, netted the third, with a low free-kick around the wall - the first Barcelona have scored since a Lionel Messi strike in May 2021. The winger, who has nicknamed himself a "shark" since the summer after working on mental aspects of the game and finding his best level of fitness, celebrated effusively. "I didn't know we hadn't scored a free-kick since Messi," said Torres. "I have a lot of confidence, I am working on it and I'll keep doing that."

Raphinha, who replaced Torres, quickly added the fourth just moments after entering the fray with a drilled effort from outside the area into the bottom corner. Cancelo gleefully added the fifth to cap an excellent individual display, skinning former Barcelona left-back Juan Miranda and driving home across goal. Whether new-look Barcelona can match Europe's best remains to be seen but this rampant display highlighted the improved attacking quality at their disposal this season.

'Weakest game'

Atletico coach Simeone said his team put in their "weakest" performance of his 12-year reign in their three-goal thrashing by Valencia. Hugo Duro netted a brace for the hosts and Javi Guerra tucked home the third as they dominated. Los Che have started the season well after flirting with



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Polish forward #09 Robert Lewandowski fights for the ball with Real Betis' Brazilian defender #20 Abner Vinicius during the Spanish Liga football match between FC Barcelona and Real Betis at the Estadi Olimpic Lluis Companys in Barcelona on September 16, 2023. — AFP

relegation until the final day of the previous campaign, and this was their finest outing yet under coach Ruben Baraja. "We had the weakest game since I arrived at the club, and we have to congratulate our opponents," said Simeone.

Defeat was the worst way for Atletico to prepare for the start of their Champions League campaign on Tuesday at Lazio. "They came into the

game with a lot more intensity and if you don't match it ... it's impossible to win any game," said Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak. "We have to look in the mirror. We know we can give a lot more than we gave today." Earlier Athletic Bilbao earned a convincing 3-0 win over Cadiz to move provisionally third. Mallorca earned a late 1-0 win over Celta Vigo through Vedat Muriqi's goal. — AFP

Kuwaiti secures 1st place in Jet Ski Championship

SHARJAH: Kuwaiti racer Rashid Al-Dawas achieved first place in the GP1 category in the Sharjah International Jet Ski Championship in the United Arab Emirates. In a statement to (KUNA), Al-Dawas expressed his happiness with this accomplishment, noting that the competition includes four rounds.

The second will be held next week, and the two other rounds will be held next November and December. "It is a great honor to be the winner in Sharjah International Jet Ski Championship, and I would like to thank all sponsors and fans who supported me in the tournament," he said.

Al-Dawas praised the wonderful organization of the Sharjah International Marine Sports Club in all technical, logistical and organizational aspects. On Saturday, the Sharjah Club organized the second round of Jet Ski races on the banks of (Al Khan) Lake in Sharjah, with the participation of 55 competitors representing 10 different countries including Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and some European countries. — KUNA



SHARJAH: Kuwaiti racer Rashid Al-Dawas wins the GP1 category in the Sharjah International Jet Ski Championship in the United Arab Emirates. — KUNA photos



Djibouti club Solar too hot for Zamalek in CAF Cup shock

JOHANNESBURG: Arta Solar from football minnows Djibouti shocked 11-time African title winners Zamalek of Egypt by winning a CAF Confederation Cup last-32 first-leg qualifier 2-0 on Saturday. The club from the tiny east African nation are more used to hidings from Egyptian opponents - they were trounced 9-1 by Al Mokawloon in the same competition three seasons ago. But after playing second fiddle to the Cairo outfit in the first half, Ghana-born Gabriel Dadzie broke the deadlock on 55 minutes and Doualeh Elabeh doubled the lead soon after.

Making the triumph even more remarkable was the fact that Arta had to host the match in the Tanzanian commercial capital Dar es Salaam because they lack an international-standard venue. Arta have invested heavily in foreign players to try and make an impact in Africa and the squad that faced Zamalek included former Ivory Coast forward Salomon Kalou, now 38. He was part of the Chelsea starting line-up in the 2012

Champions League final, won by the London club after a penalty shootout against Bayern Munich.

Zamalek, who lacked key players Ahmed 'Zizo' Sayed and Ahmed Fatouh, will get a chance to avenge the shock defeat when they host the return match on October 1 with a group place up for grabs. The 11 CAF titles won by the Egyptian club include five in Champions League, four in the Super Cup, and one each in the Confederation Cup and now defunct African Cup Winners Cup. That total puts them joint second with TP Mazembe from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Only another Egyptian club, Al Ahly, have succeeded more often with 24 titles.

Elsewhere, Moroccan side Renaissance Berkane, winners of the 2020 and 2022 Confederation Cup finals, came from behind twice to draw 2-2 with Bendel Insurance of Nigeria in Benin City. When a Vincent Augustus goal gave Bendel the lead for a second time on the hour, they retained the advantage for 18 minutes before Mohamed Morabt leveled. Liberian Sheikh Sesay netted eight minutes into added time to snatch a 1-1 draw for Gaborone United of Botswana at home to SuperSport United of South Africa.

Rangers sink St Johnstone to ease pressure on Beale

GLASGOW: Rangers eased the pressure on under-fire boss Michael Beale with a 2-0 win at St Johnstone in the Scottish Premiership on Saturday. Beale was subjected to stinging criticism following defeats against Celtic and PSV Eindhoven before the international break. A loss against lowly St Johnstone would have heaped more misery on the former QPR manager.

But Brazilian striker Danilo headed Rangers in front after 16 minutes at McDiarmid Park and substitute Rabbi Matondo added the second goal in the 79th

minute. It was another unconvincing Rangers performance against a side who are still looking for their first league win this season. But Beale was grateful for three points that at least gave him a little breathing space after such a turbulent period.

"The game was scrappy at times, we still have work to do but it was a 2-0 win and it was comfortable," Beale said. Rangers begin their Europa League campaign with a home game against Real Betis on Thursday and they will hope this result can be a foundation for a sustained winning run. Beale's men took the lead following a rapid counter from a St Johnstone corner. James Tavernier took a pass from Nicolas Raskin, played a one-two with Sam Lammers and went past Graham Carey before crossing for Danilo to head past keeper Dimitar Mitov from six yards.

Rangers striker Kemar Roofe had the ball in the net from an Abdallah Sima cut-back but the goal was ruled out for an infringement. Tom Lawrence

Tanzanians advance

Tanzanian giants Young Africans and Simba staked claims to CAF Champions League group places with impressive away performances in last-32 first-leg qualifiers on Saturday. Kennedy Musonda and Cement Mzize scored as Young Africans triumphed 2-0 against Al Merrikh of Sudan, who had to host the match in Rwanda because of the ongoing war in their homeland.

Simba came from behind twice to draw 2-2 against Power Dynamos of Zambia in Ndola, with the second equalizer from Clatous Chama coming in added time. In a clash of former champions, Hamza Jelassi netted to earn Etoile Sahel of Tunisia a 1-0 victory over FAR Rabat of Morocco in the Mediterranean resort of Sousse. Mauritania are set to have a representative in the group stage for the first time after Nouadhibou built a surprise 3-0 lead over Real Bamako in Mali, where Sidi Amar scored twice.

Young Africans were runners-up to USM Alger of Algeria in the second-tier CAF Confederation Cup last season and are poised to book a first mini-league place following 11 failed attempts. Zambian Musonda struck on 61 minutes in Kigali and Mzize doubled the lead 19 minutes later in front of several thousand Tanzanian supporters, who travelled in

a 50 mini-bus convoy. Tunisian coach Nasreddine Nabi quit the Dar es Salaam outfit after the Confederation Cup final, saying he wanted a fresh challenge, and was hired by Moroccan club FAR Rabat.

He was replaced by Miguel Gamondi, a 59-year-old Argentine who has coached in Libya, Burkina Faso, Morocco, Tunisia, South Africa, Algeria and the United Arab Emirates. Simba, the arch domestic rivals of Young Africans, have reached the Champions League quarter-finals three times in the past five seasons. Zambia-born Chama starred for the Tanzanian outfit against his compatriots, with his second-half goals cancelling leads given to Power Dynamos by Joshua Mutale and Cephas Mulombwa.

Jelassi struck midway through the second half for Etoile, who stunned Al Ahly of Egypt by winning the second leg of the 2007 final 3-1 in Cairo. Etoile are the only club to have won all five current and past CAF competitions - the Champions League, Confederation Cup, Super Cup and the now defunct African Cup Winners Cup and CAF Cup. After seven failed efforts to get past the qualifying stage, Nouadhibou rattled Real Bamako with a first-half goal from Oumar Mangane followed by two after the break from Amar. — AFP

had a drive saved by Mitov before providing the assist for his side's second goal. Matondo raced on to Lawrence's pass and slipped the ball past Mitov to seal a valuable victory. While Rangers have made a slow start this season, their Glasgow rivals Celtic sit top of the table after a 3-0 win against Dundee at Parkhead.

David Turnbull beat Trevor Carson from the penalty spot in the 51st minute after being fouled by Grant Irvine as he held off a challenge from Ryan Howley on the edge of the area. Initially a free-kick was awarded, but VAR official Steven Kirkland upgraded the award to a penalty and Turnbull converted down the middle. Kyogo Furuhashi doubled the champions' lead in the 63rd minute, despite heading down the tunnel during the first half for treatment to a recurring shoulder injury. The Japanese striker made an untracked run to meet Callum McGregor's cross and head home from 12 yards. — AFP

Messi-less Inter Miami crushed 5-2 in Atlanta

MIAMI: Inter Miami rested Lionel Messi and suffered their first defeat since the Argentine joined the club, with a 5-2 hammering at Atlanta United damaging their playoff hopes on Saturday. Messi had not made the trip to Atlanta, after a busy run of games since making his Miami debut in late July. Miami coach Gerardo 'Tata' Martino said after the loss that Messi had been suffering from "muscle fatigue" and that it would have been "very reckless to bring him to play this game".

The 36-year-old sat out Argentina's World Cup qualifier against Bolivia in La Paz on Tuesday but watched his team-mates from the bench. With no Messi last week, Miami defeated Sporting Kansas City 3-2 but this time it was a very different story for Martino's team. Miami went ahead in the 25th minute with a superbly taken goal from in-form Ecuadorian striker Leonardo Campana. But the response from Atlanta, sixth in the Eastern Conference, was emphatic with three goals in eight minutes.

A glancing header from French midfielder Tristan Muylumba, which struck the inside of the post, was ruled to have crossed the line by the assistant referee. Five minutes later, Atlanta had the lead when Brazilian winger Xande Silva dribbled to the byline and his pull-back was turned into his own net by Miami defender Kamal Miller.

Miami's defense, without former Spain international left-back Jordi Alba, were reeling and Brooks Lennon added the third in the 44th minute with a sweetly struck shot. Miami got back in the game in the 54th minute through a Campana penalty but - while they have made a habit of comebacks with Messi - there was no such revival this time. As they pushed forward in search of an equalizer, Atlanta caught them on the counter with Greek striker Giorgos Giakoumakis slotting home his 14th goal of the season, bringing him level as joint top scorer in the MLS.

Another well-worked break resulted in the fifth in the 89th minute with Saba Lobzhanidze setting up Tyler Wolff to blast home. Miami remain next to bottom of the Eastern Conference, six points behind D.C. United who occupy ninth place, the last playoff spot. Martino defended the decision to leave Messi and Alba - who he said also had muscle fatigue - at home ahead of a busy run of games with league matches on Wednesday and Sunday before the US Open Cup final on September 27. "We risked worse consequences if they came to play this game," said the coach.

Comebacks

Eastern Conference leaders Cincinnati, already assured of a post-season berth, battled back for a 2-2 draw at last year's MLS Cup runners-up the Philadelphia Union. A Jose Martinez goal and a penalty from Daniel Gazdag had put Philadelphia in command, but the impressive Aaron Boupendza pulled a goal back for Cincinnati in the fourth minute of the second half.

The visitors grabbed a point when Boupendza found Brandon Vazquez with a magnificent low ball and the USA striker found the net. In-form Orlando City produced an even more impressive comeback at home to Columbus, winning 4-3 after trailing 3-1. Ramiro Enrique leveled in the 86th minute with an opportunist strike and then won the game in the seventh minute of stoppage time, taking advantage of chaos in the Crew defence.

In the Western Conference, Denis Bouanga scored twice for champions Los Angeles FC as they beat cross-city rivals Los Angeles Galaxy 4-2. Bouanga headed LAFC in front in the 23rd minute but the Galaxy struck back immediately with English forward Billy Sharp firing home his third goal in five appearances since joining the club from Sheffield United. But a Ryan Hollingshead strike restored LAFC's lead only for Japanese veteran Maya Yoshida to bring the Galaxy back on level terms again.

Bouanga's second and an 84th minute goal from Timothy Tillman clinched the derby win and allowed LAFC to narrow the deficit on leaders St Louis City to six points. The New England Revolution had a tumultuous week with the resignation, after an MLS investigation, of their head coach Bruce Arena and then a reshuffle of the interim coaching staff. — AFP

India grab Asia Cup crown

Siraj stars as India rout Sri Lanka by 10 wickets



COLOMBO: India's players and team members celebrate with the trophy after winning the Asia Cup 2023 one-day international (ODI) final cricket match between India and Sri Lanka at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on Sept 17, 2023. — AFP

COLOMBO: Pace bowler Mohammed Siraj returned figures of 6-21 to lead India's rout of Sri Lanka by 10 wickets as they clinched their eighth Asia Cup title on Sunday. Siraj got four wickets in one over to help skittle Sri Lanka out for 50, a total the Indian openers Ishan Kishan and Shubman Gill surpassed in 6.1 overs for an impressive victory ahead of next month's ODI World Cup at home. Sri Lanka's miserably low total in the 50-over contest left a nearly packed house disappointed after they witnessed just 116 minutes of play.

The hosts elected to bat first following a delayed start due to rain and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah

struck first with the wicket of Kusal Perera, caught behind for a duck in the first over. Siraj soon took over as he made the ball swing and seam in over-cast conditions to easily surpass his previous ODI best of 4-32. He got Pathum Nissanka for two and then struck on successive balls to send back Sadeera Samarawickrama (0) and Charith Asalanka (0), but a hat-trick was averted.

Dhananjaya de Silva hit a boundary but Siraj had him caught behind with the next ball, much to the delight of the Indian fans. Siraj got his fifth with the wicket of Sri Lankan captain Dasun Shanaka, equaling an ODI record for the fastest five-wicket haul

from his first 16 balls of the match. Kusal Mendis hit three boundaries before becoming Siraj's sixth wicket, although Sri Lanka avoided the lowest-ever ODI total of 35 by Zimbabwe.

After Virat Kohli's overthrow went for a boundary, and six more runs to the total, Sri Lanka pushed past their lowest ODI total of 43 scored against South Africa in 2012. Hardik Pandya took three wickets to wrap up the innings in just 90 minutes. Mendis' 17 and an unbeaten 13 by Dushan Hemantha were the only double-digit scores in an innings that featured five ducks. Shubman Gill, a centurion in the previous match, began with a boundary in the opening over

on his way to an unbeaten 27 and fellow opener Ishan Kishan (23) soon joined the party.

The left-handed Ishan smashed fast bowler Matheesha Pathirana for two successive boundaries, and three more in a row from Gill gave India victory in the tournament's shortest final. Rohit Sharma's India dropped just one match in the tournament after they lost an inconsequential Super Four contest against Bangladesh. Sri Lanka, who won the previous edition of the Asia Cup played in the T20 format, came in as underdogs and snuck into the Super Fours with a dramatic win over Afghanistan but went down without a fight in their 11th final. — AFP

Inter outmuscle Milan 5-1; Napoli stutter at Genoa

MILAN: Inter Milan laid down an early title marker on Saturday by handing out a 5-1 derby hammering to AC Milan and going it alone at the Serie A summit, while champions Napoli were held 2-2 at promoted Genoa. Four wins from their opening four matches have Inter leading the pack with a perfect 12 points, two ahead of their other fierce rivals Juventus who beat Lazio 3-1 in the day's early match.

Milan sit a further point back in third after a humiliating first defeat of the season before they welcome Newcastle United in the Champions League on Tuesday. Spurred on by the majority of a heaving and raucous San Siro crowd, Inter claimed their fifth straight derby win in all competitions thanks to a Henrikh Mkhitaryan brace, Marcus Thuram's rocket and two late strikes from Hakan Calhanoglu and Davide Frattesi.

Simone Inzaghi's side claimed the points with a display which showed why they got past Milan to reach last season's Champions League final and confirmed their status as early favorites to beat their local rivals to a 20th Scudetto. "We've started the season brilliantly and we want to keep going," Mkhitaryan told DAZN. "We're all here for the same goal, and I don't care who plays... the coach will pick whoever gives their all for the second star (on the shirt for 20 titles)." Thuram continued his fast start in an Inter shirt, the new man also crucial to Mkhitaryan's fifth-minute opener.

Inter smash Milan

France forward Thuram bundled past Malick Thiaw before finding Federico Dimarco whose mishit shot was guided home by the former Armenia midfielder. And Thuram then underlined Inter's superiority seven minutes before the break after a lightning break-away started by Lautaro Martinez, collecting from Denzel Dumfries before

cutting inside the hapless Thiaw and crashing in an unstoppable shot from the edge of the area.

The match looked dead and buried with 45 minutes to play but Rafael Leao halved the deficit in the 57th minute when he rolled in his second of the season after being brilliantly put through by Olivier Giroud. Leao's finish was the first goal conceded by Inter this term and as a violent downpour descended on the San Siro, Mkhitaryan silenced Milan's loud "away" support with his deflected second of the evening after being fed by Martinez.

Calhanoglu's 79th-minute penalty and a neat stoppage-time finish from Frattesi, fresh from Tuesday's double for Italy at the same ground, rubbed salt into wounds for Milan and coach Stefano Pioli. "I don't think we need to apologize to our fans. Do you think we wanted to concede five goals to Inter?" said a defiant Pioli who in 2023 has lost every Milan derby to an aggregate score of 12-1. "We're disappointed, but you ask for forgiveness when you deliberately don't do something."

Napoli salvage point

Napoli's title defense continued to stutter at Genoa where the champions came back from two goals down to snatch a point late on. Rudi Garcia's side, beaten by Lazio before the international break, trail Inter by five points following the draw at the Stadio Luigi Ferraris which came thanks to strikes in the final 15 minutes from Italy internationals Giacomo Raspadori and Matteo Politano. "We've got work to do, but we had very little time to prepare for this match because a lot of players only came back (from international duty) yesterday," said Politano to Sky Sport in Italy.

Mattia Bani headed Genoa into the lead five minutes before the break before Italy striker Mateo Retegui swept in the hosts' second from Kevin Strootman's pass in the 56th minute. Retegui has scored twice since signing from Boca Juniors in July and Saturday's strike looked likely to give Genoa a stunning second win of the campaign. But Napoli didn't give up and were back in it when Raspadori arrowed in his first goal of the season in the 76th minute. And Politano salvaged a draw for Napoli with six minutes remaining with a brilliant volley from Piotr Zielinski's lofted pass.—AFP

Chelsea settle for a disappointing draw

BOURNEMOUTH: Troubled Chelsea had to settle for a disappointing 0-0 draw against Bournemouth on Sunday as their dismal start to the Premier League season showed no signs of improving. Mauricio Pochettino's side have won just once in five league games this term and they were booed off after lacking any semblance of a cutting edge at the Vitality Stadium. The Blues are without a goal in their last two matches and have scored only five times in the league this season.

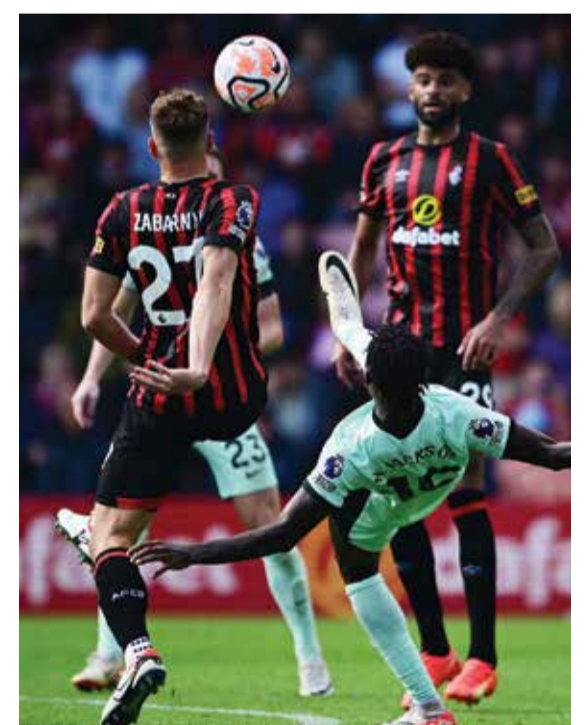
They are languishing in 14th place, closer to the relegation zone than the top four, as Pochettino comes to terms with the size of the task facing him at Stamford Bridge. The former Tottenham and Paris Saint Germain boss was hired in the close-season to clean up the mess left by Thomas Tuchel, Graham Potter and Frank Lampard, who all had spells in charge of Chelsea during last season's wretched campaign. But Pochettino has so far been unable to make an impact despite Chelsea's £350 million spending spree on new signings.

A rash of untimely injuries haven't helped but Chelsea's decision to largely sign younger players has left Pochettino with an inexperienced squad that lacks the maturity to close out games. Challenging for a place in the Champions League was Pochettino's target this season, but that ambition already seems overly optimistic on the evidence of this drab display against winless Bournemouth. While it is too soon to say Pochettino is in danger of the sack, he will be well aware Potter lasted less than seven months before being sacked by co-owner Todd Boehly.

Lacklustre Chelsea

Pochettino made two changes from the side that lost to Nottingham Forest in their previous game, with big-money summer signing Moises Caicedo left out of the squad and teenager Lesley Ugochukwu given his first Premier League start. Chelsea tried to seize the initiative in the early stages, but Enzo Fernandez fired straight at Neto from the edge of the area before Raheem Sterling dragged his shot woefully wide from a dangerous position. Nicolas Jackson went much closer when the Senegal striker drilled his shot against the post from 20 yards.

Despite their bright start, Chelsea were nearly undone by woeful defending as the unmarked Dango Ouattara reached a cross with a close-range effort



BOURNEMOUTH: Chelsea's Senegalese striker #15 Nicolas Jackson (center) vies with Bournemouth's Ukrainian defender #27 Illia Zabarny during the English Premier League football match between Bournemouth and Chelsea on September 17, 2023. — AFP

that forced a fine save from Robert Sanchez. Gallagher should have put Chelsea ahead with a shot on the turn from 10 yards, but Neto plunged to his right to make a good save. Chelsea thought they had finally taken the lead early in the second when Sterling's free-kick bounced off the bar to Levi Colwill, who slotted into the empty net only to see his effort disallowed for offside.

Moments later, Colwill and Jackson tried to bundle the ball over the line to no avail after a Chelsea corner caused havoc. But it was Bournemouth who finished stronger and Axel Disasi narrowly avoided conceding a penalty when his despairing lunge brought down Justin Kluivert just outside the area. Sanchez came to Chelsea's rescue in the 80th minute, saving with his legs to keep out Dominic Solanke's strike. Philip Billing's free-kick deflected just wide off Gallagher. Sterling could have won it with a close-range header that lacked the power to beat Neto, who also made a fine instinctive save to repel Cole Palmer's close-range volley.— AFP



MILAN: Inter Milan's Italian midfielder #16 Davide Frattesi celebrates scoring his team's fifth goal during the Italian Serie A football match between Inter Milan and AC Milan at the San Siro Stadium in Milan. — AFP