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MPs file bill to cancel coed ban law as students protest

Students, teachers reject external interference in Kuwait University affairs



By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Three MPs on Monday filed a draft law calling to cancel a 1996 law that bans coeducation at Kuwait University as dozens of students staged a protest outside the administration offices to protest a decision to impose segregation at the College of Law. The draft law submitted by MPs Jenan Bushehri, Dawood Maarafi and Abdulwahab Al-Essa calls for abolishing the 1996 law that bans coeducation at Kuwait University unless it is extremely necessary. The bill also calls on the university to create two options for students: Classes for men or women only or mixed gender classes and let the students choose which type of classes they want to join.

The draft law is not expected to be debated before the opening of the new term, and will require lengthy debates before it is accepted or rejected. The Cabinet on Monday approved an Amiri decree calling for the new term of the National Assembly to start on Oct 31.

Dozens of university students held a demonstration outside the university administration offices to protest against the decision taken by acting director of Kuwait University Fayez Al-Dhafiri last week, enforcing the segregation law at the law college. Students opposed to the decision have said that the decision was taken after pressure by Islamist MPs, describing this as an external interference in the af-

fairs of the university. The protest was called by two liberal groups, but Islamist students also took part.

Coordinator of the Democratic Forum Group Mohammad Al-Qattan said 1,500 students at the law college have been harmed by the decision because of changing their timetables. University registration officials have said that the registration for students had been completed without any problem. Qattan accused the university director of submitting to external pressure by MPs who have no right to interfere.

Member of the law college students board Turki Al-Dhafiri said the decision to halt mixed classes was politically motivated to satisfy a certain political group. He said that issuing the decision so late has negatively affected the students. Fatima Dashti, a professor at the law college, said the decision was only applied at the law college, while there are many mixed classes at other colleges. She protested at the interference of MPs in university affairs.

Dr Sheikhha Al-Jassem, who was among professors who joined the protest, criticized the government over its handling of the issue, adding that the university director did not respect the constitutional court ruling. Jassem said that the constitutional court in a ruling in 2015 interpreted the segregation law by saying that segregation can be done in the same classroom by allowing female and male students to sit on different sides of the room and not necessarily in separate classes.

KUWAIT: Kuwait University students protest a decision to impose gender segregation for courses on Sept 18, 2023. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 2)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kuwait slams Aqsa storming

KUWAIT: Kuwait's foreign ministry strongly denounced the storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque in the holy city of Jerusalem by Zionist extremists under protection of Zionist occupation police. The incursion is a flagrant violation of international laws and norms, the ministry said in a press release on Sunday. The ministry decried the persistence by Zionist occupation authorities of such provocative acts that target Muslim worshippers, urging the international community to shoulder its responsibility in preventing repeated Zionist aggressions, providing protection to Al-Aqsa Mosque and ensuring Muslim worshippers' freedom of belief. — KUNA

Ministry foils hacking attempt

KUWAIT: The finance ministry announced one of its systems was subjected to a hacking attempt on Monday, noting it has activated protection protocols that include disconnecting the affected system while the hacking attempt is evaluated. Public sector salary transfer procedures have not been affected, the ministry reassured, noting it is following up the matter with the National Center for Cybersecurity. Meanwhile, the ministry of commerce and industry denied its website or systems have been hacked, noting it continues to offer its services online as its systems undergo regular maintenance. More than 39,000 transactions were processed through the ministry's digital platforms on Monday, it added. — KUNA

PM meets UN chief, affirms Kuwait support

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, met Secretary-General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres on the sidelines of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly. During the meeting, HH the Prime Minister conveyed to the UN chief the greetings of HH the Amir and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, affirming Kuwait's support to UN's efforts to

protect world security and peace.

Kuwait is committed to the principles of its foreign policy prioritizing support to the UN's quest for fair and durable peaceful solutions to regional and international issues, he reaffirmed. HH the Prime Minister, who is leading Kuwait's delegation to the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, noted that Kuwait has been keen over the last decades on active and effective participation in the activities of UN agencies, backing their efforts in various areas. He praised the significant role of the UN secretary general in promoting international cooperation and upgrading the UN. The meeting reviewed the latest developments in regional and international issues and the UN's role in strengthening peace, security and sustainable development. — KUNA



NEW YORK: HH the Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah meets UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Sept 17, 2023. — KUNA

GCC FMs urge Iraq to address Khor Abdullah issue

NEW YORK: Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) foreign ministers have called on Iraq to take "serious and urgent" steps to deal with the negative developments on the Khor Abdullah maritime agreement, signed with Kuwait, after an

Iraqi court's "inaccurate" ruling on the issue. This came in a statement after a GCC committee meeting held at the Omani permanent delegation's headquarters at the United Nations in New York late Sunday.

During the meeting, Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah informed the attendees on the latest development on the Khor Abdullah situation. The statement affirmed that the current development with Iraq "did not serve the relations between the GCC countries and was against charters, treaties and international agreements, including UNSC resolution 833". —KUNA



NEW YORK: Gulf Cooperation Council foreign ministers hold a meeting on Sept 17, 2023. — KUNA

20% of people in Kuwait are addicted to food

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Consultant in internal medicine, gastroenterology and liver diseases Dr Wafaa Al-Hashash has affirmed that 20 percent of Kuwait's population is affected by "food addiction", approximately 940,000 individuals, according to a study published in Jan 2022. The study utilized the Yale Food Addiction Scale (YFAS) to determine that the prevalence rate of food addiction is 20 percent globally. She added "food addiction" is characterized



Dr Wafaa Al-Hashash

Continued on Page 6



Student unions protest over cancellation of coed classes

'Decision contradicts the constitution and violates court's decision'



Al-Mostaqilla students union



KUWAIT: Kuwait University students rally to protest a decision to impose gender segregation, outside the institution's campus on September 18, 2023. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Al-Mostaqilla students union organized a protest at Kuwait University on Monday in response to the administration's abrupt decision to cancel coeducation classes shortly before the start of the new academic semester. The demonstration, attended by Taaluf, Al-Wasat Al-Demoqrati, and Al-Etelafeya students unions, showcases the resilience and unity of Kuwait University's student body when facing unexpected challenges to their educational experience.

Dr Ibrahim Al-Hamoud, Head of the Public Law Department at the College of Law and a member of the administrative board of the Faculty Association, emphasized the importance of the university considering the quality of education, student comfort and timely graduation. Increasing the duration of study due to class shortages, especially with the yearly rise in student numbers, is unreasonable, he said.

Hamoud noted that the decision to cancel coeducation is illogical, as there have been no incidents or complaints related to coeducation since 1966. He affirmed that the growing number of students inevitably

necessitates opening more classes. "While law no. 24 of 1969 clearly prohibits mixing of genders, the constitutional court has clarified its constitutionality. Kuwait University has respected the judiciary and the court's ruling by separating male and female students within the classroom, which is considered a proper application of the law," he said.

Hamoud argued that the decision of the minister of education and members of parliament contradicts the constitution and violates the constitutional court's decision, which states that non-mingling can be achieved by separating males and females in the same classroom. He added that if there is a desire to prevent coeducation, a new law establishing separate universities for each gender must be enacted. However, such a law would contradict principles of justice, equality and Islamic law. He affirmed that inappropriate mingling involves lack of respect for boundaries and inappropriate clothing and behaviors, which is not the case.

Dr Sheikhha Al-Jassem, a faculty member at Kuwait University, said the committee for the promotion of values lacks the authority to prohibit gender mixing



Mohammad Al-Qattan

and impersonation at the university. She questioned the decision-making process, as the decision only affected the law faculty while other faculties continue mixed classes. "I think there are some personal, internal matters, and students and employees of the deanship of admissions and registration are the ones who are paying the price," she said.

Mohammad Mishal Al-Qattan, a medical student and the general coordinator of Al-Wasat Al-Demoqrati, placed responsibility on the university dean and director for violating the law guarantee-



Dr Ibrahim Al-Hamoud

ing the university's independence from external interference. He demanded a return to the previous situation of joint education for all.

Sarah Al-Otaibi, an English language student at the College of Arts, found the decision illogical, pointing out that coeducation is a part of life, and even in Makkah, the most sacred place on earth, there is gender mixing. She expressed concerns about delays in graduation and scholarship eligibility due to the decision. Otaibi told Kuwait Times she intends to continue with her master's studies, but there are



Dr Sheikhha Al-Jassem

conditions for scholarship that she should not be over 30, otherwise she will not be eligible for it.

Dr Fatima Dashti, a faculty member at the College of Law, criticized the committee's actions, emphasizing that in her 30 years of teaching experience, she never found an urgent need to separate male and female students in shared classes. She questioned the principle of separation of powers and whether actions at Kuwait University are seen as an assault on legitimacy and customs and traditions by the National Assembly.

US Embassy, media discussion focuses on regional security

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: The US Embassy organized a roundtable discussion on Monday, featuring Lt Gen Alex Grynkeiwich from AFCENT and a group of reporters. The discussion centered on the enduring relationship between the US and Kuwait, emphasizing the importance of regional security. Grynkeiwich began by expressing his fondness for Kuwait, recounting his first deployment to the Middle East in the 1990s, specifically to Kuwait, following the Gulf War and Operation Desert Storm, when he was enforcing a no-fly zone over southern Iraq. During this time, he had experienced tremendous support from the Kuwaiti people and military, creating a lasting impression.

He highlighted the historical ties between Kuwait and the United States, dating back 62 years, with the US being among the first nations to recognize Kuwait's independence. Furthermore, he mentioned the pivotal role the US played 32 years ago during Desert Storm in liberating Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion, underscoring the enduring strength of the Kuwait-US relationship. Kuwait continues to host US Air Force personnel, among others, contributing to regional stability. It is also a major non-NATO ally, signifying a significant commitment to Kuwait's security.

Grynkeiwich discussed the purpose of his visit to Kuwait, which involves regular interactions with Kuwaiti Air Force and air defense commanders to address re-

gional security concerns and cooperation, particularly regarding missile defense. He expressed his intention to visit the Ali Al-Salem base to assess the status of US forces stationed in Kuwait.

Regarding US engagement with Kuwaiti authorities on security challenges, Grynkeiwich explained that there is ongoing collaboration, with Kuwaiti officers working closely with US counterparts at the headquarters. He cited examples of recent cooperation, such as joint airlift training and infrastructure improvement at bases like Ali Al-Salem. This includes ensuring the functionality of a cable system for aircraft emergencies, demonstrating continuous cooperation between the two nations.

Grynkeiwich also elaborated on the US' role in supporting the Combined Joint Task Force for Inherent Resolve, focused on defeating Daesh in Iraq and Syria. Ali Al-Salem base serves as a vital hub for airlift and intelligence operations, aiding the resupply of US forces in the region and supporting their mobility. Additionally, he addressed concerns about Iranian vessels in the Arabian Gulf, referencing historical incidents involving Kuwaiti tankers in the 1980s. To deter such activities, the United States deployed additional naval and marine forces, as well as aircraft, near the Straits of Hormuz, leading to a decrease in vessel seizures by Iran.

In terms of the United States' strategy in the Middle East, Grynkeiwich emphasized the importance of expanding beyond military relationships. Recent announcements, such as the India to Mediterranean corridor, demonstrate a concerted effort to enhance diplomatic and economic aspects of the relationship, complementing the military dimension. He concluded by emphasizing the unique nature of the partnership between Kuwait and the US, highlighting the mutual respect and deep relationship that transcends mere transactions, setting it apart from other international relationships.



Lt Gen Alex Grynkeiwich poses for a group photo with journalists and US Airforce Army team.

Joint program held to ensure workers' rights

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Under the patronage and in the presence of Acting General Director of the Public Authority of Manpower Marzouq Al-Otaibi, PAM arranged a joint educational program on Monday. The program was attended by diplomatic missions in Kuwait, where procedures followed by the authority and the interior ministry to protect migrant workers were explained.

Fahad Ali Murad, Deputy General Manager at the Public Authority of Manpower, began by welcoming the attendees and explained the reason behind holding this program. "We are pleased to inform you through this meeting

about some of the measures taken to protect the workforce in Kuwait. Our aim is to achieve an organized and stable image through effective management. The organization is seeking to launch services to improve housing facilities and establish a dedicated male shelter in collaboration with the International Labor Organization and other organizations. Additionally, procedures for transferring workers from one employer to another are being regulated, and all parties are being involved to safeguard the rights of the workforce in Kuwait," he said.

Col Abdulaziz Al-Kandari explained the role of the general administration of residence affairs investigations. He said the department is responsible for receiving reports from PAM regarding absences in the private sector (article 18). It also receives reports regarding domestic workers (article 20) and conducts investigations related to labor issues, including human trafficking suspicions and others. The role of the administration in receiving absconding reports is after the employer submits

a letter issued by PAM indicating the worker's absence (article 18). As for article 20, the employer should submit a report to the general administration of service centers or the administration of residence affairs investigations indicating the worker's absence.

Upon receiving the report, the administration verifies its accuracy and ensures there is no fraud by discussing the matter with the applicant and providing any necessary evidence if available. The administration's role in investigating human trafficking cases is to receive reports from workers if they approach the administration directly or through government-announced social media platforms such as the Sahel application and the ministry of interior's website. The administration receives investigation orders from the public prosecution regarding complaints and reports submitted by the attorney general. If human trafficking or other offenses are proven, the case is presented to the public prosecution, and further action is taken accordingly.



Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei

(Left to right) Chinese ambassador, Chief of the Diwan Sheikh Ahmed Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Minister of Commerce Mohammad Al-Aiban and Minister of Finance Fahad Al-Jarallah cut the cake during the ceremony. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Embassy marks 'versary of founding of People's Republic of China

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Chinese Embassy held a reception on Sunday on the occasion of the 74th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China at Waldorf Astoria Hotel. Speaking to the press on the sidelines of the ceremony, Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Aiban revealed that during HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's upcoming visit to China to attend the opening ceremony of the 2023 Asian Games, numerous significant agreements are set to be signed.

Aiban added such agreements highlight the depth of cooperation between the two countries in areas encompassing infrastructure, industries, housing and labor cities development, emphasizing that such forthcoming high-level visits serve as an initial step toward a productive collaboration in the future. Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei announced China's preparations to receive HH the Crown Prince at the opening ceremony of the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou. "I wish His Highness' visit to China a great success, injecting strong

impetus to the China-Kuwait strategic partnership. I also wish Kuwaiti athletes good results at the upcoming Asian Games," he said.

The ambassador said his country has remained the largest trading partner of Kuwait for years, with bilateral trade volume exceeding \$31.48 billion last year. "Chinese enterprises have engaged in over 80 major projects in Kuwait. Nowadays, a growing number of Kuwaiti friends have traveled to China. What's more, the first Chinese cultural center in the Gulf region has been completed in Kuwait and held a soft opening ceremony today. It will become an important window for the people of Kuwait to understand Chinese culture and feel the charm of China," he revealed.

Zhang said this year marks the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the 5th anniversary of the China-Kuwait strategic partnership, where Kuwait was the first Gulf country to establish diplomatic relations with China, and also the first in the Middle East to sign Belt and Road cooperation documents with China.

He affirmed his country's keenness to continue to work with Kuwait to enhance the synergy of development strategies and advance high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, in a bid to make cooperation more fruitful and productive. "I hope the Chinese enterprises in Kuwait and our fellow Chinese will continue to make more contributions to China-Kuwait practical cooperation and our people-to-people friendship," Zhang said.



Group picture of representatives and guests of Public Authority of Manpower's educational program. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Zain celebrates Kuwait's next generation of aspiring coders



Zain's representative presents the Zain Award for the Most Innovative Project to the winner.



CODED CEO Ahmad Marafi recognizes Zain for its strategic partnership.

- Company proud to support CODED Academy's 'Kuwait Codes' program for second year
- Zain Award for 'Most Innovative Project' presented during graduation ceremony

KUWAIT: For the second year running, Zain joined the special graduation ceremony held to celebrate the students who successfully enrolled in the 'Kuwait Codes' program in strategic collaboration with CODED Academy. The initiative is considered the best of its kind in the nation and has contributed to upskilling over 2500 students in programming, coding, and digital competencies since its launch. The ceremony was held at Kuwait University's College of Engineering and Petroleum, attended by Dean of the College of Engineering and Petroleum Prof. Khalid Al Hazaa, CODED Academy co-founder and CEO Ahmad Marafi, CODED officials, students and their families, along with sponsors and supporters.

In the event, the company presented the 'Zain Award for the Most Innovative Project' to the aspiring student Bader Fadhel Qassim in recognition of his excellence and innovative approach. The ceremony also witnessed the recognition of all the students who successfully enrolled in the third season of the Kuwait

Codes program, which kicked-off earlier this year under support from Zain.

During the third season, the Zain Innovation Campus (ZINC) hosted a fun workshop entitled "So you think you can design?", which came under a special program for female coders as part of the bigger 'Kuwait Codes' initiative. The workshop empowered girls and young women to create their own digital designs within a specific set of rules, and the designs were then presented to a judges panel that reviewed the designs and selected the winners. This particular program upskilled over 100 female students this year.

'Kuwait Codes' is the first initiative of its kind in Kuwait, and it continues its mission to create a technically advanced generation by offering the opportunity for high school students from private and public schools to learn and develop programming skills in four main streams: website design, Python programming, video game development, and smartphone app development using Flutter. This year alone, the



A large crowd celebrated the new generation of Kuwaiti coders.

program trained over 1100 students.

Zain is proud to be one of the main strategic partners of CODED throughout the years, a partnership that has contributed to empowering thousands of young programmers and developers into the local market. The company is keen on playing its part in empowering and creating the next generation of Kuwaiti coders.

Many of Zain's corporate sustain-

ability strategy initiatives center around youth and education development, and as digital skills are gaining accelerating importance in the future of education and the economy, the company has put the development of programming and digital competencies of the youth at the forefront of its priorities. Zain is keen on contributing to preparing the next generation of local talents with the skills required by modern markets. Zain

is keen on playing a vital role as an integrated digital service provider in light of the rapid digital changes witnessed by the modern world. The company always seeks to reach new levels of excellence with its customers through offering the best innovative services, meeting their needs and aspirations, as well as supporting programs and initiatives that embrace tech innovation and aim at developing it.

Gulf envoys meet at Oman Embassy

KUWAIT: Ambassadors from the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) bloc assembled at Oman's Embassy in Kuwait for talks aiming to step up coordination, the Gulf Arab Sultanate's envoy Saleh Al-Kharusi said on Monday. The talks mainly revolved around efforts to bolster cooperation between GCC foreign missions and Kuwait's foreign ministry, he said in a statement. Kuwait's Foreign Ministry on Sunday expressed sincere gratitude for the efforts of the Saudi and Omani governments in coordinating their efforts towards finding a solution for the Yemeni crisis. The ministry also applauded the dexterity of inviting the Yemeni delegation to complete the talks on the ceasefire agreement and reaching a solution that all sides agree on under the auspices of the UN. — KUNA



Award aimed at encouraging Arab journalists

CAIRO: Chief of the Arab Media Excellence Award Committee, Hamad Al-Badri, on Monday affirmed Kuwait's keenness to search for distinguished work in the media that serves the Arab community. This came in Al-Badri's statement to KUNA after the launch of the works of the first Arab Media Excellence Award Committee meeting, in its eighth session chaired by Kuwait.



Hamad Al-Badri

Al-Badri said that one of the goals behind this award is to encourage and motivate the media and journalists for what they have achieved and will achieve in the future to serve the Arab community. Kuwait puts great interest in the Arab media as it largely impacts the Arab community, insuring the national cultural identity in the face of the current challenges regionally and internationally, noted Al-Badri.

He stated that the committee discussed several issues like regulations and ways to develop the award to further motivate journalists and revealed that once they attract participations, the committee will hold two more meetings, pointing that the selection of winning works will be according to precise standards determined by the committee. Al-Badri confirmed that the award is supported financially by Kuwait with the Arab League's support to highlight and honor works related to the award categories, which are divided into ten media categories: journalism, television, radio and other media sectors.

The General Secretariat of the Council of Arab Information Ministers launched the Arab Media Excellence Award in 2015 as one of the activities it organizes to celebrate Arab Media Day annually on April 21. The award is given to media organizations and Arab journalists who have presented distinguished media works that serve Arab world issues, and each year a specific topic is determined to receive this award. — KUNA



Al-Salam Humanitarian and Charity Society support relief efforts.



BENGHAZI: Kuwait provides Libyan people with relief, medical equipment, tents and rescue vessels. Kuwaiti concerned bodies and charitable organizations are coordinating efforts to send necessary aid to Libyans.

Kuwait sends fifth planeload of relief aid to Libya

KUWAIT: The fifth planeload of relief aid for hurricane-struck Libya left Kuwait on Monday, carrying 10 tons of various medical supplies and other necessities. This fifth batch of supplies came through the support and organization of the Al-Salam Humanitarian and Charity Society and the cooperation of the International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO), in addition to the coordination between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as the Ministries of Social Affairs and Defense.

Deputy Managing Director of Al-Salam Humanitarian and Charity Society Hamad Al-Oun told KUNA that this was the second planeload organized by the society carrying medical and relief supplies to help with the people's physical and health safety there and help in rebuilding lives in stricken communities.



He indicated that a third plane would head for Libya on Thursday, organized by the society as part of the relief air bridge that was created as directed by the political leadership to provide urgent relief to the Libyan people amid the humanitarian catastrophe there. Storm Daniel is the most violent of its kind in over three decades, killing thousands of people and leaving thousands of others injured, missing and displaced. — KUNA



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KPC, OAPEC sign MoU on research cooperation

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) on Monday signed a memorandum of understanding to enhance scientific, research and technical cooperation, exchange experiences, and achieve mutual benefit between the two parties. The objectives of the memorandum are to cooperate jointly between the two parties to exchange experiences and best practices between them, in addition to enhancing and building technical capabilities and expertise.

The memorandum also aims to encourage awareness of technological development, create collaborative research and development projects, constantly keep abreast of the latest innovations and related technical achievements and enhance the utilization of existing technical projects at the Petroleum Corporation Kuwait.

The statement quoted the CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah, stressing that the corporation's efforts continue to build its capabilities and potential in the field of research and development. Sheikh Nawaf Al-Sabah stressed the corporation's keenness to cooperate with its strategic partners and international oil organizations that have proven their worth in the research field, such as OAPEC, saying, "From this memorandum of understanding, the journey of progress and mutual benefit with OAPEC continues to push our oil industry forward."

For his part, OAPEC Secretary General Jamal Al-Loughani praised, according to the statement, the efforts exerted by the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation in order to enhance cooperation with the organization, which is based in Kuwait, which has been its permanent headquarters since its establishment in 1968. He stressed that the organization will spare no effort to put all the provisions of the agreement into actual implementation for the benefit of both parties. Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) was represented during the signing of the memorandum of understanding by Deputy Chairman and CEO Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah, while OAPEC was represented by Secretary General Jamal Al-Loughani. — KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Motorists experienced heavy traffic jams on some streets and highways around Kuwait, especially roads close to schools, as students of all educational stages headed back to school on Sept 18, 2023. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

UNHCR, Kuwait's Direct Aid sign scholarships deal for refugees

Deal aims at empowering youths

KUWAIT: The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) signed an agreement Monday with Direct Aid to provide scholarships for 40 students in the African Horn region. The agreement, which will provide scholarships at Direct Aid universities in Africa, aims to provide education for refugees from Somalia, Kenya, and Tanzania. Nisreen Rubaian, UNHCR representative in Kuwait, told KUNA after the signing ceremony. The agreement, she added, also aims at empowering youth and improving their personal and professional lives to contribute to economic development in the labor market in host countries.

Rubaian said the agreement coincided with the publication of a report by UNHCR about refugees' education in 2023, which showed that more than 50 percent of refugee children were not going to school.

She thanked Direct Aid for offering the scholarships, which showed the genuine meaning of solidarity. General Manager of Direct Aid, Dr Abdullah Al-Sumait, said the partnerships with the UNHCR contribute to better empowerment in the African communities. He said education was a major pillar for improving living conditions and the wellbeing of people. — KUNA



UNHCR, Kuwait's Direct Aid senior officials sign scholarships deal for African refugees. — KUNA



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Arab journalists attend the program 'news monitoring on the internet'. — KUNA photos



KUNA media training center kicks off 'news monitoring on the internet' program.

KUNA media center holds Internet news monitoring program

KUWAIT: KUNA Media Training Center kicks off its program titled "News Monitoring on the Internet," which runs until September 21. The program, presented by Ahmad Al-Sheikh, a member of the Media Council at the British Association of Journalists, focuses on the latest tools to monitor news on the internet through Google and various social media platforms.

In the training program, Al-Sheikh discusses multiple topics, including analyzing the audience and platforms, developing news photos and videos, and developing and issuing news according to the interests of people. KUNA Media Development Center



Member of the Media council at the British Association of Journalists Ahmad Al-Sheikh presents the program.

focuses on increasing the skills of professional journalistic work, improving media content, and bringing theory and practice closer in the field of writing media materials. — KUNA





China weighs ban on clothing that 'hurts feelings' of nation

Ukraine recaptures land near Bakhmut

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DERNA: Rescue personnel walk on a mud-covered road as they work in the aftermath of the devastating Derna flood on Sept 17, 2023. — AFP

Survivors recount Libya flood horror

'Mountain of water' swept away buildings, leaving only mud behind

DERNA: It was long past midnight when Abdel Moneim Awad al-Sheikh awoke to desperate screams from outside his home in the Libyan city of Derna, only to find his building engulfed by surging flood waters. "I took nothing but my glasses and phone and fled as the waters shook the iron doors like an earthquake," recounted the 73-year-old survivor of the deadly disaster.

He and his family managed to escape their first-floor home and rush up the stairs of the multi-storey building as the raging waters tore away the front door and swept it into the darkness. From the top floor, they watched in horror as the tsunami-like tidal wave swept away entire buildings, cars and the people inside them, washing untold numbers into the Mediterranean Sea.

The enormous flood, fueled by torrential rains on Sept 10, had broken through two upstream dams and sent a tidal wave crashing down the previously dry riverbed, or wadi, that bisects the city of 100,000. A week on, thick mud cakes the devastated building where al-Sheikh and his wife lived, along with two

of their sons and their families, in the city where the official death toll has climbed above 3,000.

Scramble onto roof

By the time they had reached the fourth floor that traumatic night, the water had temporarily begun to subside, but it was not the end of the nightmare, said al-Sheikh. Roughly 20 minutes later, "my son yelled from upstairs and said another, bigger wave, about 20 meters (66 feet) high, is coming". "We put up a wooden ladder and climbed up onto the second roof, where we stayed until after dawn."

As the sun rose over Derna, now a vast apocalyptic wasteland of shattered buildings and lives lost, a group of volunteers came to help them, most of them young men. "One of them had lost his entire family," said al-Sheikh. Amid the chaos, the true death toll remains unknown, with the health minister of divided Libya's eastern administration, Othman Abdeljalil, saying 3,283 people were confirmed dead in Derna. Libyan officials and hu-

manitarian organizations have warned that the final toll could be much higher, with thousands still missing.

'Mountain of water'

Many who survived the flood lost everything except their lives, their homes now only shells emptied of their contents. Mohamed al-Zawi, 25, recalled that "all our furniture and things were moving" as water swirled through their home. The first wave was only at pavement-level, but the second came "with strength", quickly reaching the second and then third floors of his building.

Zawi recalled seeing "a large mountain of water bringing with it cars, people, belongings ... and pouring everything out into the sea". Seated near what was once his home, the shock remains etched onto Zawi's face. "We had received warnings a day earlier that strong rains were expected and that we should remain at home, but nothing else," he said. UN experts have blamed the high death toll both on climatic factors and the legacy of Libya's war that has

weakened its critical infrastructure, early warning systems and emergency response.

'I saw death'

Zawi said that when he finally managed to come down from the roof, once the waters subsided, he saw "25 or 30 bodies" along the nearby streets. He rushed to find shrouds for them, he said, before moving on to help the search for any survivors. In the same neighborhood, Mohamed Abdelhafiz, a Lebanese national who has lived in Derna for decades, recounted that "the earth shook" that night, and he initially thought a quake had hit. "I saw death," the 50-year-old said, recalling how he had rushed out to his balcony only to find that the water had already reached it. Standing at an empty window frame, he pointed outside to the shattered city and said: "This whole area, from my house to the wadi, had three or four buildings." "Now, there is nothing. The ground is just mud, as though there were never any buildings here." — AFP

1 in 10 Japanese are older than 80: Government data

TOKYO: More than 10 percent of Japanese people have crossed 80 years or older for the first time, new official data showed, as the nation faces a rapidly greying population. Government data released on Sunday, ahead of Monday's "Respect for Aged Day" national holiday, also showed that the share of Japan's population at 65 or older expanded to a record 29.1 percent from 29.0 percent a year ago.

The level compared with second-ranked Italy's 24.5 percent and third-ranked Finland's 23.6 percent, according to the internal affairs ministry. "Japan has the highest percentage of elderly population in the world," the ministry said in a press release.

For decades, Japan has seen its population shrink and grow older as young people delay marriage and children largely due to unstable jobs and economic difficulties. As a result, Japan has seen ballooning costs for elderly care with not enough young people to fill jobs and pay for various social and welfare programs.

The ministry said that with the baby boomer population turning 75 or older, Japan's 124.4 million people are continuing to grow older. Around 12.59 million people are 80 or older while 20 million are 75 or older, it said. As a result, Japan is relying on an elderly labor force. More than nine million elderly are working, accounting for 13.6 percent of the workforce, or one in seven workers in Japan.

A quarter of all elderly in Japan have jobs, less than South Korea's 36.2 percent, but far ahead of other developing countries such as the United States at 18.6 percent, and France at 3.9 percent. More than a third of people between 70 to 74 have jobs in Japan, the data showed. By 2040, Japan's elderly population is projected to account for 34.8 percent of the population. — AFP

Tensions ease in Karabakh as aid resumes

BAKU: Tensions over Nagorno-Karabakh eased a notch on Monday as aid deliveries resumed to the breakaway territory following an agreement between Armenian separatists and authorities in Azerbaijan.

Armenia had accused Azerbaijan of fueling a humanitarian crisis in the mountainous region — internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan — by closing the sole road linking the region with Armenia. It had said the closure of the Lachin corridor, which is policed by Russian peacekeepers, had led to food and medicine shortages in the region and accused Azerbaijan of ethnic cleansing, allegations Baku has denied.

Baku has said separatists refused its proposal to reopen Lachin at the same time as the Aghdam road, which connects Nagorno-Karabakh with the rest of Azerbaijan. The months-long crisis as well as Azerbaijan's deployment of troops near Nagorno-Karabakh and along the border with Armenia had sparked fears of a fresh war between the arch-foes locked in a decades-long dispute over the region.

The "simultaneous passage of the Red Cross cars was ensured" through the Lachin corridor and the Aghdam road on Monday, Hikmet Hajiyev, foreign policy advisor to Azerbaijan's president said on social media. "The whole international community once again witnessed that there was no so-called blockade but a deliberate self-blockade, weaponization and politicization of humanitarian issues," he said.

'Sustained relief'

Separatist authorities confirmed 23 tons of wheat flour from Armenia as well as medical supplies had been delivered to Nagorno-Karabakh "thanks to the agreement reached between the Red Cross's Stepanakert branch and Russian peacekeepers." "The delivery of cargo from the Russian city of Rostov is planned by Red Cross vehicles in several days via the same routes."

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan recently said some 2,000 Russian peacekeepers were either "unable or unwilling" to control the road as part of a 2020 ceasefire deal between Baku and Yerevan. The International Committee of the Red Cross said it had managed to deliver "wheat



BAKU: Captured Armenian arms are displayed at a memorial exhibition in Baku on Sept 13, 2023. — AFP

flour and essential medical items" through the two roads thanks to "a humanitarian consensus" between regional "decision-makers".

Nagorno-Karabakh residents "urgently need sustained relief through regular humanitarian shipments," said Ariane Bauer, ICRC's regional director for Europe and Central Asia. The European Union and United States have called for the reopening of Lachin and Aghdam routes for humanitarian aid.

Azerbaijan's Armenian-populated enclave was at the center of two wars between Armenia and Azerbaijan — in 2020 and in the 1990s. Six weeks of fighting ended in autumn 2020 with a Russian-brokered truce that saw Armenia cede swathes of territory it had controlled since the 1990s. There have been frequent clashes at the two countries' shared border despite the ongoing peace talks between Baku and Yerevan under the mediation of the European Union and United States.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have said they are committed to the conflict's peaceful settlement, but the negotiations have so far failed to bring about a breakthrough. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, ethnic Armenian separatists in Karabakh broke away from Azerbaijan. The ensuing conflict claimed some 30,000 lives. — AFP

US military asks for help finding lost stealth jet

WASHINGTON: A stealth-capable US fighter jet vanished on Sunday — not from prying eyes but rather from the American military, prompting an unusual call to the public to help locate the missing multimillion-dollar plane. After what authorities labeled a "mishap," a pilot flying an F-35 in the southern state of South Carolina on Sunday afternoon ejected from the craft.

The pilot survived, but the military was left with an expensive problem: it couldn't find the jet, leading Joint Base Charleston to ask for help from local residents. "If you have any information that may help our recovery teams locate the F-35, please call the Base Defense Operations Center," a post from the base read on X, formerly known as Twitter. Base authorities said they were searching, in coordination with federal aviation regulators, around two lakes north of the city of Charleston. The planes, manufactured by Lockheed Martin, cost around \$80 million each. — AFP

International

Ukraine recaptures land near Bakhmut

Human rights in Russia 'significantly deteriorated' since war: UN expert

KYIV: Ukraine said on Monday its forces had recaptured small clutches of land from Russian forces along the southern front and near Bakhmut, regions where Kyiv's troops have focused their slow-moving counter-offensive. Kyiv launched its bid to wrest back territory controlled by Moscow in June, after stockpiling Western-supplied weapons and recruiting assault battalions.

Its efforts have focused on the war-battered town of Bakhmut in the eastern Donetsk region, as well as several points along the frontline in the south, towards Crimea. "Two square kilometers (0.77 square miles) were liberated in the Bakhmut sector," Deputy Defense Minister Ganna Malyar said on state media.

Her announcement came one day after Kyiv said its forces had retaken Klishchivka, a village south of Bakhmut, which was captured by Russian forces in May after one of the longest and bloodiest battles of the war. Malyar also said Ukrainian forces had clawed back 5.2 square kilometers in the south, where its forces are working to push deeper at two points along the front.

But Ukraine's progress against entrenched Russian positions has been limited since June, spurring debate among Kyiv's Western allies over its military strategy. Russian forces meanwhile have pursued their aerial bombardment campaign, targeting Ukraine's southern regions and maritime export hubs in particular. Ukraine said on Monday its air defense systems had downed a swarm of attack drones and nearly 20 cruise missiles in Russia's latest aerial barrage over-

night. "A total of 24 strike UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) were recorded around the Mykolaiv and Odesa regions. Eighteen attack drones were shot down by air defense units," the air force said on social media.

'Significantly deteriorated'

It added that its forces had shot down all 17 cruise missiles fired by Russian forces overnight. Kyiv has at the same time stepped up its aerial attacks on Russia. Moscow said it repelled Ukrainian drones over outer Moscow and two border regions — as well as over several parts of occupied Crimea. Crimea, which Moscow annexed from Ukraine in 2014, has been targeted throughout the war but attacks there have intensified as Kyiv vows to recapture the Black Sea peninsula.

And since Ukraine launched its counter-offensive, Russia has weathered waves of drone attacks that have damaged buildings, including in the capital Moscow. But Russian officials have downplayed their significance. "Drones were intercepted over the western, southwestern, northwestern and eastern parts of the Crimean peninsula: Istra and Domodedovo districts of Moscow region, Belgorod and Voronezh regions," the defense ministry said.

Kyiv announced the territorial gains as Beijing said China's top diplomat, Wang Yi, would begin a four-day visit to Russia for security talks on Monday. China and Russia are strategic allies, with both countries frequently touting their "no limits" partnership and economic and military cooperation. China's foreign ministry said Wang would hold security consultations



LVIV: Children play in the fountain in front of the Opera and Ballet Theatre in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv on Sept 17, 2023. — AFP

at the invitation of Nikolai Patrushev, secretary of Russia's Security Council. The visit was due a day after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un left Russia following a rare six-day trip, which appeared to solidify his country's ties with President Vladimir Putin and fanned Western fears Pyongyang could provide Moscow

with weapons. A top United Nations expert meanwhile warned that respect for human rights inside Russia had substantially worsened since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine last year. "The situation of human rights in the Russian Federation has significantly deteriorated since its in-

vasion of Ukraine in February 2022," UN Special Rapporteur Mariana Katzarova said in her first report on Russia. Russia has criminalized criticism of the military, and law enforcement officials have detained thousands for protesting or speaking out against the invasion. — AFP

Inside the S Korean factory that could be key for Ukraine

CHANGWON: At a sprawling South Korean arms factory, a high-tech production line of robots and super-skilled workers were rapidly churning out weapons Friday that could, eventually, play a role in Ukraine. Since the Russian invasion last year, the Hanwha Aerospace factory in the southern city of Changwon has expanded production capacity three times, workers told AFP, as South Korea ramps up arms exports while traditional behemoths like the United States struggle with production shortages.

Longstanding domestic policy bars Seoul from selling weapons into active conflicts, but even so it signed deals worth \$17.3 billion last year, including a \$12.7 billion agreement with NATO member and key Kyiv ally Poland, for K9 Howitzers, K2 tanks, and more. And with North Korea's Kim Jong Un in Russia touring space centers and weapons factories, experts say the South may be forced to review its careful balancing act on the Ukraine war — which Seoul has condemned, even as it resists calls to supply weapons directly to Kyiv.

On the assembly line Friday were rows of War-

saw-bound Howitzers, an artillery weapon a bit like a super-mobile cannon. Hanwha Aerospace, South Korea's largest defense contractor, is racing to meet delivery targets for the 14-wheeled, 47-tonne K9 Howitzers, which have a firing range of 40 kilometers (25 miles) — much longer than a tank, although the K9 needs to be stationary to shoot.

Poland ordered 212 K9s last year and Seoul has already delivered 48 of them — a pace "no one else can achieve," Lee Kyoung-hun, Hanwha's production leader told AFP. "We are capable of delivering products in the shortest time frame possible," said Lee, adding that it took between three and four months to build one Howitzer from scratch.

Seoul has long harbored ambitions to join the ranks of the world's top arms exporters — aiming to be the fourth largest, behind the US, Russia and France — something that is now possible, industry research indicates. It has already sold artillery shells to Washington — but with a "final user" agreement in place meaning the United States would be the military that uses the munitions. Experts have said this allows the United States to then provide their own shells to Kyiv. South Korea's arms industry has one key advantage over others globally: it's always been "ready for war," said Choi Dong-bin, Hanwha Aerospace's senior vice president.

Hostilities in the 1950 to 1953 Korean War ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty, and Seoul remains technically at war with nuclear-armed Pyongyang. This gives the country an advantage globally in

weapons production. Choi said, as Seoul has the capacity to mass-produce quickly and easily whenever it gets an order. "The fact that we're maintaining production line is another boon. At this moment we're receiving many orders from overseas and we are able to respond quickly to their demands and deliver products in a short period of time," he said.

Seoul's weapons are also well-tested: "These are deployed on the ground," on one of the world's most heavily fortified borders, Choi said. "Because they are deployed (in South Korea), it has the capacity to perform in any part of the world," he added. Heavily-sanctioned North Korea lacks Seoul's high-tech weaponry — but it does have stockpiles of outdated Soviet-era munitions. Kim met Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday, and experts have warned the internationally-isolated pair might have agreed a deal involving Pyongyang supplying artillery shells and anti-tank missiles in exchange for satellite technology from Moscow.

Any such deal could change Seoul's calculations, experts say, as although South Korea has condemned Russia's invasions of Ukraine, it has resisted calls to step up support to Kyiv, in part as it has long called on Moscow to help manage Kim Jong Un. But if Moscow starts buying weapons from Pyongyang — something that would violate rafts of UN sanctions — it could both change the course of the Ukraine war and force Seoul's hand, said Choi Gi-il, professor of military studies at Sangji University. "If that were to happen, I think it will be more than 50-50 prob-



CHANGWON: A South Korean engineer works on a part of a K-9 self propelled howitzer at Hanwha Aerospace factory in Changwon on Sept 15, 2023. — AFP

ability that South Korea-manufactured weapons exported to Poland would be deployed to help Ukraine fend off the Russians," he said.

The export of South Korean weaponry, especially the K9 howitzers, would be "of great value to Kyiv," he said. "It's always better to have more howitzers in war and both Russia and Ukraine don't have enough of them," he said, adding that Ukraine was mostly using Soviet-era outdated weapons. "But K9s stand out as among the most recent, overwhelming conventional weapons. It will mean so much for Kiev to have them on the frontlines." — AFP

US, Iran swap prisoners in \$6bn deal

DOHA: Arch-foes the United States and Iran each released five detainees on Monday in a prisoner swap deal that also gives Tehran access to \$6 billion in long-frozen oil funds. The five Americans freed by Iran, including a businessman arrested in 2015, landed in Doha just before 5:40 pm (1440 GMT) on a Qatari jet, hours after the unblocked funds were credited to Iranian accounts in Qatari banks.

The five were greeted on the tarmac before walking in the setting sun to a terminal building, three of them with their arms round each other's shoulders. One of them praised US President Joe Biden for ignoring the political backlash and taking the "incredibly difficult decisions" that freed them. "Thank you President Biden for ultimately putting the lives of American citizens above politics," Siamak Namazi

said in a statement.

Two of the Iranian detainees arrived in Qatar, Iranian media said. The other three released by the United States have opted to remain there or in a third country, Tehran said. The trigger for the exchange was the release of the \$6 billion in funds, frozen by US ally South Korea under sanctions against Iran, to the Iranian accounts. Washington has denied the \$6 billion is a ransom payment, insisting the money will be used for humanitarian purposes.

"We hope to have total access to the Iranian assets today," Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani told a news conference in Tehran earlier on Monday. "The prisoner exchange will take place on the same day and five Iranian citizens imprisoned in America will be released." As the prisoners were released, Biden granted clemency to the five Iranians and announced sanctions against Iran's ex-president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the country's intelligence ministry. The sanctions were imposed over alleged deceit over the disappearance of Bob Levinson, a former FBI agent who disappeared in Iran in mysterious circumstance and is presumed dead.

Iran generated the \$6 billion through oil sales

to South Korea, which blocked the funds after the United States under former president Donald Trump reimposed sanctions as he withdrew from a landmark nuclear accord. Iran's central bank governor said Iran would seek damages from South Korea for withholding the funds. The equivalent of €5.57 billion (\$5.95 billion) was deposited in six Iranian accounts with two Qatari banks on Monday, he said.

"We're making a complaint on behalf of Iran against South Korea for not giving access to these funds and the reduction in value of these funds in order to receive damages," Mohammadreza Farzin said on state TV. The five Americans of Iranian descent — all considered Iranian nationals by Tehran, which rejects dual nationality — were released to house arrest when the deal was agreed last month. They included Namazi, a businessman arrested in 2015 on spying charges which his family has rejected. The others are wildlife conservationist Morad Tahbaz, venture capitalist Emad Sharqi, and two others who wished to remain anonymous.

Last week, the official IRNA news agency identified the five Iranian prisoners. They include Reza Sarhangpou and Kambiz Attar Kashani, both accused of violating US sanctions against Tehran. A third prisoner, Kaveh Lotfolah Afrasiabi, was detained at his home near Boston in 2021 and charged

with being an Iranian government agent, according to US officials. The two others, Mehrdad Moein Ansari and Amin Hasanzadeh, were said to have links to Iranian security forces.

Biden's administration has insisted Iran will only be allowed to use the unfrozen funds to buy food, medicine and other humanitarian goods. Iran, which has been deeply hostile to the US since the 1979 Islamic Revolution overthrew the pro-Western monarch, has denied any restrictions on use of the funds. Iran's Kanani has insisted the money will allow Tehran to "purchase all non-sanctioned goods", not just food and medicine.

Biden took office with hopes of restoring the landmark 2015 nuclear agreement, under which Iran promised to constrain its contested nuclear work in return for sanctions relief. But months of talks failed to produce a breakthrough. Prospects for resolving the dispute sank further after protests broke out in Iran last year following the death in custody of Mahsa Amini, who had been arrested for allegedly violating the country's Islamic dress code for women. The release of the prisoners comes just days after the first anniversary of her death, and as Biden and Iran's president, Ebrahim Raisi, are in New York for the annual UN General Assembly, although they are not expected to meet. — AFP

20% of people in Kuwait are...

Continued from Page 1

by excessive consumption of high-energy foods, a lack of satiety and escalating consumption even when the body doesn't require it. This condition is specifically associated with foods containing sugar, wheat or both.

Dr Hashash pointed out that "food addiction" operates on the same neurological mechanisms as drug addiction, targeting the same neurotransmitters in the brain that affect reward centers, triggered by dopamine release, resulting in feelings of happiness or euphoria. Over time, individuals require larger quantities of food to achieve the same feelings of happiness and euphoria, as dopamine receptors decrease, mirroring the mechanisms of drug addiction.

She explained "food addiction" is assessed using tools designed to reflect diagnostic criteria for other addiction disorders, such as loss of control over consumption and a strong desire to continue despite negative health consequences. The Yale Food Addiction Scale, introduced in 2009, is a valid psychological tool specifically designed to assess food addiction using diagnostic criteria.

Dr Hashash noted that women are more suscep-

tible to this type of addiction, with research results indicating that approximately 24 percent of women are affected by it. In general, individuals over the age of 35 have a prevalence rate of about 22.2 percent, while those with excess weight have a rate of approximately 24.9 percent. Individuals with eating disorders have the highest prevalence rate at around 57.6 percent.

She also highlighted that food addiction rates increase in cases of anxiety, depression and social isolation, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. Addictive foods are those containing sugars, wheat or both, such as pizza, chocolate, potato chips, French fries, burgers, cheese, pastries, soft drinks and others.

Dr Hashash mentioned that the symptoms of addiction cannot be identified through blood tests but rather through various behaviors, such as a strong desire for food even after just having eaten a healthy meal, an inability to stop eating even when feeling full, finding excuses to indulge in desired foods, multiple unsuccessful attempts to quit consuming these foods and other various behaviors.

She recommended consulting a gastroenterologist to determine if there is any organic cause contributing to these addictive behaviors, using behavioral and therapeutic techniques. Additionally, she advised preparing a list of pros and cons related to lifestyle choices and engaging in regular physical activity.



DOHA: US citizens Siamak Namazi, Emad Sharqi and Morad Tahbaz disembark from a Qatari jet upon their arrival at Doha International Airport in Doha on Sept 18, 2023. — AFP

International

China weighs ban on clothing that 'hurts feelings' of nation

'Vague' proposal could lead to 'arbitrary' punishment: Scholar

BEIJING: Clothing that "hurts the feelings" of the nation could soon be outlawed in China, according to recent draft revisions to legislation, with their vagueness sparking concern over the broad scope for interpretation and enforcement. The proposed law states that both speech and clothing deemed "harmful to the spirit of the Chinese people" or that "hurts the feelings" of the nation will result in fines or even jail time.

But it stops short of defining specifically which types of clothing stand to be banned by the new rules. "Determining who has the authority to decide and how to make judgements may require more time, and we need the establishment of mature judgement criteria before advancing such proposals," a 23-year-old Beijinger surnamed He told AFP. She worried that the offences the law targets are "not as clear as crimes like robbery, where right and wrong are definitive". Several legal scholars in China objected on similar grounds to the revisions, which were released earlier this month for public consultation. The consultation period ends on September 30.

The proposals would lead to "too vague a standard of punishment, which will easily lead to an arbitrary expansion

of the scope of administrative punishment", wrote Tsinghua University's Lao Dongyan on the social media platform Weibo. Police in China already routinely use the broad charge of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" to punish people with clothing or banners bearing messages deemed politically sensitive.

But the changes could grant authorities further power to clamp down on any clothing perceived as harmful to public morality. Earlier this month, social media videos showed a man in the southern city of Shenzhen being questioned by police for livestreaming himself wearing a skirt, triggering a discussion about individual freedom of expression. Many online commentators agreed with local law enforcement's decision to intervene, with one saying the man's behavior was "offensive to common morals".

'Historical reasons'

Like most people AFP spoke to on the streets of Beijing, He interpreted the revisions mainly as a reaction to incidents involving people wearing Japanese clothing in historically significant places or on memorial days. In 2021, the state-backed tabloid Global Times said a woman was "severely criticized and educated" after

she wore a kimono in public on December 13, the national remembrance day for victims of Japanese war crimes in 1937.

And last year, a woman said she was detained during a photoshoot while wearing a kimono in the eastern city of Suzhou by police. "Dressing is everyone's own choice and freedom, but there are also special (circumstances)," He said. "If someone makes an insulting move in front of a certain statue on a specific day and wears a special costume, such behavior is 100 percent on purpose and should be punished."

Gu, a 35-year-old man, told AFP that he was open to holding people legally accountable for offensive clothing on "special occasions". "There are indeed some historical reasons, and I think the emotions of the local people should be considered," said Gu. "But in most cases, for example, if someone just goes to a shopping street (wearing a kimono), I think there is no need to pursue any action."

'Psychological harm'

Others, such as 25-year-old male programmer Yang Shuo, were less lenient. "If a person wears a kimono to ... the Memorial Hall for the Victims of the Nanjing



A man looks at clothing at a store in the Causeway Bay district of Hong Kong on July 25, 2023 in this file photo. — AFP

Massacre by Japanese Invaders, I believe it would cause significant psychological harm to the Chinese people," said Yang. "I think they should be punished."

Jeremy Daum, senior research fellow at Yale's Paul Tsai China Center, told AFP he thought the revisions themselves

would be amended to focus the law more on such incidents. "It's fairly certain that the language will be heavily modified — probably made more specific to address heroes, martyrs, party history — following the large number of public comments," he said. — AFP

Clean water, toilets a luxury for quake survivors in Morocco

AMIZMIZ: In her earthquake-hit Moroccan town, Zina Mechghazi has improvised a sink by placing a pink bucket and a bar of soap on the dusty ground amid the ruins. "I haven't taken a shower in seven days," said the woman from Amizmiz at the foot of the High Atlas range, about 60 kilometers (40 miles) southwest of Marrakech. "I've only washed my armpits and changed my clothes."

Over a week since a 6.8-magnitude quake devastated parts of central Morocco, many worry that the dire living conditions and poor hygiene spell new threats for the survivors. The disaster killed nearly 3,000 people and injured thousands more when it hit in Al-Haouz province, south of the tourist hub Marrakech, on September 8.

Many survivors have stayed close to their ravaged villages and now sleep in improvised shelters and simple tents provided by Morocco's civil protection service. Later, Mechghazi was kneading dough to make bread, sitting on a stool next to a stove out in the open. When she was finished, she washed the flour off her hands with untreated water from a dirty five-liter jug, shrugging that "we have to adapt".

With only a few houses left standing and habitable in Amizmiz, functioning bathrooms and toilets have become a luxury, and they are often overcrowded. Mechghazi pointed to an empty lot nearby where a stand of olive trees now

provide the only, limited privacy as a child was relieving himself behind a tent.

'Rain and cold'

During the day, temperatures in Amizmiz still top 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit), but nights bring biting cold and damp in the mountain area. "Winter is coming, the situation is difficult, especially with the children," said Rabi Mansour, holding a four-month-old baby, her fourth child. "Problems caused by rain and cold will be a challenge."

A pregnant woman, who only gave her first name, Hassna, and who is just days away from giving birth, said she was terrified. "I never thought I would give birth in these conditions," she said. "I don't have much water, it's hard to go to the bathroom, and I'd rather not even think about how I'm going to manage. It stresses me out so much."

A few tents away, first aid was being provided to people with injuries or sickness. "We have a foot infection, a tooth abscess, a stomach problem, and others are here for medication," said one responder, working under an awning serving as a clinic. For those villagers who were badly injured or disabled in the quake, the question of hygiene facilities and health services is especially important.

Said Yahia has been in a hospital in Marrakech since he lost both of his legs, after a rock crushed them while



ARDOUZ: Girls fill bottles with water in the village of Ardouz in the Amizmiz region on September 14, 2023. — AFP

he tried to save his son from their home. "I live in a remote place in the mountains," he told AFP from his hospital bed, dreading the thought of going back home. "I don't know what will become of me."

'Disease vector'

Morocco is expected to request more aid soon from the United Nations to help it recover and rebuild, UN aid chief Martin Griffiths told reporters in Geneva on Friday. An especially pressing need will be the provision of clean water, which was already in short supply in some areas before the quake.

Contaminated water is "a major vector of disease, with a whole range of water-related illnesses from diarrhea to cholera," Philippe Bonnet, the

director of emergencies for French charity Solidarites Internationales, told AFP by phone. Poor hygiene can also lead to skin problems, and the cold brings respiratory diseases like bronchitis, he said.

The charity has sent a team to Morocco with equipment to test the water, among other things. Some latrines have already been constructed by organizations in Tafeghaght, seven kilometers south of Amizmiz, and charities have said they may also send mobile latrines. Bonnet stressed the urgent need for emergency latrines. "If the water is unfit for consumption because the source has been contaminated, which is a risk with open-air latrines, the impact is very significant," he said. — AFP

Police allegedly threaten parents of French bullying victim

VERSAILLES: The parents of a French schoolboy who killed himself after complaining of being bullied at school said they were disgusted by the response of the authorities, which included a threatening letter warning they could face prison for slander. The 15-year-old boy, named as Nicolas, killed himself on September 5, one day after children went back to class in France after the summer break.

He had moved for the new term to an establishment in Paris, after complaining of being bullied during the previous school year at his former school in Poissy, in the Yvelines region southwest of the capital. Rather than expressing sympathy with the family's predicament, the Yvelines regional education authorities, based in Versailles, sent them a letter saying statements made by the parents had been "unacceptable" and urged them to adopt a "constructive" attitude.

UN says war crimes committed in Ethiopia despite peace deal

GENEVA: Serious violations are still being committed in Ethiopia despite a peace deal in the north, UN rights experts said Monday, warning the conflict was spreading across the country and putting regional stability at risk. "Atrocities, war crimes and crimes against humanity are still being committed in the country," the United Nations-backed investigators said in a statement.

Last November, a peace deal between Ethiopia's federal government and rebels in the Tigray

region ostensibly ended a brutal two-year conflict. "While the signing of the agreement may have mostly silenced the guns, it has not resolved the conflict in the north of the country, in particular in Tigray," said Mohamed Chande Othman, head of the UN-backed Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia.

"Nor has it brought about any comprehensive peace," he told reporters in Geneva, presenting the commission's latest report. "The situation in Ethiopia remains extremely grave." Beyond Tigray, the report warned that "hostilities in Ethiopia are now at a national scale, with significant violations increasing particularly in Amhara region, but also ongoing in Oromia and elsewhere". "The risk to the state as well as regional stability and the enjoyment of human rights in East Africa cannot be overstated."

Attal, 34, who this month had met the boy's family alongside first lady Brigitte Macron, is seen as one of the most ambitious ministers in President Emmanuel Macron's government. He has made tackling bullying a priority after a series of high-profile suicides in recent



VERSAILLES: A photograph shows the building of the rectorate of the Versailles Academy (Education Authority) on Sept 18, 2023. — AFP

years of children who had complained of being bullied at school. Versailles prosecutors are seeking to investigate whether Nicolas' suicide was directly linked to bullying, cautioning against drawing any conclusions for now. Attal is due on Monday to host a meeting of school regional authorities to discuss all the reports of bullying received over the last year. — AFP

'Truly horrific'

Radhika Coomaraswamy, a member of the commission, told reporters there were "indicators for the possibility of future atrocity crimes", with the tensions appearing to be "between two ethnic groups". "What is needed is a comprehensive peace agreement involving all Ethiopians." A mosaic of more than 80 ethno-linguistic communities, Ethiopia has long struggled with territorial conflicts inside its borders.

The Tigray conflict, which erupted in November 2020, pitted Ethiopia's government forces — backed by Eritrea's army and forces from the neighboring region of Amhara — against the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). It was marked by mass atrocities by all sides, but there were hopes the violations would cease after the signing of last year's peace deal. — AFP

Handwritten letters only way to reach loved-ones in Darfur

EL DAEIN: With no cell service or phone calls, people in Sudan's war-ravaged western region of Darfur are resorting to a bygone means of communication: handwritten letters, carried by taxi drivers. Ahmed Issa, 25, sits on a plastic chair in a roadside cafe penning a message to relatives he left behind in Nyala, the capital of South Darfur state.

In the safety of El Daein, 150 kilometers (93 miles) southeast, he told AFP the letters are often the only way to get news in and out of his hometown, the second-biggest city in Sudan and the site of brutal battles between the regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). "Even at the start of the fighting, it was hard to get in touch with people in other neighborhoods inside Nyala," he said, nearly five months after the war began.

The situation has only grown worse since, with horrific violence reported across Darfur, a region the size of France that is home to around a quarter of Sudan's 48 million people. They remember all too painfully the years-long war and atrocities that began in 2003. Hundreds of thousands were killed and more than two million displaced after the government of Omar al-Bashir unleashed the Janjaweed militia in response to a rebel uprising.

Hunched forward in a black patterned shirt and a neat crew cut, Issa carefully folds his letter over and over. "You wait a week for the letter to arrive, and you don't know for sure if they'll get it," he told AFP. "And if they do, there's no guarantee they can send one back" through the treacherous roads in and out of Nyala.

Three months ago, the West Darfur state capital of El Geneina seemed to be the nucleus of the fighting, becoming a symbol of the return of ethnic violence in Darfur. Western countries and the UN linked the violence to the RSF and its allies. It triggered the International Criminal Court to open a new investigation into alleged war crimes. Now Nyala is the center of clashes between the army and the RSF. Over 10 days in August, more than 50,000 people fled Nyala's violence, according to the United Nations. Water and electricity networks quickly failed, compounding threats in a city where one in four people already needed humanitarian aid before the war, the UN said.

The messenger

People will do anything to make sure their loved ones are alright, according to human rights defender Ahmed Gouja, who left Nyala but is trying to inform the world of the gruesome violence unfolding through Twitter, which is being rebranded as X. He himself spent 16 days "with no info" about his family in Nyala, before finally reaching "one of my brothers who arrived at El Daein, searching for an internet signal". "We die every moment that passes while we are deprived" of news of loved ones, he wrote.

For weeks, Suleiman Mofaddal has seen families like Gouja's walk through his El Daein office, a small room with yellow walls, anxious for news of those who cannot or refuse to leave their homes in Nyala. On his desk sits a pile of small, neatly folded paper rectangles, each with a name scrawled in blue ink. Some have a phone number, just in case the recipient gets cell service for even a moment. All wait to be handed to drivers on Mofaddal's team, who will carry the letters on their way to Nyala. "Most often, the recipient immediately writes a response and hands it back to the driver before he leaves," Mofaddal told AFP. Then the driver heads back out, hoping the road ahead won't be closed — by either the bombs, militia checkpoints, or the downpours of Sudan's rainy season. — AFP

Business

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2023

'Just can't sell': Ukraine harvests sunflowers as war blocks ports

Farmers enjoy good harvest, but exports face hurdles

SHESTIRNYA, Ukraine: A truck dumps another load of black sunflower seeds into the barn of Ukrainian farmer Oleksandr Ryabinin, where they scatter over the floor, releasing a nutty aroma when crunched underfoot. It is sunflower harvest time in Ukraine and Ryabinin has gathered in more than half his crop.

But with repeated Russian attacks on ports, and Black Sea shipping routes closed, exporting has become more difficult. "At the moment we haven't sold a single kilogram (pound) of sunflower seeds," the 52-year-old farm director tells AFP. Sunflower seeds and their oil are core exports for Ukraine, which in 2020/2021 produced 31 percent of all global sunflower oil, according to the United States Department of Agriculture.

These exports were massively disrupted by the war, as farmers were forced to abandon their land and seek alternative routes to deliver their goods. "People are afraid to transport oil," says Ryabinin, who manages fields in the southeastern Dnipropetrovsk and Kherson regions. "No-one wants to risk it," he says, explaining that ships are afraid to travel to Ukrainian ports due to Russian shelling. The lack of demand means traders are offering prices for seeds that are too low, he complains.

"There's no point in selling now. We'll wait for the price to go up, for some grain corridor to open." Sunflowers grow over much of Ukraine. In summer the mass of golden flowers against a blue sky is reminiscent of the country's flag. But the crop is harvested when the beautiful petals have fallen off and a blackened, shriveled seed head remains.

Under the hot sun, combine harvesters methodically quarter a field on Ryabinin's farm, cutting off seed heads and shaking out the seeds, before funneling them into trucks. Ryabinin expects the harvest will be over within 10 days. The seeds still in their black protective husks can be stored for up to a year, he



KRYVYI RIG, Ukraine: This aerial view taken on Sept 16, 2023 shows a combine harvester collecting sunflower seeds in a field outside Kryvyi Rig, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

said, after which they start acidifying. At the moment his farm's barns are also filled with wheat grain. They are only selling their rapeseed, he says. The metal sides of the sunflower seed barn are pierced with tiny holes from shrapnel and a concrete wall outside is pockmarked with impacts from a cluster bomb. A farm worker was killed on this spot as he tried to run for cover, struck in his heart by a piece of shrapnel.

He was 26 and had just become a father, Ryabinin says. The farmer of 30 years says he had been making a good living before the war. He and other farmers were investing in new equipment, such as imported combine harvesters. But then came the Russian occupation of Kherson region, which left his farm unable to cultivate 40 percent of its 10,000 hectares (25,000 acres) of land last year.

After the Russians were driven out of Kherson, the farm workers spent the winter clearing weeds and getting sappers to clear unexploded ordnance. With Russian troops now on the other side of the Dnipro river, the situation is calmer and this summer 100 percent of the farm's land has been planted. Now "we have some production but we just can't sell it", he says with frustration. — AFP

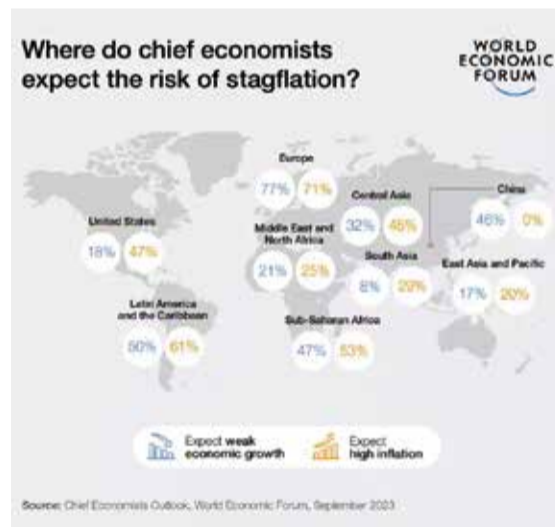
Global economic outlook remains anemic: WEF survey

DAVOS: The global economic outlook remains anemic, with six out of ten respondents in the latest survey of chief economists expecting overall conditions to weaken over the year ahead. Uncertainty around the trajectory of the world economy remains high despite the fact that fears of a global recession appear to have eased or that many regions are expected to record a modest pick-up in growth rates in 2024. Global headwinds persist, and the prospects of a stronger recovery next year have dimmed, not least because of mounting concerns about the vitality of China's economy following its post-COVID-19 reopening at the end of 2022, the World Economic Forum (WEF) survey says. The September 2023 Chief Economists Outlook was published amid slowing global momentum and continuing economic uncertainty. Recession concerns appear to have eased, but the outlook remains anemic as the world grapples with political and financial headwinds.

There are some signs of optimism about the easing of inflationary pressures following looser labor market conditions and fading supply-chain pressures. According to a significant majority of chief economists, the weak economic outlook and geopolitical tensions are likely to have a lasting impact on progress towards global development goals in the coming years.

One notable source of uncertainty is the impact of political factors on the world economy. In successive surveys, chief economists have drawn attention to the destabilizing effect of rising geopolitical and geoeconomic tensions. This remains the case in the latest survey, with 90 percent of respondents expecting geopolitical factors to be a source of global economic volatility in the year ahead. Notably, only a slightly smaller proportion (79 percent) say the same about domestic political factors. This figure may be influenced by the imminent start of a US electoral cycle that is widely expected to be unusually consequential. Nevertheless, it also points to a broader trend in recent years of the global economy becoming the focus of sharper domestic political attention in many countries.

The chief economists' expectation of weaker global conditions is echoed in the latest projections from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which warn of decelerating momentum and looming downside risks despite a modest upgrade to 3 percent on their forecast for global growth in 2023. This overall forecast for the global economy masks a growing divergence in growth prospects around the world, however. The



IMF notes that global growth is currently heavily reliant on expansions being recorded in the majority of emerging and developing economies, whereas there is a continuing slowdown across 93 percent of advanced economies. A similar pattern of regional variation is evident in the latest chief economist survey results. Respondents continue to see the strongest growth prospects in Asia over the remainder of 2023 and into 2024, with the notable exception of China. In particular, 92 percent expect moderate or strong growth this year in South Asia, with a clear increase since the last survey in the share of respondents expecting strong growth in the region, from 36 percent to 52 percent. The outlook for East Asia and Pacific is also very positive, with 84 percent expecting moderate or strong growth this year. However, this reflects a slight weakening since May, in line with the slowdown in China.

In the May edition of the Chief Economists Outlook, 97% of respondents expected China to record moderate or strong growth in 2023. In the latest survey, that figure has almost halved to 54 percent. A similar proportion (57 percent) expect moderate or strong growth in 2024, suggesting there is little expectation of a rapid improvement in conditions. Besides the slower-than-expected rebound of domestic consumption earlier this year, China's economic prospects have been clouded by deflationary pressures and signs of fragility in the crucial real estate market.

Trade volumes have also slumped, with imports down by 12.4 percent and exports by 14.5 percent in the year to July 2023.5 While the immediate effects of this weakness are already being felt by China's regional neighbors, a sharp and sustained slowdown in China would risk wider spillover effects, fuelling even greater uncertainty over the medium-term prospects for the global economy, the survey added.

Erdogan lobbies Musk for new Tesla factory

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan urged tech tycoon Elon Musk to open his next Tesla factory in Turkey, becoming the latest leader to lobby one of the world's richest men. Erdogan and Musk have held a string of meetings both in Turkey and on the sidelines of international forums, developing a seeming friendship that they extended on Sunday in New York.

Turkish television on Monday showed Musk entering New York's Turkish House, a new skyscraper across from the United Nations building, with his three-year-old son, whom he held on his lap during the talks. "President Erdogan called on Tesla to establish its seventh factory in Turkey," the Turkish leader's office said.

Turkey's Anadolu state news agency said Musk told Erdogan that his country was "among the most important candidates" for the new factory. Erdogan's lobbying efforts follow those undertaken by French President Emmanuel Macron, who met Musk in June, and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez. Erdogan was in New York to attend the annual UN General Assembly meeting, which he is scheduled to address on Tuesday.



NEW YORK: This handout picture taken by Turkish Presidency press office, on Sept 17, 2023, shows Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (center) posing with Elon Musk (fifth left) ahead of the 78th session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly at the Turkish House in New York, United States.—AFP

SocGen shares sink as bank's new CEO unveils strategy

LONDON: Shares in Societe Generale plunged more than 10 percent on Monday after the French bank's new CEO unveiled his strategy and financial targets. Slawomir Krupa met with investors, analysts and journalists for several hours, laying out what he

called a "realistic" roadmap that "Societe Generale needs, a roadmap where the promises are less important than the capacities to attain them."

Societe Generale will now target a modest revenue increase of between zero and two percent on average between 2022 and 2026. It plans to distribute between 40 percent and 50 percent of earnings to investors, down from 90 percent last year.

In terms of profitability, it will now target a return on tangible equity (ROTE) of between nine and 10 percent through 2026. This indicator, which measures profitability in terms of share capital, has tended to vary widely in re-

cent years. It went from 11.7 percent in 2021 to 2.9 percent last year, then rebounding to 5.6 percent in the first half of this year.

The bank also plans to hold more capital ready to absorb potential losses. Analysts panned the update to the bank's strategy. "We are negatively surprised by lack of revenue growth, increased capital target, payout and ROTe cut, and by the lack of details," said analysts at Jefferies investment bank.

Shares in Societe Generale fell more than 11 percent in afternoon trading, the biggest daily drop since the collapse of a US lender earlier this year caused a selloff of bank stocks.—AFP



Proposed India-Mideast corridor to redefine Eurasian connectivity

IMEC seeks to connect India with Europe via Mideast by sea and port

NEW DELHI: The proposed 'India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor' (IMEC) announced during the G20 Leaders' Summit in Delhi will prove to be a game-changer project and provide huge impetus to global trade, Engineering Exports Promotion Council India (EEPC India) said on Monday.

The corridor will also make the "global supply chain more resilient", EEPC India chairman Arun Kumar Garodia said. The project seeks to connect India with Europe via the Middle East by sea and port, reports India's PTL.

This will redefine the movement of goods and services across the continents as it will bring down logistics costs and ensure quicker delivery of shipments, Garodia said in a statement.

For India's engineering exports sector, both the Middle East and Europe are key markets, and having transport infrastructure of this scale will greatly enhance its competitiveness globally, he said. Garodia also said the investment in the transformative project will greatly boost economic activities, create jobs, and most importantly, help reduce carbon footprint.

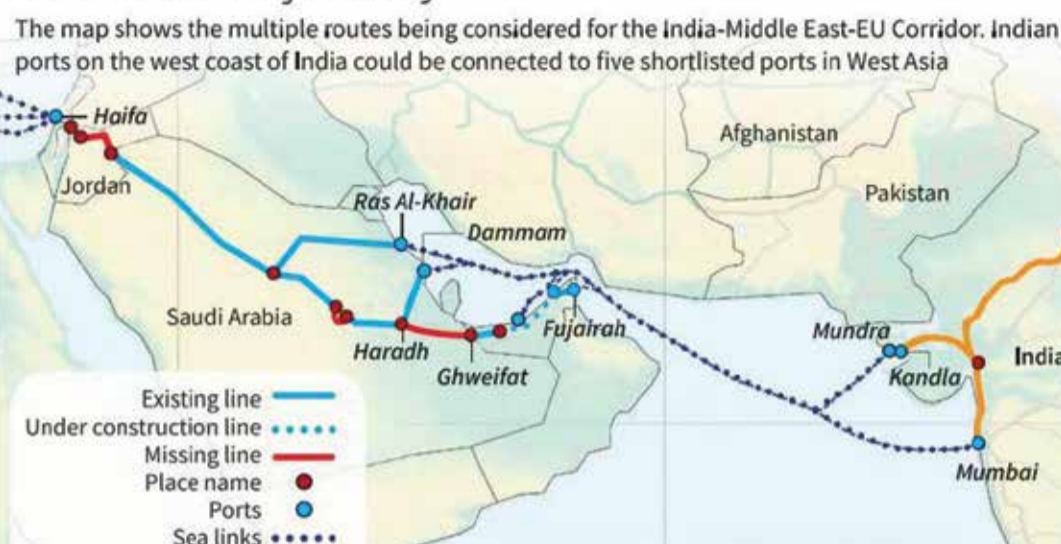
India along with the US and several major economies on September 9 announced the ambitious economic corridor with Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasizing on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations while promoting con-

nectivity initiatives. According to a White House statement the initiative "will be comprised two separate corridors, the east corridor connecting India to the Arabian Gulf and the northern corridor connecting the Arabian Gulf to Europe. It will include a railway that, upon completion, will provide a reliable and cost-effective cross-border ship-to-rail transit network to supplement existing maritime and road transport routes - enabling goods and services to transit to, from, and between India, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the Zionist entity, and Europe".

The new economic corridor, which many see as an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative, was jointly announced by the leaders of the US, India, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, France, Germany, Italy and the European Union on the sidelines of the G20 summit. EEPC India noted that the inclusion of the African Union into the G20 and the announcement of the Global Biofuel Alliance are the other two landmark developments which will positively impact trade and investment, and help chart out sustainable growth paths.

"At a time when the engineering exporting community is looking for new markets, permanent member status to the African Union on the proposal of India will create significant goodwill for Indian businesses in African countries," Garodia said.

Corridor trajectory



According to EEPC, India's G20 Presidency has sought to structurally transform global policy-making, especially in the areas of trade, investment, and climate and development financing. "India's G20 Presidency under the

leadership of PM Modi has delivered spectacular results. The New Delhi Declaration, which was adopted by members, is a shining example of his decisive and action-oriented leadership," Garodia added. — Agencies



Faith Birol

IEA chief Birol: An 'unexpected hero' of climate fight

PARIS: Faith Birol had big dreams of becoming a footballer or a filmmaker when he was younger. Instead, he became a surprising champion of the battle to kick the world's addiction to fossil fuels as the executive director of the global energy watchdog. Birol, 65, heads the International Energy Agency, a Paris-based organization that was founded in 1974 in the wake of the oil crisis to ensure the security of the world's supplies of crude.

Created by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the IEA advises 31 wealthy democracies ranging from the United States to Mexico, Japan and European nations. Its mission has evolved in more recent years. Today, Birol goes around the globe to press nations to accelerate their development of renewable energy and wean themselves off oil, gas and coal - with IEA data to back his case. "I'm a very direct man, I believe in numbers," Birol told AFP in an interview at the IEA's headquarters near the Eiffel Tower. He cited a 1970s French music hit, "Paroles paroles", meaning "words words", to press his point. "There is a lot of 'paroles'. I believe in numbers. I believe data always win," Birol said. Last week, Birol made headlines again by stating that the world "may be witnessing the beginning of the end of the fossil fuel era" as he gave a preview of next month's annual IEA energy outlook report.

Demand for oil, gas and coal will peak by the end of 2030 thanks to the "spectacular" growth of clean energy technologies and electric cars, Birol said. "Some people say climate change is not real, some people say we shouldn't move so fast," he told AFP. "There are different views but the rigor of our analysis is not questioned," said the Turkish energy expert, who has worked at the IEA for two decades and became its executive director in 2015.

OPEC career

The IEA caused a stir in 2021 when it published a roadmap to reach the Paris Agreement goal of having a carbon neutral world by 2050 and limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The message from the organization that once worked to secure crude supplies was blunt: all future fossil fuel projects must be scrapped. The report has opened the window of "what is deemed possible" in the rapid deployment of low-emissions energy, said Gernot Wagner, a climate economist at Columbia Business School. Birol featured on Time magazine's list of the 100 most influential people in the world that same year. Some climate campaigners have described him as an "unexpected hero" in the movement against global warming.

Such an image may have once seemed unlikely for a man who worked for six years for the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the Saudi-led oil cartel. But Birol said he now goes around the world telling countries that rely on oil revenues that demand for their product will slow down. "The real friends say the bitter truth. Instead of feeling upset, it's a wake up call for them to diversify their economies, not to focus their economies only on the oil income," he said.

Oil industry 'shock'

Birol has also pushed for change within the IEA, too, through a "modernisation strategy" that include opening the organization's door to emerging countries such as Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa. Of those, Mexico became a full-fledged member in 2018.

He had also decided that it was "time to make the IEA a leader in global clean energy transition".

He said the UN's 2018 report on the impact of climate change showed the IEA needed to draw a roadmap for the energy transition. The document "became a benchmark" for governments, investors and the boards of energy companies, Birol said, noting that it "was a shock" for the fossil fuel industry. — AFP

US auto union chief warns ready to 'amp up' strike if no deal

WASHINGTON: The United Auto Workers chief warned Sunday that a historic strike at the top three car manufacturers will expand if the companies do not raise their wage offers in ongoing negotiations.

Stellantis, one of the three, had offered its workers what it called a "highly competitive" wage increase of 21 percent over four years, but UAW President Shawn Fain called that "definitely a no-go."

"If we don't get better offers and... take care of the members' needs, we're going to amp this up even more," Fain told CBS News talk show "Face the Nation," saying General Motors, Ford and Stellantis have "no excuse" for not resolving salary disputes given their massive profits of recent years.

"We're prepared to do whatever we have to do. The membership is ready, the membership is fed up."

The UAW is demanding improved conditions across the board for its workers, including a 40 percent pay raise over the next four-year contract. All three companies have been offering raises of around 20 percent. A UAW source confirmed that the union held talks with General Motors on Sunday, the third day of the strike, but offered no further details.

The standoff has fed already acrimonious debate in Washington over President Joe Biden's economic policies ahead of the 2024 election - and whether he has done enough to avert or resolve the auto dispute. Only 12,700 of the union's 150,000 workers are currently on strike, but Fain's comments pointed to the possibility of a much broader action, with echoes throughout the economy.



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

France to allow loss-making petrol sales to bust inflation

PARIS: France will lift a ban on below-cost sales to bring down fuel prices, Finance and Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire said Monday, hoping to soothe consumers' inflation anxieties.

With a draft law set for debate in October, "I hope it will come into force from the beginning of December," Le Maire told broadcaster France 2. Selling products at a loss has been mostly banned in France since 1963, over fears larger retailers could drive small competitors out of business by offering artificially low prices whose costs they could afford to absorb.

But Paris is extremely sensitive to discontent over

2024 presidential race

Republicans on Sunday tried to tie the strike to voters' concerns on inflation and the Biden administration's overall economic leadership. "I have no doubt in my mind that all those hard-working autoworkers are living in the same reality as other Americans, and that is that wages are not keeping up with inflation," former vice president Mike Pence said on CNN. Pence, who is seeking the Republican presidential nomination in the 2024 election, blamed Biden's stewardship for "the worst inflation in 40 years" and added that the administration's electric vehicles push would mainly benefit battery-makers in China.

Pence's former boss Donald Trump, who holds a resounding lead in polls over other Republican presidential aspirants, has been critical of the union's leadership and of Biden's focus on promoting EV manufacturing. "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," Trump said in an interview aired Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press."

Democrats have lined up solidly behind the autoworkers - and Biden. "The president has made it clear which side he is on in this struggle," liberal senator Bernie Sanders said on CNN, adding that Biden had repeatedly said "that a strong labor movement benefits all of us." On social media, Vice President Kamala Harris said she agreed that "a new contract should promote good middle-class jobs - and ensure the UAW remains at the heart of our auto economy."

Hakeem Jeffries, the Democratic leader of the House of Representatives, echoed that theme.

"Incredible economic prosperity has been generated for the corporations," he told ABC's "This Week," shortly before heading to Detroit to stand with the workers. "It's only fair that everyone share in those record profits." — AFP

Unrepentant Truss urges UK govt to cut taxes to spur growth

LONDON: Former Conservative prime minister Liz Truss on Monday waded in to give the Tory government economic advice, nearly a year after she triggered market turmoil and took the UK to the brink of financial meltdown. In a speech, Truss blamed "25 years of economic consensus" for causing stagnation, characterizing her opponents as an "anti-growth coalition" of the "political and economic establishment".



Liz Truss

"I believe it is vital that we understand that and shatter that economic consensus, if we are to avoid worse problems in the future," she told the Institute for Government political think-tank. Her intervention came with the UK still feeling the after-effects of her chaotic, short-lived tenure, heaping pressure on her successor Rishi Sunak with a general election expected next year. Year-on-year inflation is currently at 6.8 percent - the highest in the G7 - while GDP shrank by 0.5 percent in July after growing by the same amount the previous month. Current finance minister Jeremy Hunt is preparing to outline government spending, ruling out tax cuts while inflation remains stubbornly high, causing a row in the ruling Conservative party.

An unrepentant Truss - a self-described free-market liberal who promised "growth, growth, growth" before she took office - urged Hunt to cut taxes to stimulate the UK economy. She also urged the government to ditch some net-zero commitments, including the ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles from 2030, and to increase the retirement age. But she was roundly mocked even before she gave the speech.

"Liz Truss giving a speech on economic growth is like an arsonist giving a talk on fire safety," said the deputy leader of the smaller opposition Liberal Democrats, Daisy Cooper. Truss had been warned when she took office in September last year - notably by Sunak - that trying to stimulate growth through tax cuts with more borrowing would make inflation worse.

She and her finance minister Kwasi Kwarteng ignored critics, causing the pound to plummet and a surge in mortgage rates, adding more pain to households already squeezed by hikes in food and energy bills. After a U-turn, Truss fired Kwarteng then resigned herself on October 14 last year with her government's credibility in tatters. — AFP

rising fuel costs as prices soar - remembering the massive and sometimes violent "Yellow Vests" protests sparked by a planned new fuel tax in 2018-19.

"This never-before-seen measure will give us concrete results for the French public, without subsidizing fuel," Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne told daily Le Parisien at the weekend. "The state can't bear the cost of inflation by itself, otherwise that will deepen the deficit," Le Maire said Monday. So far the government had pushed price limits and called on groups to prolong at-cost sales to try and ease the pain, urging major fuel sellers to show "solidarity" towards drivers. Oil giant TotalEnergies - which operates one-third of French forecourts - said it would keep prices for petrol and diesel capped at 1.99 euros (\$2.12) per liter into next year.

Ministers have often insisted that higher prices are down to global oil market factors, including Saudi and Russian production cuts, the recent devastating floods in Libya and forecasts of still lower supply in the fourth quarter. With low-cost

petrol mainly a way to bring in customers who go on to buy higher-margin items, large retailers have been calling for the right to sell at a loss - meeting opposition from smaller service stations. "My members get 40 or 50 percent of their income from fuel sales, so if they sell at a loss, I'd give them three months" to survive, said Francis Pousse, president of the Mobilians industry group representing 5,800 independent service stations.

Large groups "can't keep losing 15 euro cents on every litre of fuel," Pousse added, saying he was "skeptical" of the measure's effect on purchasing power. France's law against selling at a loss got a high-profile outing in 2018, when supermarket giant Intermarche admitted that offers of up to 70 percent discounts on products including Nutella chocolate spread were not in line with the rules.

The firm was later fined 375,000 euros over the promotions, which triggered scenes of shoving and even fights in several of its shops over pots of the creamy hazelnut treat. — AFP

Business

Climate protesters throng New York, demand end to fossil fuels

Activists want Biden to declare climate emergency

NEW YORK: Tens of thousands of people took to the streets of New York on Sunday, calling for increased action against climate change ahead of the opening of the UN General Assembly. Taking up multiple city blocks, protesters from some 700 organizations and activist groups carried signs reading "Biden, end fossil fuels," "Fossil fuels are killing us" and "I didn't vote for fires and floods" in a demonstration that came on the heels of a summer marked by multiple climate change-linked disasters. US President Joe Biden is among the world leaders set to attend the UN General Assembly (UNGA), which is scheduled to formally open on Tuesday. "We are here to demand that the administration declare a climate emergency," said Analilia Mejia, director of the activist group Center for Popular Democracy.

"We must wake up and take immediate action," she told AFP. A UN climate report released this month named 2025 as the deadline for global greenhouse gas emissions to peak — followed by a sharp drop thereafter — if humanity is to cap global warming in

line with Paris Agreement targets.

The 2015 Paris treaty has successfully driven climate action, but "much more is needed now on all fronts," said the report, which will underpin a crucial climate summit in Dubai at the end of the year. Achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050 — another Paris goal — will also require phasing out the burning of all fossil fuels whose emissions cannot be captured or compensated.

Mejia, 46, pointed to recent extreme weather events—from fires in Canada, Hawaii and Greece to flooding in Libya — as demonstrating the seriousness of the "existential crisis" posed by climate change. Another activist, Nalleli Cobo, 22, told AFP she'd like to see political leaders "come to my house" in the western US state of California and "spend the night living next to an oil and gas well."

Cobo, who has worked with Sweden's Greta Thunberg on climate campaigns, blames the "toxic air" she has been exposed to at her home for the ovarian cancer she contracted at 19. "Our lives are on the line," she said. Biden

has made a historic push for green manufacturing, offering billions of dollars for clean energy projects, but some young activists say he has not acted forcefully enough to lead the United States off dependence on fossil fuels.

California filed a lawsuit Friday against five global oil majors, alleging the firms caused billions of dollars in damages and misled the public by minimizing the risks from fossil fuels.

Top world scientists warn that the world is likely to experience new record heat in the next five years, and that global temperatures are more likely than not to breach a crucial threshold of an average 1.5 degree C rise. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has organized a Climate Ambition summit for Wednesday, during the General Assembly, at which he hopes to accelerate the ongoing work to counter climate change by governments as well as private sector organizations and financial institutions. "History will remember their action, or inaction," said Mejia. "And if we're lucky, human beings will be around to remember what (world leaders) did in this summit." — AFP



NEW YORK: People rally to end fossil fuels ahead of the 78th United Nations General Assembly and Climate Ambition Summit in New York on September 17, 2023. — AFP

MENA Weekly Market Report

Speculators rush into crude futures

A week that saw the short end of the US yield curve firm up amid rising energy prices and robustness in US data pointing to higher for longer rates, while the dollar paused following a week-long ascent. The commodity sector saw a sharp divide between surging energy prices led by fuel products and renewed weakness across metals and grains. The Bloomberg Commodity index traded higher for a third week, but the small increase was unevenly split with a 2.5 percent rally in the energy sector and firmer livestock prices being offset by losses in metals, both precious and industrial as well as grains. A tightening fuel product market amid lower output of crude oil from Saudi Arabia and Russia, as well as the higher for longer US rates, were the two main themes driving activity, together with data pointing to a US crop being less impacted by drought than originally feared.

Hedge funds and CTAs responded to these developments by aggressively adding to their long positions in WTI and Brent crude oil for a second week while all the major metals saw net selling.

Crude oil and fuel products: During a two-week period to September 12, the combined leveraged fund long in Brent and WTI has jumped by 137k contract or 35 percent in response to the Saudi and Russian year-end production extension. The combined net reached an 18-month high at 527k contract last week with buying being led by WTI (+30k to 279k) as inventories at Cushing, the delivery hub, continue to shrink amid the current tightness. The WTI long versus short ratio has spiked to 14.6 longs per short, from a June low of 1.5. Gasoil's strong rally was met by increased short selling while the length was added to the RBOB and ULSD contracts.

Gold, silver and copper: Continued weakness across precious metals amid the fallout from higher energy prices, dollar strength and rising yields helped trigger a 25 percent reduction in the gold long to 50k, a return to neutral in silver at 1.2k, and a reversal back to a net short in platinum. All developments leave these metals in a better position to rally on price-friendly news as seen Friday when the dollar rally stalled. The copper net flipped back to a net short of 3.8k contracts.

US equities

Technology stocks pulled down the market. Adobe shares dropped by 4.2 percent after earnings, while Nvidia, Amazon, and Microsoft each declined by 3 percent, 3 percent, and 2.5 percent, respectively, putting pressure on the indices. The Nasdaq 100 decreased by 1.8 percent to 15,202, and the S&P500 lost 1.2 percent, settling at 4,450. We believe that the hype around generative AI has led to a rush of interest in the technology sector, but it will take much longer than current stock prices suggest for commercialization to fully materialize. The VIX rebounded to 13.79, rising from its year-low point due to a significant volume of options expiring.

Note: Ole Hansen is head of commodity strategy, Saxo Bank

Shares in Chinese property giant Evergrande fall

HONG KONG: Shares in Chinese property giant Evergrande plunged by around 25 percent as markets opened in Hong Kong on Monday, following the arrest of several of the debt-ridden company's employees in China. Evergrande's stock price dipped to 0.47 around 9 am in Hong Kong (0100 GMT) on Monday, before ticking back up, after closing at 0.62 Hong Kong dollars on Friday.

The drop comes two days after police in the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen said in a statement that several employees of Evergrande's finan-

Nov 30 deadline to join Gulf Bank's Al-Danah millionaire draw

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is keen to announce that November 30, 2023, marks the final opportunity for customers to deposit and participate in the KD 2 million annual draw for the Al-Danah account. The annual grand draw, scheduled for January 18, 2024, will unveil the world's most significant cash prize linked to a bank account, where the first multimillionaire will be revealed. In a gesture of appreciation towards its valued customers and in celebration of the Al-Danah account's 25th anniversary, Gulf Bank made a groundbreaking announcement back in May. The annual grand prize value for the Al-Danah account has been increased to KD 2 million, solidifying its position as the most substantial cash prize associated with a bank account.

The grand draw event on January 18, 2024, will be conducted under the supervision of representatives from both the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Ernst & Young. The Al-Danah millionaire account is one of the most rewarding and prestigious savings accounts in Kuwait, with periodic draws that have been creating millionaires since its launch in 1998 — now offering an annual grand draw prize worth KD 2,000,000, monthly opportunities for ten lucky winners to win KD 1,000, in addition to quarterly draws with KD 100,000 prizes each.

Participation conditions

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents in Kuwait. A minimum of KD 200 is required to open an account, and the same amount must be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 monthly fee will be charged to the account, until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the daily draw within two days.

Gulf Bank encourages Al-Danah customers to raise their chances of winning by increasing their depositing amount, using the electronic payment service available through the bank's website and mobile application. The Al-Danah millionaire account is one of the oldest and most prestigious savings accounts in Kuwait and was designed to encourage a culture of savings in society, and reward customers for their commitment to saving on a regular basis. Hence, Gulf Bank encourages everyone to open an Al-Danah millionaire account to start saving and to enjoy the multitude of benefits the account has to offer.

Numerous features

Amongst the many advantages enjoyed by Al-Danah millionaire account, is that it is the only account that rewards customers for their loyalty, by providing loyalty chances. The loyalty chances are the total chances gained in the previous year, which are then transferred to the current year to reward customers for their loyalty to the bank. All chances gained by existing Al-Danah clients in 2022 have been transferred and added to the 2023 chances — taking into consideration the terms and conditions.

The Al-Danah account provides a multitude of valuable



services to its customers, including access to an exclusive Al-Danah ATM card, that is ideal for depositing money into their accounts at any time. Account holders can also calculate their chances of winning the monthly, quarterly, and annual draws using the Al-Danah calculator, available on Gulf Bank's online website and mobile application. To participate in the upcoming quarterly and annual Al-Danah draws this year, customers can visit one of Gulf Bank's branches or transfer directly through Gulf Bank's Online/Mobile Banking services. They can also direct their queries via WhatsApp on 1805805 for round-the-clock assistance from Gulf Bank representatives or call the Customer Contact Center on the same number. Additionally, customers can visit the dedicated Al-Danah account website to learn more about the account and its winners.



SYDNEY: Activists launched court action Monday accusing Australia's environment minister of failing to protect the Great Barrier Reef and other treasures from the climate risks of coal mining. — AFP

Green group sues Australian minister over coal's impact

SYDNEY: Activists launched court action Monday accusing Australia's environment minister of failing to protect the Great Barrier Reef and other treasures from the climate risks of coal mining. They allege the minister, Tanya Plibersek, has unlawfully refused to act on "a large volume of expert and scientific evidence of climate risk".

The case focuses on applications to extend coal mining operations into the 2040s at two sites in New South Wales state owned by MACH Energy and Narrabri Coal Operations. Both coal mining firms have joined the minister in defending the case. The mining extension applications are in the final stages of the state and federal approvals process. The Environment Council of Central Queensland, which is bringing the case at the Federal Court in Melbourne, argued it was unlawful for the min-

ister to refuse to act on the "climate science".

The council said it wrote to Plibersek last year asking her to re-consider a number of coal mining proposals because of their link with global warming and the likely "significant impact" on environmental treasures such as the Great Barrier Reef. "We're doing this because we're so tired of the sound bites. So tired of photos of ministers posing with koalas, saying all the right things but failing to act," said the environmental group's president, Christine Carlisle.

"The science could not be clearer. It's time for our environment minister to step up and act on climate risk." Australia has committed to cutting carbon emissions by 43 percent by 2030 from 2005 levels, on a path to reaching net-zero emissions by 2050.

But the centre-left Labor government has refused to rule out approving new coal mines in a country that is one of the world's largest coal exporters.

"Our client asserts the minister has a legal responsibility to face up to the harm new coal and gas will cause to Australia's unique plants, animals and places," said Environmental Justice Australia senior lawyer Retta Berryman, who is representing the group in court. A spokesperson for Plibersek declined to comment because the case is before the courts. — AFP

cial subsidiary, Evergrande Wealth Management, were arrested. The authorities did not specify the number of employees or the charges against them.

The statement called on the public to report any cases of suspected fraud. Evergrande, the world's most-indebted property developer with an estimated debt of \$328 billion (307 billion euros) at the end of June, has been at the centre of China's deepening market crisis, raising fears of a global spillover. Once a star player in an industry key to China's economic growth, Evergrande's enormous debt has been seen by Beijing as an unacceptable risk for the country's financial system. Authorities have gradually tightened developers' access to credit since 2020, and a wave of defaults has followed — notably that of Evergrande.

On Friday, China's national financial regulator greenlighted a takeover of Evergrande's insolvent insurance subsidiary, Evergrande Life Insurance, by new state-owned vehicle Haigang Life Insurance. — AFP



Countries hone policies ahead of COP28 in Dubai

PARIS: We're heading into Climate Week NYC Sept 17-24, and then the UN's COP28 conference in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, later this year. As stakeholders from around the world gather at these big climate events, the latest edition of the S&P Global Sustainability Quarterly explores how companies and countries are approaching climate change and the energy transition?

Standard-setting bodies like the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) are changing the landscape for climate disclosure. The ISSB released its first standards this summer, and as companies prepare to implement them, research from S&P Global Sustainable finds that climate disclosure varies widely around the world. Following the International Sustainability Standards Board's release of climate standards, S&P Global Sustainable data shows that scope emissions disclosure is still uncommon.

Against this global backdrop, we examine how the world's most populous country is approaching energy transition in research by S&P Global Commodity Insights - India's Energy Transition: More Energy, Fewer Emissions - that is also featured in "Look Forward: India's Moment," a collection of research about the challenges and opportunities facing India in the coming decades.

Managing sustainability risks in supply chains that span the globe has been a persistent challenge for companies, and new regulations in some parts of the world are putting more pressure on companies to ensure their suppliers act sustainably. We dive into this topic in research from S&P Global Market Intelligence about the global impact of the EU's anti-deforestation law, which will require companies selling certain products in the EU to confirm that their goods do not contribute to deforestation.

Research from S&P Global Ratings also helps us understand how companies in particularly complex sectors such as chemical manufacturing are approaching the decarbonization challenge. This research finds that the sector's medium-term decarbonization targets are unlikely to materially affect chemical companies' cost structures but could imply more significant disruptions to the sector post-2030. India is critical in the global push toward net zero because of its large and growing demand for energy. Its efforts to reduce emissions will also serve as a model for other emerging economies.

The European Union's regulation on deforestation-free products is likely to reconfigure trade and supply chains across deforestation-linked commodities over the next decade. Sectorwide challenges will intensify beyond 2030. Medium-term decarbonization targets are unlikely to materially affect chemical companies' cost structures but could imply more significant disruptions to the sector post-2030.

While there are potential risks on the horizon for chemical companies, S&P Global Ratings views the sector's credit risks as manageable under existing regulatory policies. Green, social, sustainable, and sustainability-linked bond issuance has risen this year, despite challenges posed by high global interest rates, while traditional bond issuance is stagnating.

Lifestyle



Mayank Prajapati, an Indian professional eSports athlete, plays 'Street Fighter V' at his residence in Gurgaon.



Sanindhiya Malik, an Indian professional eSports athlete, plays 'League of Legends' at his residence in New Delhi.

Asian Games landmark for eSports fires Olympic dreams

ESports' debut as a medal event at the Asian Games starting this week will change attitudes and be a major step towards Olympic recognition at last, gamers and experts say. Gaming was a demonstration sport at the 2018 Asian Games but gold medals will be up for grabs this time in Hangzhou in seven different games. Players will battle in EA Sports FC, PUBG Mobile, Arena of Valor, Dota 2, League of Legends, Dream Three Kingdoms 2 and Street Fighter V.

For Mayank Prajapati, India's medal hope in the Street Fighter beat'em up game, the Asian Games opening on Saturday will mark how far he and eSports have come. He recalled how his father would beat him for sneaking off to play video games. "I played my first game in the late 1990s at an arcade machine at a market with the two rupees I had," the 33-year-old said. "It was my first exposure with Street Fighter and I fell in love with the game."

"I got addicted and often lied to my parents, saying 'I am going for tuition', but spent hours playing," Prajapati, a 3D designer, recalled how his father

once tracked him down out playing video games at night, surrounded by half a dozen cheering children.

"I got a lot of scolding... I think I got beaten up," laughed Prajapati, himself now a father to a two-year-old boy. Prajapati's tale is a familiar one among gamers from different countries. Kim Gwan-woo, who will represent South Korea in Street Fighter V, told AFP in Seoul: "My parents absolutely hated me playing video games."

They remain "dubious" about him going to the Asian Games, he said, but added: "I think they will be very happy if I actually win a medal." South Korea, together with hosts China, are expected to be the dominant force in eSports at the Games.

Olympic dream?

ESports events at the Games are expected to play out to bumper crowds at the futuristic-looking China Hangzhou Esports Centre—a far cry from players slinking off to dingy arcades against their parents' wishes. Its inclusion at the Games is a milestone for eSports in its quest for recognition as

a "real" sport, said Professor Kang of Shingu College, who was one of the first generation of Korean professional gamers under the alias "H.O.T Forever".

"When I was a player in the late 1990s the initial reaction was, 'Why is a video game on TV?'" Kang told AFP. "But with the hard work of the players and staff, I think we're about 90 percent there in becoming a real sport," he added. Lokesh Suji, vice-president of the Asian Electronic Sports Federation, called the Asian Games a significant step towards the ultimate goal.

"The dream will eventually be realized once it gets included into the Olympics as a fully fledged medal sport," said Suji, also director of the Esports Federation of India.

That does not look like happening in the near future, certainly not in time for next year's Paris Olympics. The International Olympic Committee is desperate to attract younger audiences, hence there will be breakdancing for the first time at the Games next year.

But even though the IOC officially recognized eSports as a sport in 2017,

there is currently no plan to include video games in the Olympic program. One stumbling block is the type of games which would be included because the promotion of violence goes against Olympic values, so that immediately rules out some popular eSports titles.

On the sly

The Olympic dream may still be out of reach, but gamers say that eSports at the Asian Games will result in more fans, players and recognition. Sanindhiya Malik, 21, who is in the Indian team for the League of Legends, used to pretend to be studying on his computer when in actual fact he was competing online. "Sometimes during a tournament I had to hide and play from my parents so that they didn't know," Malik said.

"But after I graduated to representing India, my parents have noticed the recognition that this game can give me. "Even my relatives and friends who earlier questioned my game time have congratulated me—and it feels good." —AFP

Snake no mistake: Australian fined for surfing with python

As if sharks were not already enough to worry about, an Australian surfer has been seen paddling out with a python coiled around his neck. The intrepid surfer caused a stir on Australia's Gold Coast after footage emerged of him carving through the azure waves while carrying his pet carpet python.

But authorities said he did not possess a permit to have the reptile in public, and fined the man 2,322 Australian dollars (\$1,500). "To take an animal out in public or display it requires a separate permit," Queensland's Department of Environment and Science said Monday in a statement.



"Snakes are obviously cold-blooded animals, and while they can swim, reptiles generally avoid water. The python would have found the water to be extremely cold, and the only snakes that should be in the ocean are sea snakes." Carpet pythons are non-venomous snakes that can grow up to three meters (about 10 feet) long, and wrap around their prey and squeeze it until it suffocates. They mostly eat birds, lizards and other small mammals. —AFP



Alexia Delrieu, 50-year-old "bouquiniste" poses in front of her stands, where she sells antiquarian books and old posters, on the left bank of the Seine River in Paris.



A bouquiniste (bookseller) opens his stalls in Paris.

PARIS BOOKSELLERS 'OPTIMISTIC' OVER BATTLE TO STAY DURING OLYMPICS



Eric De Tarragon, 60-year-old "bouquiniste" poses in front of his stands, where he sells antiquarian books and old posters, on the left bank of the Seine River.

The famous booksellers that line the Seine in Paris say they are standing their ground over plans to shut them down during the opening ceremony of next year's Olympic Games as a matter of survival. Paris authorities told the "bouquinistes" earlier this summer that some 570 of their 900 stalls would have to move ahead of the opening ceremony on July 26, 2024 due to "a risk of acts of terrorism".

Already struggling to bounce back from shutdowns during the pandemic and a longer-run loss of interest from locals, the booksellers are refusing to miss out on the 16 million tourists expected for the Games. "I have neighbors who, if they don't sell one day, simply don't eat," said Alexia Delrieu, 50, who has run her stall by the Tournele Bridge for more than a decade.

"The good times were 20 years ago or more, before the internet. Now, you have to really work to make mini-

mum wage," added Guido Cuccolo, 71, based on the Quai de Conti. A self-proclaimed "born protester", Cuccolo says he is "optimistic" about winning the battle to stay. The booksellers have become an unlikely cause celebre across France, attracting attention of newspapers on both left and right.

For the local authorities, it is a delicate situation. The stall keepers do not pay rent, and are not entirely reliable with rules about their appearance and opening hours. But they are a beloved symbol of the capital. The vice-president of the Cultural Association of Booksellers of Paris, Pascal Corseaux, said dismantling the boxes would be a "logistical nightmare". "Many of them will not survive," he told AFP. "There is a much simpler solution, which is to bring in bomb squads, seal the boxes and then reopen quickly afterwards," he said. —AFP



Albert Abid, 62-year-old "bouquiniste" poses in front of his stands, where he sells antiquarian books and old posters, on the left bank of the Seine River in Paris. — AFP photos



Alain Papillaud, 74-year-old "bouquiniste" poses in front of his stands, where he sells antiquarian books and old posters, on the left bank of the Seine River in Paris.



Silva Brui, 73-year-old "bouquiniste" poses in front of her stands, where she sells antiquarian books, on the left bank of the Seine River.



Fashion designer Susan Fang is seen following a catwalk presentation for their Spring/Summer 2024 collection, at London Fashion Week in London. - AFP photos



Models present creations by Susan Fang.

MONSTER TRUCKS AND LEVITY LIFT LONDON FASHION WEEK



Designers can find sources of inspiration in unexpected places — as evidenced by the runways of London Fashion Week on Sunday. Ukrainian designer Masha Popova turned to monster truck shows while China's Susan Fang showcased a collection of ethereal dresses.

Engines roaring

Best known for her work with denim, Ukrainian-born designer Popova continued what she called her "obsession with denim manipulation" in her new collection. Models walked the runway in denim mini-skirts and hip-hugging low-rise jeans. Popova, based in London, treated her signature fabric in a variety of ways — including over-dyeing, flocking, scratching and patchwork — to produce a "rugged effect".

The collection was inspired by monster truck shows and featured an "electrifying" color palette for the outfits. The models walked to the beat of techno music, with the sound of engines roaring in the background. Popova counted social media influencers among her guests, including the sisters Abby and Charlotte Roberts, both with millions of followers on TikTok. Fashion content creator and model Emma Winder told AFP after the show that she liked the "earthy tones" of the collection, even if she was "not really a double denim fan".

Floating with Fang

Susan Fang, originally from China, launched her brand in 2017 after graduating from the Central Saint Martins arts university in

London. Since then she has created futuristic designs with a weightless, floating appearance. For her spring and summer 2024 collection, models walked beneath large wings made of white kites said to represent "human civilization and emotions", hanging next to the figure of a "cold robot" also made of white kites.

Below-the-knee skirts, from black to pale pink, were paired with crop tops in the collection, which also featured dresses with tulle ruffles and sandals worn with socks. Fang also showcased a dress made from protruding wire trees adorned with beads, handcrafted primarily by women from Chinese minority groups, a centrepiece of the collection. Fang said that with the design she wanted to create an "ensemble resembling the Tree of Life, radiating the pure energy of human life".

Union Jack and English palace

Montreal-born designer Erdem Moralioglu staged his show under the colonnade of the British Museum, creating a majestic atmosphere from the outset. For his spring-summer 2024 collection, he delved into the archives of Chatsworth Palace, the home of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire in the north of England. Erdem created a poetic collection, with prints based on engravings and Chatsworth tapestries.

The organza and satin skirts and dresses were long, the shoulders bare, like those of a fairytale princess. However some of the looks were much more modern, with large biker jackets, one of them petrol blue, partly covering a long pink transparent



skirt. Sinead Gorey, one of the last to showcase her works on the London runways, paid homage to the "British summer of love" with a collection that put the Union Jack front and centre. The flag was featured on the designs that included thigh-high, high-heeled boots harking to the 1990s Spice Girls, with inscription like "London Swings Again!" London Fashion Week continues before winding up on Tuesday. — AFP



Models present creations by Erdem.



Balmain collection robbed ahead of Paris fashion show



French fashion designer Olivier Rousteing greets spectators after presenting Balmain Womenswear Fall-Winter 2023-2024 collection during Paris Fashion Week in Paris.—AFP

Thieves have made off with more than 50 items from the French luxury fashion brand Balmain's new collection just 10 days before its Paris Fashion Week show, the company's creative director, Olivier Rousteing, said on his Instagram account. "Our driver called us to say that he had been attacked by a group of people. More than 50 items were stolen," said the 38-year-old designer in a post late Saturday.

The driver, who was "safe and sound", was transporting the merchandise in a truck that was headed from the airport to the Balmain headquarters when the theft occurred, he said, adding he was at the Balmain site Saturday morning when the driver called. "My team and I have worked very hard. We will work even harder, day and night, just like our suppliers, but this is

so disrespectful. I wanted to share this with you as a reminder to never take anything for granted," Rousteing said, who has been the creative director of Balmain since 2011.

Mixing hip-hop and embracing diversity, Rousteing has shaken up the industry, "democratizing" the world of luxury fashion and making it more relatable to young people. He is known for pushing the brand into new territory, working with celebrities like Kim Kardashian, and frequenting red carpets including the Cannes Film Festival. The show by Balmain, bought in 2016 by Qatari investment fund Mayhoola, is scheduled for the women's ready-to-wear fashion week in the French capital on September 27.—AFP



A model presents a creation from Balmain Womenswear Fall-Winter 2023-2024 collection during Paris Fashion Week in Paris.

A major retrospective opens in London this weekend into "Coco" Chanel, exploring her 60-year career that transformed women's wardrobes, and with new revelations about her troubled wartime past. Chanel—full name Gabrielle Bonheur Chanel—died in 1971 aged 87, leaving an indelible mark on fashion with her trademark tweed suits and quilted bags.

"She's such a pillar of Western fashion, a fascinating woman," said Oriole Cullen, modern textiles and fashion curator at the V&A where the exhibition opens on Saturday. "Her name is still so present in contemporary fashion." The showcase—"Gabrielle Chanel. Fashion manifesto", created by the Palais Galliera, a museum of fashion and fashion history in Paris—traces the designer throughout her life.



A trio set of perfumes from 1936 (from left) "Chanel Cuir de Russie", "Chanel Gadenia" and "Chanel number 5" are displayed during the press photocall for the exhibition "Gabrielle Chanel, Fashion Manifesto".

From 1910, when she first opened a milliners in the French capital, to her last collection in 1971, the exhibition features some 200 outfits. Chanel transformed women's fashion, introducing comfortable, elegant yet simple clothes in which women could move with ease.

One of the earliest garments on display is a sailor blouse from 1916, made from fine silk jersey which had until then been used to make underwear and stockings. The collar was inspired by fishermen's clothes. In the decade that followed, Chanel established herself as the world's foremost couturier, with her little black dress still a timeless classic.

In 1926, American Vogue magazine described it as "the frock that all the world will wear". Fans of her Chanel No.5 perfume, launched in 1921, included screen siren Marilyn Monroe and the late Queen Elizabeth II, who received a bottle as a birthday gift in 1955. It remains one of the best-selling fragrances in the world today.



LONDON'S V&A HOSTS NEW CHANEL EXHIBITION



A member of staff looks at the different dresses and outfits displayed.

Resistance?

Chanel, who was born into poverty and grew up in a convent, rubbed shoulders with the British aristocracy. In the 1920s and '30s she was photographed alongside Winston Churchill, Britain's future wartime leader, and at the famous Ascot horse races. World War II saw her shut her shop on the rue Cambon in central Paris, a stone's throw from the Ritz hotel where she lived.

At the age of 57, she fell in love with a German embassy attache, Hans Gunther von Dincklage, which the exhibition also touches upon. In July 1941, the Nazi authorities reg-

istered Chanel as a "trusted source", although it is unclear whether she was aware of the fact.

She was given the code name "Westminster" and an ID number "F7124". In December 1943, the Nazis wanted to use her connections in England to get in touch with Churchill. Her links with the enemy are well known but the V&A exhibition includes two new documents which claim that in January 1943 she joined the French Resistance.

A document dated and signed from Paris in 1948 features her name as an "occasional agent" while another, a certificate, shows her membership of the resistance forces from January 1, 1943

to April 1944. Chanel left for Switzerland after the war, making a spectacular comeback in 1954 at the age of 71 with her tweed suit that Vogue called "the world's prettiest uniform".

The V&A exhibition includes 54 of them, in shades of beige, grey and pink. The beige version was worn by Chanel herself in 1958. Other highlights include Chanel evening dresses in lame and a reproduction of the staircase at 31 rue Cambon, where she is said to have secretly observed her customers from behind mirrors.—AFP



A Chanel number 5 perfume bottle from 1921 is displayed during the press photocall for the exhibition "Gabrielle Chanel, Fashion Manifesto".



A member of staff arranges a dress during the press photocall for the exhibition "Gabrielle Chanel, Fashion Manifesto".



Members of staff arrange a dress during the press photocall for the exhibition "Gabrielle Chanel, Fashion Manifesto".



A silk blouse is on display.

Sports

Fiji light up World Cup

South Africa cruise; England grind out win

PARIS: Fiji produced the upset the Rugby World Cup needed on Sunday beating Australia to end almost seven decades of rugby pain at their hands while the 2019 finalists South Africa and England made it two wins from two. The Fiji players described as "jackals" by their impressive coach Simon Raiwalui outmuscled the Wallabies to deservedly prevail 22-15 in a thrilling match that blows open Pool C.

It was the first time Fiji had ever beaten Australia at a World Cup. Defending champions South Africa and England won in contrasting styles, the Springboks thrashing Romania 76-0 in Pool B while the English ground out a 34-12 win over Japan in Pool D. Fiji's impressive victory gives them a great chance of reaching the last eight for the first time since 2007 with their remaining matches against a robust Georgia and whipping boys Portugal.

Raiwalui said this was a new Fiji that can combine steel in the forward line with extravagant three-quarter play. "We wanted to change who we are, our identity, what we stood for," said the New Zealand-born former Fiji lock. "We have traditional areas where those Tier 1 teams, developed nations attack us and we think those are the areas that we've really improved in."

Rather than a "bunch of talented individuals," Raiwalui said this Fiji is a "team of talented players." Aus-

tralia and coach Eddie Jones by contrast have it all to do if they are to avoid the ignominy of becoming the first Wallabies team to fail to reach the knockout stages. Jones, who in his first spell in charge took Australia to the 2003 final only to lose to England in the dying seconds of extra-time, and his team face a monumental test of character against Wales next weekend.

'Destiny will decide'

However, the 63-year-old former England coach, who Australian rugby chiefs took a gamble on bringing back to replace Dave Rennie last January, is adamant his young side can still go deep in the tournament. "We've had a bit of a setback today but that's all part of being at a World Cup, I do remember South Africa lost a game and won the (2019) World Cup," said Jones. South Africa's minds will switch quickly to next Saturday's keenly awaited match with Six Nations Grand Slam champions Ireland. Perhaps, though, the most significant move by the Springboks came off the pitch.

In an effort to resolve their Achilles heel, kicking at goal, they called up their 2019 World Cup-winning playmaker Handre Pollard, replacing hooker Malcom Marx, who was ruled out of the tournament last week. "We have no doubt he'll step up to the challenge," said head coach Jacques Nienaber. "He's been here

before so he knows the physical and mental demands of the World Cup," he added. Nienaber was in philosophical mood when asked about the Ireland match which many believe will decide who tops the pool and who finishes second.

Awaiting the runners-up in the quarter-finals is likely to be host nation France with the winners of Pool B most probably facing New Zealand. "Destiny will decide who we will play in the quarter-final," said Nienaber. England did not win over many neutral observers in their attritional win over Japan but for die-hard supporters the style means little as they sit top of Pool D after two matches. England fly-half George Ford, who contributed 14 points with the boot to go with his team's four tries, admitted it had hardly been box office rugby.

"Probably not the prettiest to watch and we had to build the game in a different way to get our points in the end, but I thought it was good discipline from the boys," he said. Ford was slightly on the defensive when it was suggested the players had seemed frustrated at half-time. "There was no frustration from our end, we understand what wins Test matches," said the 30-year-old. "There'll obviously be decisions we'll look back and think we could have done better but overall we're very happy with the way we played." - AFP



SAINT-ETIENNE: Australia's right wing Mark Nawaqanitawase (left) loses the ball as he is tackled by Fiji's centre Vilimoni Botitu during the France 2023 Rugby World Cup Pool C match between Australia and Fiji on Sept 17, 2023. - AFP



EUGENE: Armand Duplantis of Sweden competes in the Men's Pole Vault during the 2023 Prefontaine Classic and Wanda Diamond League Final on Sept 17, 2023. - AFP

World records for Duplantis, Tsegay

EUGENE: World and Olympic pole vault champion Armand Duplantis improved his world record with a leap of 6.23m at the Diamond League finals on Sunday, as Gudaf Tsegay shattered the women's 5,000m world record. Swedish superstar Duplantis added a centimeter to the world record of 6.22m he recorded in France in February. He has now reset the world record seven times. Five of those marks were set indoors, with both of his outdoor world marks coming at Hayward Field in Eugene, where he won the world title last year.

"I'm two for two right now on world records coming here to Hayward," Duplantis said. It has absolutely everything. It has the history, it has the modern touch. The track is really fast, the crowd and energy is fantastic." Duplantis retained his world title in Budapest last month with a clearance of 6.10m and cleared 6.12 in Ostrava in June. He'd failed in a string of attempts at 6.23 since February, including at Brussels last weekend, but said the smaller field in the finals was more conducive to a record attempt.

"I think that it's a lot easier to be fresh at that world record height," he said. Duplantis had already secured victory with a height of 6.02 - the 73rd clearance of his career of more than six meters. In his first effort at 6.23, with the crowd chanting, he raced up the runway and sailed over. "I just try to jump high," said Duplantis, who believes he can continue to improve the record. "The limit is very high, and I hope that I can continue to jump well and keep jumping higher than I did today."

Ethiopia's Tsegay had electrified the crowd with her spectacular 5,000m win in 14min 00.21sec. The reigning 10,000m world champion carved almost five seconds off the previous 5,000m record of 14:05.20, set by Kenyan Faith Kipyegon in Paris on June 9. Kenyan Beatrice Chebet was second to Tsegay in 14:05.92, the third-fastest time ever. "My focus today was the world record," said Tsegay, who won the 2022 5,000m world title in Eugene and was disappointed with a 13th place finish in that event in Budapest that left her "very hungry in my mind."

Jackson sprint double

Shericka Jackson couldn't break Florence Griffith-Joyner's 35-year-old 200m world record, but the Jamaican's 21.57sec was enough to complete a sprint double after her 100m victory on Saturday. Jackson concluded a season that included a 200m world title and the second-fastest time ever of 21.41. Sunday's time was the eighth-fastest ever - and of those eight Jackson owns five and will be poised to renew her pursuit of Griffith-Joyner's record of 21.34 from 1988 in 2024.

"The end of the season," Jackson said. "I'm healthy and I ran some fast times, so I'm definitely grateful."

Marie-Josée Ta Lou of Ivory Coast finished second in 22.10 and Anthonique Strachan of the Bahamas placed third in 22.16. Canadian Andre de Grasse won the men's 200m in 19.76sec. Kenneth Bednarek was second in 19.95 and Erriyon Knighton third in 19.97. Emmanuel Wanyonyi clocked a world-leading 1min 42.80sec to edge Marco Arop - the man who beat him to World Championships gold last month - in the 800m. -AFP

Jumbo-Visma make history; Kuss claims first Grand Tour win

BARCELONA: American rider Sepp Kuss claimed his first Grand Tour victory in the Vuelta a Espana on Sunday in Madrid, which he described as "life-changing", as his team Jumbo-Visma completed an unprecedented treble. The Dutch team became the first to win all three Grand Tours in a single year, after Jonas Vingegaard won his second consecutive Tour de France and Primoz Roglic triumphed at the Giro d'Italia.

While Jumbo-Visma co-leaders Vingegaard and Roglic are accustomed to being the superstars, this week they supported their usually loyal domestique Kuss to his maiden Grand Tour success on apparent team orders. Kuss, 29, crossed the line smiling wide, his position as general classification leader not under threat on stage 21's flat 101.5 kilometer procession to Madrid.

"It's incredible—I think today was the stage that I suffered in the most of the whole race, now I'm just glad it's over," said Kuss. "I'll still be me—it's life-changing for sure, but I think I'll just look back on this experience with a lot of fond memories." He continued: "It's still sinking in and it's going to take quite some time. (Tonight we'll have) a big celebration, family and friends are here and that is going to be really special." Danish rider Vingegaard finished second, 17 seconds behind Kuss, who finished the grueling 21 stage race in 76 hours, 48 minutes and 21 seconds.

Roglic came in third, just over a minute behind Kuss, with Spaniard Juan Ayuso of UAE Team Emirates beating his compatriots Mikel Landa and Enric Mas to fourth. "This year, I came with bigger ambitions but it wasn't possible against a very strong team," said Ayuso, 21, who finished third in the previous edition of the Vuelta. Ayuso also claimed the white jersey for best young rider, while Australian Kaden Groves finished with the green jersey for the most points, also winning the final stage after a remarkable bunch sprint.

Groves claimed the intermediate sprint to tighten

his grip on the points victory, sticking with Remco Evenepoel, Rui Costa, Nico Denz, Filippo Ganna and Lennard Kanna in the day's break. The chasing pack reeled them in to 12 seconds with six kilometers to go in a dramatic finale to both the stage and the Grand Tour as a whole. Groves surged ahead of Evenepoel, who had moved early, to cross the line first, pursued by Ganna, second and Denz, third.

'Big advantage'

"We all looked at each other and that meant the peloton could come back together but I knew that in the sprint I could find a little extra and Remco leading out at 500 meters is a big advantage for me," said Groves. The exciting sprint through Madrid's streets brought to an end to the race which started in Barcelona on August 26, travelling 3,153.8 kilometers to the finale in the Spanish capital.

The first few stages were beset by problems, including stormy weather, rider complaints over dark conditions and an attempted sabotage by protestors for Catalan independence. The complications soon faded and attention turned to the race itself, with Kuss taking the red jersey from stage eight and holding it until the end. Reigning champion Evenepoel's defence crumbled in the Pyrenees but the Belgian bounced back strongly to claim the King of the Mountains jersey for best climber.

Kuss has been part of the winning team in seven Grand Tour victories, including Roglic's Vuelta treble between 2019-2021, and became only the second rider ever to ride in all three Grand Tours in a season and win one, behind Gastone Nencini in 1957. He is only the fourth US rider to win a Grand Tour, after Chris Horner at La Vuelta in 2013, Greg LeMond, who won three Tour de Frances between 1986 and 1990, and Andrew Hampsten, Giro champion in 1988.

Lance Armstrong, seven times winner of the Tour de France between 1999 and 2005, and Floyd Landis, crowned in 2006 at the same race, had their victories withdrawn by the International Cycling Union after being convicted of doping. Race organizers said earlier Sunday that the start of the 2024 Vuelta would take place in Portuguese capital Lisbon on August 17, which was also the first city outside of Spain to host a first stage. - AFP



MADRID: Jumbo-Visma team's members celebrate on the podium after the 2023 La Vuelta cycling tour of Spain on Sept 17, 2023. - AFP

New Zealand's Fox wins BMW PGA Championship

WENTWORTH: New Zealand's Ryan Fox won the BMW PGA Championship with a superb final round fightback to ruin the title dreams of rising star Ludvig Aberg at Wentworth on Sunday. Fox began the day three shots behind overnight leader Aberg and a triple-bogey seven on the third hole appeared to have taken him out of contention. But the 36-year-old covered his last 13 holes in eight under par for a closing 67. Fox's 18-under-par final total gave him a one-shot victory over playing partner Aaron Rai and Tyrrell Hatton.

"I don't really know what to think at the moment to be honest," Fox said after his fourth DP World Tour title. "It's not a tournament that has treated

me very well in the past, although I've loved coming here. I don't know what changed today but it's pretty special to make a birdie on the last to win. "To have a back nine like that, especially after how I started the day, it's amazing. I played great and pretty much didn't miss a shot from the third hole onwards."

Rai missed a long eagle putt on the 18th which could have given him the title or at least forced a play-off. World number three Jon Rahm, who had been runner-up on each of his two previous appearances at Wentworth, carded a 68 to claim fourth place on 16 under. Sweden's Aberg, who had been seeking successive tournament victories in just his 10th event as a professional, held a two-shot lead after 54 holes. But the 23-year-old sensation slumped to a closing 76, including two double bogeys in the space of three holes.

'Stupid mistakes'

Aberg, whose victory in the final qualifying event earned him a Ryder Cup wild card, admitted failing to close out victory would "sting for a long time". "It

Theegala cruises to a maiden PGA Tour title

SAN FRANCISCO: Sahith Theegala cruised to a maiden PGA Tour title on Sunday, romping to victory by two strokes at the Fortinet Championship in northern California. Theegala, who started the final round sitting on a two-shot lead, never looked like squandering that advantage during a composed final round on the Silverado Resort's north course in Napa. The 25-year-old from California carded a four-under-par 68 including seven birdies to finish on 21 under for a comfortable win with a crowd of close family and friends looking on from the galleries.



CALIFORNIA: Sahith Theegala of the United States celebrates with the trophy after winning during the final round of the Fortinet Championship on Sept 17, 2023. - AFP

Theegala's procession to the title was effectively sealed on the 14th hole, when he rolled in a superb 20-foot birdie putt to pull five shots clear. South Korea's Kim Seong-hyeon, playing in the group ahead, raised hopes of a rally with back-to-back birdies on the 15th and 16th holes to trim Theegala's lead to three shots, but the leader would not be denied. Theegala responded to Kim's challenge by drilling a superb second shot from the fairway to seven feet of the hole on the par-four 16th. He then coolly rolled in the birdie putt to take a four-shot lead with just two holes remaining. A solid par on the par-three 17th left Theegala four clear heading to the par-five 18th, and although Kim bagged another birdie on the last to cut the lead back to three, the outcome was never in doubt. Theegala played conservatively to close with a bogey for an aggregate 267. "It doesn't feel real, it's probably not going to sink in for a while," an elated Theegala said after the win.

"But man, there was a lot of good golf, and that was probably the most fun I've had on a golf course in my life. Family and friends cheering me on, it's mind-blowing. "This feeling is incredible and I couldn't have done it without my whole team and everyone out here. It's a team effort and for me to put it together like this means the world." Kim finished on 19 under after a closing four-under-par 68. Australia's Cam Davis finished alone in third on 17 under after a closing 70, one clear of Eric Cole on 16 under, who also finished with a 70. Two-time major champion Justin Thomas's challenge faded on the final round with a level-par 72 to leave him in fifth on 15 under, six off the lead. Brendon Todd finished in sixth on 14 under after moving up the leaderboard with a six-under-par 66 to close. -AFP

was quite difficult out there and I made a few stupid mistakes where I missed on the wrong side and was a little bit too cute with the chips," he said. "It cost me today and I'm trying to learn from it. I'm looking forward to the next time I'm in that same position."

Seven members of Europe's Ryder Cup side packed the top 10, with Rory McIlroy surging through the field with a round of 65. McIlroy, who only made the cut thanks to a birdie on the 18th hole in near darkness on Friday, finished in a tie for seventh place before heading to Mykonos for a friend's stag do on Monday.

Asked if Europe captain Luke Donald would be pleased ahead of the clash with the United States in Rome later in September, McIlroy said: "It's awesome. We're in a good spot. "We had a really good day in Rome on Monday, the team's been shaping up really well for the last couple of months, everyone's been in pretty good form. "It's still almost two weeks away until the first ball is hit on the Friday morning but I'm sure you'll ask all the boys that are coming in here they are all just so excited to get to Rome and get going." - AFP

Sports

Dinkci shines as Heidenheim claim first Bundesliga victory

Moenchengladbach stage shock comeback

BERLIN: Heidenheim's on-loan midfielder Eren Dinkci scored twice in a 4-2 win against his parent club Werder Bremen on Sunday to give the promoted side their first ever Bundesliga victory. Bremen-born Dinkci, who joined Heidenheim on loan from Werder in July, scored either side of half time as the Bundesliga newcomers prevailed in one of two six-goal thrillers in the Bundesliga on Sunday. In Sunday's late game, another promoted side Darmstadt threw away a three-goal lead to draw 3-3 with Borussia Moenchengladbach.

"It's a great feeling. My first brace in the Bundesliga, and it comes against Bremen of all clubs. My whole family is

here today, so it doesn't get much better than this," Dinkci told DAZN after Heidenheim's win. The club's first top-flight win came on a weekend when coach Frank Schmidt celebrated 16 years in the dugout, making him the longest-serving coach in German league history. Schmidt took over Heidenheim in the fifth tier back in 2007, but he dismissed talk of a fairytale on Sunday. "There was nothing cheesy about today's win. It was just an awesome game of football," he said.

Tim Kleindienst gave Heidenheim an early lead from the penalty spot after Bremen's Anthony Jung threw an elbow at the ball while defending a free-kick. The home side then doubled their advan-

tage on the stroke of half-time through Dinkci, who refused to celebrate after smashing the ball past former teammate Jiri Pavlenka in the Bremen goal. The visitors looked down and out at half-time, but were given a route back by an Omar Traore handball.

Marvin Ducksch hit the resulting penalty straight at Heidenheim goalkeeper Kevin Mueller before nodding in the rebound to make it 2-1. Bremen missed a good chance to equalize through Romano Schmid before Mitchell Weiser pulled them level with a well-placed header on 64 minutes. Dinkci restored the lead four minutes later, slotting the ball into the bottom corner from the edge of the

area after a cross from Jan-Niklas Beste. Beste, who spent a year at Bremen's reserves in 2018/19, rifled in a fourth a few minutes later to seal the win.

Gladbach miracle

Later on Sunday, Borussia Moenchengladbach staged a miraculous comeback in Darmstadt, in part thanks to a controversial red card. Darmstadt started the game bottom of the table, but exploded into the first half with two goals in the first ten minutes. Marvin Mehlem picked up a looping long ball to slot home the first. Matej Maglica doubled the lead with a header two minutes later. Tim Skarke blasted in a third on the

half-volley just after the half-hour, putting Darmstadt on course for a first win of the season. The game turned early in the second half when Maglica was sent off after appearing to brush the ball with his hand in the box. "We were lucky the decision went our way because it gave us a chance to get back in the game," said Gladbach midfielder Julian Weigl after the whistle. Tomas Cvancara missed the penalty, but US international Jordan Siebatcheu Pefok pulled a goal back for Gladbach a few minutes later. Florian Neuhaus added a second from close range on 73 minutes, before Cvancara atoned with a brilliant long-range equalizer. — AFP

Trossard strikes as Arsenal end Everton curse

LIVERPOOL: Arsenal ended their six-year wait for a Premier League victory at Everton as Leandro Trossard fired the title-chasing Gunners to a 1-0 success on Sunday. Mikel Arteta's side had to work hard for their first win at Goodison Park since 2017, with Belgian forward Trossard settling a scrappy encounter midway through the second half. Arsenal were not at their fluent best but they earned their fourth win in five games this season by matching Everton's physical approach.

Arteta has warned his players they would only end their Everton curse if they are willing to put their bodies on the line and they rose to that challenge. After leaving it late to beat Manchester United in their previous game before the international break, this was another tense affair for Arsenal. But Trossard's goal lifted unbeaten the north Londoners into fourth place, two points behind leaders Manchester City as they aim to avenge last season's late collapse in the title race.

"It was a long time without a win here. We played a great game and didn't give anything away. We dominated and the score should probably have been bigger," Arteta said. "Everton haven't created a single chance. It's about intelligence but also about the fight. Against Manchester United I saw my face after and it was a bit of relief. This was enjoyment. We were patient and Leandro produced an incredible finish to win the game."

Winless Everton remain in the relegation zone as they face up to another relegation battle after narrowly beating the drop in the last two seasons. Sean Dyche's team headed into the game on the back of the news that the club is set to have new owners after Farhad Moshiri agreed to sell his 94 percent stake to American investment fund 777 Partners. The takeover would bring to an end the tumultuous tenure of British-Iranian Moshiri, who first invested in 2016.

Ruthless Arteta

Everton's new owners got an early glimpse into the size of the task facing them as the Toffees suffered a fourth defeat in their opening five league games for the first time since 2005-06. Arteta, a former Everton midfielder, has no such worries as Arsenal prepare for their return to the Champions League after a six-year absence against PSV Eindhoven on Wednesday.

The Spaniard was rewarded with a clean-sheet from keeper David Raya, who made his Arsenal debut following his move from Brentford as Aaron Ramsdale dropped to the bench. Raya was one of two changes, with Fabio Vieira making his first start since April in place of Kai Havertz. "It is nothing different. I have 11 players to pick and no-one is different," Arteta said of his ruthless decision to axe Ramsdale.

Gabriel Martinelli thought he had given Arsenal the lead their dominance deserved when he slotted home from close-range in the 19th minute, but his effort was disallowed for offside against Eddie Nketiah in the build-up. Gabriel's pass had bounced off Everton forward Beto when Nketiah was ruled to be interfering with play, much to Arsenal's disgust. Adding insult to injury for Martinelli, the Brazilian forward limped off with a muscle injury soon after that incident. — AFP



LIVERPOOL: Everton's Portuguese striker #14 Beto (left) vies with Arsenal's French defender #02 William Saliba (right) during the English Premier League football match between Everton and Arsenal at Goodison Park in Liverpool on September 17, 2023. — AFP

Last ever Champions League stage starts as City face title defense

PARIS: Manchester City begin their defense of the Champions League on Tuesday when the group stage kicks off in the last season in its current format as Europe's elite club competition gets ready for a radical change. Unveiled by UEFA in 2021 at the height of the crisis which saw a group of 12 clubs announce a breakaway Super League before promptly abandoning the project, the new-look Champions League will begin next year.

It will see the number of clubs involved in the competition proper increase from 32 to 36, with all participants going into a single league in which teams will play eight games - up from the current six - in what is known as the "Swiss system". This is therefore the last campaign, after two decades, in which the Champions League will begin with a group stage featuring eight sections of four teams, with the top two in each advancing to the last 16.

"We are convinced that the format chosen strikes the right balance and that it will improve competitive balance," said Aleksander Ceferin, the president of European football's governing body, when the changes to the Champions League were confirmed in May last year. The format that is on its way out was brought in for the 2003/04 season, ending an experiment with a second group stage. In terms of symmetry and simplicity it cannot be bettered, with half the teams advancing from the group stage to the last 16. But this is an era in which major club and international competitions keep expanding. In addition, there has been a recognition that the Champions League group stage has gone somewhat stale.

Growing gulf

The financial gulf between the continent's most powerful clubs and the rest is growing all the time, accentuated in particular by the decision to award a portion of prize money based on the position of teams in UEFA's own club ranking. That means the

Recent UEFA Champions League winners

PARIS: Recent winners of the UEFA Champions League ahead of the start of this season's group stage on Tuesday:

- 2022-23 : Manchester City (ENG)
- 2021-22 : Real Madrid (ESP)
- 2020-21 : Chelsea (ENG)
- 2019-20 : Bayern Munich (GER)
- 2018-19 : Liverpool (ENG)
- 2017-18 : Real Madrid (ESP)
- 2016-17 : Real Madrid (ESP)
- 2015-16 : Real Madrid (ESP)
- 2014-15 : Barcelona (ESP)
- 2013-14 : Real Madrid (ESP)
- 2012-13 : Bayern Munich (GER)
- 2011-12 : Chelsea (ENG)
- 2010-11 : Barcelona (ESP)
- 2009-10 : Inter Milan (ITA)
- 2008-09 : Barcelona (ESP)

team placed at number one gets over 36 million euros (\$38.4m) just for being the top-ranked side, with the amount dropping progressively so the lowest-ranked team receive only just over one million euros. Even at this elite level, there are plenty of teams who are doing little more than make up the numbers, albeit while being handsomely rewarded. It is hard to imagine Swiss side Young Boys or Serbia's Red Star Belgrade making a big impact alongside Pep Guardiola's City and RB Leipzig in Group G.

City should stroll through to the last 16, racking up goals in the process, and they begin as favorites to retain a trophy they won in June by beating Inter Milan 1-0 in the final in Istanbul. That success saw City finally win the competition they had been chasing since the Abu Dhabi-led takeover of 2008 that transformed the club. "This project is to want more, more ambition," said Spanish midfielder Rodri after scoring the winner for City in last season's final.

So who can stop them?

It surely will not be the champions of Switzerland or Serbia, or a Leipzig team who lost their star defender, Josko Gvardiol, to City during the close season. Record 14-time winners Real Madrid are

Most European Cup/Champions League wins per club

- Real Madrid (Spain) - 14 (1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1966, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2022)
- AC Milan (Italy) - 7 (1963, 1969, 1989, 1990, 1994, 2003, 2007)
- Liverpool (England) - 6 (1977, 1978, 1981, 1984, 2005, 2019)
- Bayern Munich (Germany) - 6 (1974, 1975, 1976, 2001, 2013, 2020)
- Barcelona (Spain) - 5 (1992, 2006, 2009, 2011, 2015)
- Ajax (Netherlands) - 4 (1971, 1972, 1973, 1995)
- Manchester United (England) - 3 (1968, 1999, 2008)
- Inter Milan (Italy) - 3 (1964, 1965, 2010) — AFP

always contenders in the Champions League, although Carlo Ancelotti's team find themselves in a difficult group alongside Napoli, Braga and newcomers Union Berlin.

Bayern Munich have reinforced in attack with the signing of Harry Kane, while Paris Saint-Germain have lost Neymar and Lionel Messi but kept Kylian Mbappe and strengthened around him. Both of their seasons will be defined, as ever, by their performances in the Champions League. Arsenal will hope to make an impression on their return to the Champions League for the first time since 2016/17, while Saudi ownership has propelled Newcastle United back into the competition after two decades away.

However, they find themselves in a section along with PSG, AC Milan and Borussia Dortmund. UEFA might have been less inclined to change the format of the Champions League format if their competition featured groups like that more often. "It's hard and challenging but I think there's some great European games for us to experience and great places to visit for our supporters," said the Newcastle manager Eddie Howe after the draw. His team begin away to seven-time European champions Milan on Tuesday. — AFP

UEFA Champions League

AC Milan v Newcastle	19:45
beIN Sports HD 2	
beIN Sports HD 1 English	
beIN Sports 1 FR	
BSC Young Boys v Leipzig	19:45
beIN Sports HD Xtra 1	
Man City v Crvena Zvezda	22:00
beIN Sports HD 3	
beIN Sports 1 FR	
Barcelona v Royal Antwerp	22:00
beIN Sports HD 4	
beIN Sports 3 FR	
Shakhtar Donetsk v Porto	22:00
beIN Sports Fr 6 HD max	
beIN Sports HD Xtra 2	
PSG v Borussia Dortmund	22:00
beIN Sports HD 1	
beIN Sports HD 1 English	
beIN 4K HDR	

AFC Champions League

Yokohama Marinos v Incheon United	13:00
beIN Sports AFC HD	
Ulsan Hyundai v Pathum United	13:00
beIN Sports	
Kaya FC v Taishan	15:00
beIN Sports AFC 2 HD	
Johor Darul m v Kawasaki Frontale	15:00
beIN Sports AFC 1 HD	
Pakhtakor Tashkent v Al-Ain	17:00
beIN Sports AFC HD	
Ahal FC v Al Fayha	19:00
beIN Sports AFC 2 HD	
FC Istiklol Dushanbe v Al Duhail SC	19:00
beIN Sports AFC 1 HD	
Persepolis v Al Nassr	21:00
Abu Dhabi Sports Asia 2	
Alkass Nine HD	
beIN Sports AFC HD	

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134

Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
lbn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Change of Name

I'm Balu Krishnamumari, holder of Indian Passport No. T8986396, resident of Kakaravariipalli, Chakrampeta, Penagalur mandal. YSR Dist. A.P. India, have changed my name Krishnamumari to Krishna Kumari (given name) and Balu (surname) in all of my dealings and documents. (#4229) 19/9/2023

Automated enquiry about the CivilID card is 1889988

Giants deliver epic comeback; Commanders rally, Chiefs win

Washington Commanders overturn 18-point deficit

LOS ANGELES: The New York Giants rallied from 21 points down to win 31-28 at the Arizona Cardinals in a remarkable franchise-record-equaling comeback on Sunday. The Giants lost their opening game 40-0 to Dallas last week and had statisticians scrambling for details on the worst ever start to an NFL season when they trailed 20-0 at half-time. But quarterback Daniel Jones set about orchestrating a stunning turnaround with a 13-yard rushing touchdown early in the third.

Although Cardinals quarterback Joshua Dobbs responded by connecting with Marquise Brown for a three-yard score, the Giants proved unstoppable. New York put up 24 unanswered points in the remainder of the game before Graham Gano slotted a 34-yard field goal with 19 seconds left on the clock to put the Giants ahead. Jones ended the game with three total touchdowns having thrown for 321 yards and rushed for another 59.

Running back Saquon Barkley had two touchdowns and rushed for 63 yards but had to come out of the game in the final stages with what appeared to be a serious ankle injury. The 21-point comeback is the biggest by the Giants in the modern NFL era and matches wins against the Chicago Cardinals in 1949 and the Philadelphia Eagles four years earlier. The Washington Commanders produced a big comeback of their own, overturning an 18-point deficit at the winless Denver Broncos to leave with a 35-33 victory.

Washington trailed 21-3 in the second, before they put up 18 unanswered points and then two rushing touchdowns from Brian Robinson Jr in the fourth quarter put them 11 points up. A field goal for Denver narrowed the gap and then with the clock running out a "Hail Mary" pass from Broncos quarterback Russell Wilson was tipped on and eventually collected in the end zone by Brandon Johnson to give Denver the chance of a comeback of their own. They were unable to make the two-point conversion needed to force overtime, leaving their new coach Sean Payton with a 0-2 start to the season.

Earlier, Patrick Mahomes threw for two touchdowns as the Kansas City Chiefs bounced back from their season-opening loss to defeat the Jacksonville Jaguars. Reigning NFL Most Valuable Player Mahomes overcame a slow start to finish with 305 yards from 29-of-41 passes to give the reigning Super Bowl champions a gritty 17-9 win on the road in Florida. Mahomes and the Chiefs had been upset at home by the Detroit Lions in their opening game of the season after a litany of blunders by the receiving corps.



GLENDALE: James Conner #6 of the Arizona Cardinals is tackled by Adoree Jackson #22 of the New York Giants during the second quarter at State Farm Stadium on Sept 17, 2023. — AFP

But with fit-again tight end Travis Kelce back in the starting line-up, Mahomes looked more like his old self as the Chiefs dug deep for a hard-earned victory.

Mahomes picked out favorite target Kelce for a third-quarter touchdown after earlier connecting with Skyy Moore for the Chiefs' other touchdown. The Dallas Cowboys moved to 2-0 with another confident victory, beating the New York Jets 30-10.

The Jets, who lost quarterback Aaron Rodgers for the season after he snapped his achilles tendon in the win over Buffalo on Monday, had little joy against an impressive Cowboys defense. Rodgers' deputy, Zach Wilson, threw three interceptions while the Cowboys benefited from five field goals from rookie Brandon Aubrey. The Bills bounced back with a 38-10 rout of the Las Vegas Raiders with quarterback Josh Allen tossing three touchdowns with no interceptions to finish with 274 yards from 31-of-37 attempts.

While the Chiefs and Bills got back to winning ways, the Cincinnati Bengals fell to 0-2 after a 27-24 loss to divisional rivals Baltimore. Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson threw for two touchdowns and 237 yards as Bengals counterpart Joe Burrow once again struggled to get into the groove. The Miami Dolphins earned their second win of the season with a 24-17 victory at divisional rivals the New England Patriots, who fell to 0-2 for the first time since 2001.

Raheem Mostert scored with two rushing two touchdowns including the 43-yard fourth quarter touchdown that ultimately proved decisive. The Patriots made it a seven-point game with Rhamondre Stevenson's two-yard run but lost the game when their play on fourth down, where they had creatively kept the ball alive rugby style, was ruled to have been short on review. In Detroit, Lions set a new NFL record for the longest passing streak without an interception came to an abrupt end in a 37-31 overtime defeat to the Seattle Seahawks in Motor City. — AFP

Roma thrash Empoli 7-0; Fiorentina beat Atalanta 3-2

MILAN: Romelu Lukaku scored his first Roma goal in Sunday's 7-0 demolition of Empoli, his new team's first win of the Serie A season. Belgium forward Lukaku rolled in Roma's sixth in the 82nd minute of a dominating performance in which talisman Paulo Dybala also got off the mark for the season with a brace. Strikes from Renato Sanches, Bryan Cristante and Gianluca Mancini, as well as a comical Albert Grassi own goal ensured a rout against pointless, goalless and rock-bottom Empoli which moved Roma out of the relegation zone and up to 12th on four points.

"It's obviously important for strikers to score goals," said coach Jose Mourinho to DAZN. "It was perfect for him as he scores in front of his fans and he leaves the field happy. He needs to feel loved and wanted. He's come here and he felt immediately that the team needed him." Lukaku made his first start alongside Dybala in an attack built to help Roma qualify for the Champions League for the first time since 2018.

On loan from Chelsea, Lukaku made a substitute appearance in Roma's loss to AC Milan before the international break and had a largely low key evening against Empoli apart from his simple finish from Andrea Belotti's pass. Only 35 seconds had passed when Sebastian Walukiewicz handled Rasmus Kristensen's cross. Dybala to rammed home his first goal of the campaign from the penalty spot.

Kristensen was key again when Sanches doubled the hosts' lead in the eighth minute, swinging in another cross from which the unmarked Portugal international guided home a perfect header. Lukaku was involved in Roma's bizarre third, laying off to Cristante before Bartosz Bereszynski whacked the ball off his Empoli teammate Grassi and watched the ball drift into his own goal. Dybala netted his sublime second 10 minutes after the break when he collected Cristante's pass, sent Sebastiano Luperto packing with a feint and rolled in a cool finish.

Lukaku on target

The Argentina forward would have ended the night with a hat-trick had his free-kick not thwacked the crossbar moments before he was substituted in the 64th minute. The match seemed to be roll-



ROME: Roma's Portuguese midfielder #20 Renato Sanches celebrates after scoring his team's second goal during the Italian Serie A football match between AS Roma and Empoli on Sept 17, 2023. — AFP

ing towards an otherwise uneventful end but Cristante started a late flurry in the 79th minute when he drove home Roma's fifth from long range. The stage was set for Lukaku to lap up the applause of fans who swamped an airport to greet his arrival in Rome last month. A Mancini header wrapped up the scoring with four minutes remaining.

Christian Kouame shot Fiorentina to a 3-2 win over Atalanta with the decisive strike in Sunday's entertaining Serie A clash in Florence. Ivorian Kouame pounced on defensive indecisiveness in the 76th minute to prod home his first goal of the season and move Fiorentina up to seventh. Giacomo Bonaventura and Lucas Martinez-Quarta scored Fiorentina's other goals at the Stadio Artemio Franchi as the hosts moved level on seven points with champions Napoli and Frosinone, 4-2 winners over Sassuolo earlier in the day.

Eusebio Di Francesco's Frosinone won a Serie A game from a losing position for the first time in their history. They came back from being two goals down in the first 25 minutes to claim an impressive home win thanks to a Walid Cheddira penalty on the stroke of half-time, Luca Mazzitelli's brace and a stoppage-time finish from Pol Lirola. Atalanta are two points back in ninth after their second defeat in their opening four matches, which means that Lecce stay in the Champions League positions despite only drawing 1-1 at Monza. — AFP

Real climb back to top of La Liga

BARCELONA: Real Madrid came from behind to beat Real Sociedad 2-1 and climb back to the top of La Liga on Sunday, maintaining their perfect start to the season. Earlier Sergio Ramos made his second Sevilla debut in a narrow win over Las Palmas, while Mason Greenwood played his first match for Getafe, on loan from Manchester United. After Barcelona put five past Real Betis in a flashy display on Saturday the onus was on Carlo Ancelotti's Madrid side to maintain their 100 percent record and they did, against the tricky Basque visitors.

Propelled by the electric Takefusa Kubo, Real Sociedad took an early lead through Ander Barrenetxea, but Madrid hit back with goals from Fede Valverde and Joselu to earn their fifth win from five games. England international Jude Bellingham was unable to continue his excellent goalscoring form, after netting five goals in his first four Madrid matches, but remains the division's top goalscorer. Madrid start their Champions League campaign on Wednesday at home against Union Berlin, and despite losing Ballon d'Or winner Karim Benzema in the summer and star player Vinicius Junior to injury, remain a force to be reckoned with.

"We started by letting in a goal and the good thing is that we were capable of turning it around—the bad thing is that we have to avoid that," said Ancelotti. "We did it thanks to the commitment, energy and will of the team, we have an intensity that opponents find hard to cope with for 90 minutes." The Basque visitors went ahead at the new-look Santiago Bernabeu after only five minutes, when Kubo stroked a fine pass into Barrenetxea's path. Kepa Arrizabalaga kept out his first effort with a fine save but could not claw out the second.

Kubo then beat the goalkeeper with a brilliant strike but it was disallowed for offside. Joselu hit the crossbar with the goal gaping and Alex Remiro denied Dani Carvajal as Madrid found their footing. Valverde slammed Real Madrid level less than a minute into the second half, lashing Fran Garcia's cut-back in off the post from outside the area. The left-back created the second goal too, crossing for target man Joselu to nod the hosts ahead at the back post. Spain international Joselu was immediately taken off for Eduardo Camavinga, as Ancelotti sought more control of the game.

The Italian got it too, with the visitors effectively shut down, no longer finding spaces between Madrid lines. "This is the Bernabeu and with our fans we turned it around," said Joselu. "We're doing a bit of everything, we're confident in ourselves, there's a



MADRID: Real Madrid's German defender #22 Antonio Rudiger (up) heads the ball during the Spanish Liga football match between Real Madrid and Real Sociedad on Sept 17, 2023. — AFP

lot of quality in the squad and we came from behind again." Madrid lead Barcelona by two points, with both of Spain's giants unbeaten, although the Catalans drew their opening game against Getafe.

'Die happy'

Sergio Ramos played for Sevilla for the first time since he left the club in 2005 as they earned their first win of the season over Las Palmas. The 37-year-old centre-back started in the 1-0 victory at the Ramon Sanchez-Pizjuan, following his arrival from Paris Saint-Germain this summer. Ramos, who left Sevilla for Real Madrid 18 years ago to the ire of many supporters in Andalusia, was cheered on his return. Belgian winger Dodi Lukebakio sent Sevilla ahead after 71 minutes and with Ramos patrolling, they kept their first clean sheet of the campaign. "I felt a lot of emotion ... it was amazing to find my people again, my home, my fans, it's unique," Ramos told Movistar.

The defender admitted some nerves about how fans would treat him after playing at a rival club for so long. "I had a few doubts at first but the reception I had on my arrival, I will take to the grave ... now I can die happy," he added. Elsewhere Pacheta got off to a winning start as Villarreal's new coach thanks to Alexander Sorloth's 94th minute winner against Almeria in a 2-1 victory. Getafe edged Osasuna 3-2, with Greenwood making his debut, and his first appearance since January 2022.

The English striker, on loan at Getafe from Manchester United, was charged with attempted rape and assault in October 2022 but the charges were later dropped. Getafe coach Jose Bordalas sent Greenwood on in the 77th minute to applause from home fans at the club's Coliseum Alfonso Perez stadium. A group of Osasuna supporters greeted the 21-year-old's arrival to Spanish football with chants of "Greenwood, die". "I didn't hear them so I have nothing to say," said Bordalas. "I am very happy with the kid's debut." — AFP