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Crown Prince heads to China

Sheikh Mishal accompanied by a number of senior ministers



KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah leaves for China on Sept 20, 2023. — KUNA

KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah departed to China to attend the 19th Asian Olympic Games at the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping. HH the Crown Prince was seen off at the airport by National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun, HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Head of HH the Crown Prince Diwan Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Deputy President of Kuwait National Guard Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Acting Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah.

HH the Crown Prince is accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil and Minister of Economic Affairs and Investment Dr Saad Al-Barrak, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah

Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Aiban, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr Jassem Al-Ostad, Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Faleh Al-Ruqba and senior state officials.

Kuwait was the first Gulf state to establish full-scale diplomatic relations with China in 1971. The strategic Kuwait-China relationship has been evolving, serving aspirations of the two countries, namely with respect to development schemes. Moreover, Kuwait was the first Arab state to ink a memorandum of understanding with China for involvement in China's Belt and Road Initiative. The New Kuwait 2035 development strategy has given further impetus for the country's drive to cement ties with China, with the prime goals of overhauling the Kuwaiti economy to render it diversified and sustainable; thus largely becoming in harmony with the Chinese economic strategy. — KUNA

In my view

New stage of China-Kuwait strategic partnership



By Zhang Jianwei
Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah departed Kuwait on September 20, heading to China to attend the opening ceremony of the 19th Hangzhou Asian Games. This is the first visit to China by a highest-ranking Kuwaiti leader in five years. President Xi Jinping will meet with Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in Hangzhou. They will witness the signing of a number of bilateral cooperation documents, which will lay out the blueprint for future China-Kuwait relations. His visit is of important significance, as China and Arab states are working together to build a China-Arab community with a shared future in the new era. It will significantly deepen strategic mutual trust between China and Kuwait and elevate our practical cooperation to a higher level. China-Kuwait strategic partnership will thus enter a new stage.

China-Kuwait relationship is steeped in history. The friendly exchange between the two sides along the ancient Silk Road dates back to thousands of years ago. As early as in 1965, the late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah who was then Minister of Finance, Industry and Commerce, paid a visit to China, during which he reaffirmed that Kuwait firmly supports the People's Republic of China in defending national unity and territorial integrity, supports the one-China principle and supports the PRC in restoring its lawful seat at the United Nations at an early date. That visit paved the way for the establishment of

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GCC, US FMs stress Iraq must respect Kuwait's sovereignty

NEW YORK: GCC foreign ministers and their American counterpart Antony Blinken on Wednesday affirmed the necessity that Iraq adheres to Kuwait's sovereignty. They affirmed that Baghdad must respect its territorial sanctity and UN resolutions, namely Resolution 833 regarding demarcation of

Kuwait-Iraq borders. Moreover, the ministers, in a statement issued at end of a ministerial-level meeting, called for completing demarcation of the borders beyond mark 162 and urged Iraq to rapidly settle the "international legal status" to safeguard the treaty that regulates navigation via Khor Abdullah waterway, worked out in 2012.

Furthermore, they renewed their support for the UN Security Council Resolution 2107 (2013) regarding the return of all Kuwaitis to their home country including those missing, plus Kuwaiti properties, namely the national archive, to the UN mission in Iraq. They expressed hope that Iraq would continue cooperating to make progress on the file

and called on Iraq and the UN to spare no effort to resolve relevant issues.

Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah had taken part in the meeting between the GCC ministers and Blinken, held on the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York. Sheikh Salem during the session reacted to a ruling issued by the supreme federal court in Iraq regarding the maritime treaty, endorsed by the Iraqi parliament and the Kuwaiti National Assembly in 2013 — a copy of which had been delivered to the UN. In his reaction, he shed light on the inaccurate information and the abusive rhetoric against Kuwait from Baghdad. — KUNA

Kuwaiti players head to China for 19th Asian Games

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti sports delegation headed on Wednesday for the People's Republic of China to participate in the 19th Asian Games, to be held from Sept 23 to Oct 8 in Hangzhou. Kuwait's delegation chief and member of Kuwait Olympic Committee Fatima Hayat said in a statement that Kuwait is participating with 141 male and female players competing in 25 individual and team sports, and they are well equipped to partake in the 19th Asian Games. —KUNA



KUWAIT: The Kuwait sports delegation heads to China for the 19th Asian Games. — KUNA

Azerbaijan claims victory after Karabakh separatists surrender

BAKU: Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev said Wednesday his country had regained control over breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh, after separatist Armenian fighters agreed to lay down their arms in the face of a military operation. The stunning collapse of separatist resistance represents a major victory for Aliyev in his quest to bring Armenian-majority Nagorno-Karabakh back under Baku's control.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have fought two wars over the mountainous region since the collapse of the Soviet Union. A day after Azerbaijan launched a military operation in the region, Baku and the ethnic Armenian authorities in Karabakh announced a ceasefire deal had been brokered by Russian peacekeepers to stop the fighting. "Azerbaijan restored its sovereignty as a result of successful anti-terrorist measures in Karabakh," Aliyev said in a televised address.

Aliyev claimed that most of the Armenian forces in the region had been destroyed and said the withdrawal of separatist troops had already begun. Under the truce deal, the separatists said they had agreed to fully dismantle their army and that Armenia would pull out any forces it had in the region. Azerbaijan's defense ministry said that "all weapons and heavy armaments are to be surrendered" under the supervision of Russia's 2,000-strong peacekeeping force on the ground.

Both sides said talks on reintegrating the breakaway territory into the rest of Azerbaijan would be held on Thursday in the city of Yevlakh. Russian peacekeepers said Wednesday evening that the ceasefire was holding and there were no violations recorded. Baku's operation marked the latest spasm of violence over the rugged territory. After the Soviet Union fell apart, Armenian separatists seized the region — internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan — in the early 1990s and it is home to some 120,000 ethnic Armenians. The war left 30,000 people dead and forced hundreds of thousands from their homes.

In a six-week war in 2020, Azerbaijan recaptured swathes of territory in and around the region. The years of conflict have been marked by ethnic cleansing and abuses on both sides, and there are concerns of a fresh refugee crisis as Karabakh's Armenian population fears being forced out. Azerbaijani presidential foreign policy advisor Hikmet Hajiyev promised safe passage for the separatists who surrendered and said Baku sought the "peaceful reintegration" of Karabakh Armenians.

Charles Michel, president of the EU's Council of Europe, urged Baku to ensure the safety of the local population. Russian President Vladimir Putin said he hoped for a "peaceful" resolution, adding that Moscow has been in contact with all sides in the conflict. Putin held talks with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan Wednesday evening, but the Kremlin insisted the crisis was "Azerbaijan's internal affair".

Jubilant residents in Azerbaijan's capital expressed hope the deal heralded a definitive victory in — and the end of — the decades-long conflict. "I was very happy with this news. Finally, the war is over," 67-year-old pensioner Rana Ahmedova, told AFP. Armenia said at least 32 people were killed and more than 200 wounded by the shelling in Karabakh, as the latest onslaught from Azerbaijan saw artillery, aircraft and drone strikes rock the region. Moscow said several of its peacekeepers in Karabakh were killed when the car they were travelling in came under fire.

In Yerevan, Pashinyan said it was "very important" the ceasefire hold. Again denying his country's army was in the enclave, he said he expected Russia's peacekeepers to ensure Karabakh's ethnic-Armenian residents could stay "in their homes, on their land". The loss in Karabakh ratchets up domestic pressure on Pashinyan, who has faced stinging criticism at home for making concessions to Azerbaijan since the 2020 defeat. The Armenian leader insisted that his government had not been involved in drafting the latest ceasefire deal.

Thousands of protesters waving the separatist region's flag blocked a main road in Armenia's capital Yerevan as riot police protected official buildings. "We are losing our homeland, we are losing our people," said Sargis Hayats, a 20-year-old musician. Pashinyan "must leave, time has shown that he cannot rule. No one gave him a mandate for Karabakh to capitulate," he said.

The ceasefire announcement came after Aliyev warned the military operation would continue until the separatists laid down their weapons, despite international pressure to halt fighting. The outburst of fighting came as Moscow, the traditional power broker in the region, is bogged down and distracted by its war on Ukraine, which has left it isolated by the West. But its peacekeepers there appeared to have played a key role in helping to negotiate the ceasefire and will now oversee its implementation. — AFP



Local

Controversial decision to prevent gender mixing at Kuwait University sparks debate

Legal experts and rights activists weigh in

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: In a recent decision that has left the Kuwaiti community in shock, the ministry of education accepted the suggestion of the values promotion committee at the National Assembly to prevent mixed classes at Kuwait University by segregating study sessions between males and females.

This decision, which has ignited a fierce controversy, has faced widespread opposition from both the public and some government representatives, who have submitted a petition to reverse this decision. Kuwait University students also staged a sit-in to voice their rejection of this move, viewing it as an encroachment on their freedom. On the other hand, some students who support segregated classes see it as a solution to the problem of class shortages that both the university and its students have been grappling with.

Kuwait Times gathered opinions from various segments of the population, revealing significant discontent with this decision. Many argue that this prohibition on gender mixing represents a troubling first step towards further restrictive measures infringing on personal freedoms. Citizen Mohammad Al-Musallam criticized the decision, describing it as ill-considered and likely to lead to delays in students' graduation. He emphasized the Kuwaiti community's commitment to maintaining respect between genders.

Citizen Noora Al-Mutairi deemed the decision illogical, pointing out that even significant Islamic authorities

like Awqaf do not enforce such segregation among their staff. She argued that individuals should not be compelled to adhere to the beliefs of others unless there is a clear religious or legal basis for doing so. Supporters of the decision have a different perspective. Some citizens, including students, do not oppose the decision but are concerned about its potential impact on class availability. They fear that many classes might be canceled due to reduced student enrollment, adversely affecting students' educational journeys.

Meanwhile, on social media, there were expressions of surprise at the widespread rejection of the decision, particularly among females. Some questioned the benefits of gender mixing for female students in their academic pursuits. One student who agreed with the decision criticized its opponents, stating that segregating classes resolved the issue of classroom shortages that all students had been struggling with, and questioned why it was causing such problems.

Legal experts and rights activists also weighed in on the matter. Dr. Sheikha Al-Jassem, a rights activist and philosophy professor at Kuwait University, vehemently rejected the decision. She characterized it as emblematic of an enduring conflict between political Islam and liberal values. She pointed out that since Kuwait University's establishment in 1966, education has been coeducational, with a majority of female students. Dr. Jassem further argued that there is no discernible economic benefit in offering classes exclusively for males, given their low representation.



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

Kuwait women empowerment advocates visit EU institutions

BRUSSELS: A delegation of 12 Kuwaiti women's empowerment advocates concluded a five-day visit to the EU institutions in Brussels, where they had the opportunity to exchange with European experts on learning and best practices to accelerate women's empowerment. The visit, which took place between 18 and 21 September 2023, aimed to enhance dialogue and networking opportunities between the EU and the visiting Kuwaiti delegation, foster closer people-to-people exchanges and enhance cooperation.

The Kuwaiti participants came from all walks of life, including government, business, media, civil society and academia, sharing a common passion and commitment to enhance women's empowerment in Kuwait. In Brussels, the Kuwaiti delegation met with senior EU officials from the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European External Action Service, civil society organizations, as well as students and academics, exchanging best practices and identifying bilateral cooperation opportunities.

A dedicated panel discussion was also

held at the College of Europe, the oldest postgraduate institute of European studies, on policies that are being introduced to accelerate women's empowerment and inclusion. The participants also had the opportunity to enjoy aspects of Belgian culture including a visit to the picturesque city of Bruges.

Speaking on the importance of this visit, Irina Gusachenko, focal point for Gender Equality at the Delegation of the European Union to the State of Kuwait said: "Women's empowerment is a top priority for the EU. The European Union is delighted to exchange views and best practices with such an inspiring group of Kuwaiti women. The EU remains committed to promoting dialogue and bilateral cooperation on women empowerment, which is the basis for building strong, innovative, inclusive, and thriving societies".

Commenting on the familiarization visit, Dr. Lubna Al-Kazi, Professor at Kuwait University, founder and director of the Women's Research and Studies Center added: "The trip organized by the

EU Kuwait was an excellent way to build bridges of friendship and mutual understanding. The women leaders were from different sectors in Kuwait and showed the progress made here in different professions. This visit has helped us to see the best practices of the European Union in women's empowerment and at the same time given us the opportunity to show the work we are doing here."

This visit comes in the context of the EU's Joint Communication on a Strategic Partnership with the Gulf, which aims at enhancing EU's cooperation with the Gulf. This strategy presented concrete proposals to strengthen cooperation on energy, green transition, climate change, trade and economic diversification as well as facilitating people-to-people contacts. Women's empowerment is cuts across all of these topics.

European Union Delegation

The Delegation of the European Union to the State of Kuwait opened in July 14, 2019. The EU Delegation plays a crucial role in fostering bilateral dialogue and cooperation between the EU and Kuwait in areas of mutual strategic interest. Some of these areas are climate action, education and science, youth and women's empowerment,



Mona Al-Arbash, Dalal Al-Dosari, Dr Manal Al-Daihani, Najla Al-Sager, Dr Zainab Al-Musailekh, Zainab Haider, Mashael Al-Shuwaihan, Hanan Al-Zayed, Dr Amar Behbehani, Shaima bin Hussein and Dr Bibi Ashour at the European Union institutions in Brussels

among others. Moreover, there is a significant emphasis on fostering people-to-people exchanges to enhance understanding of the EU among local audiences and strengthen bilateral ties.

The Delegation also represents the

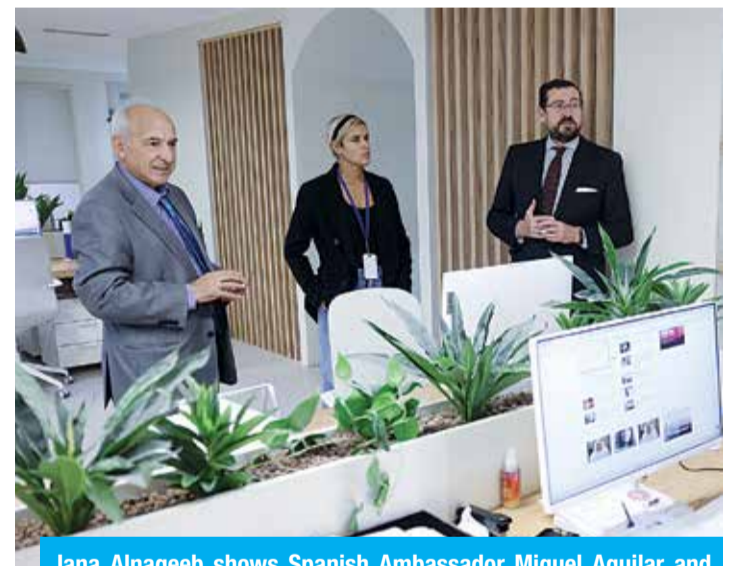
EU, promotes EU values, engages with civil society and media, coordinates with EU Member States embassies, and carries out press and public diplomacy activities to support EU policies and interests.



(Left to right) Head of Printing Department Al-Watheq Bellah Darwish, Commercial Attache Miguel Lopez, Jana Alnaqeeb, Public Relations and CSR Manager and Spanish Ambassador Miguel Moro Aguilar.



Jana Alnaqeeb introduces Spanish Ambassador and Commercial Attache to Fedha, the first presenter in Kuwait that works with artificial intelligence at Kuwait News.



Jana Alnaqeeb shows Spanish Ambassador Miguel Aguilar and Commercial Attache Miguel Lopez the Editorial department.

Spain ambassador visits Kuwait Times and Kuwait News

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Spanish Ambassador to Kuwait Miguel Moro Aguilar visited Kuwait Times and Kuwait News on Wednesday, along with Commercial Attache Miguel Lopez. Public Relations and CSR Manager Jana Alnaqeeb took the ambassador on a tour of various departments of Kuwait Times and Kuwait News, including the newsroom, printing press, studio and the artistic coworking space of the paper.

Alnaqeeb provided the ambassador and the commercial attache with insights into the illustrious history of Kuwait Times, which has a proud legacy spanning more than six decades as the first English-language daily newspaper in Kuwait and Arabian Gulf. During this diplomatic excursion, the ambassador engaged in insightful discussions and highlighted bilateral relations between Spain and Kuwait, while sharing cultural perspectives.

During the visit, Aguilar extended his warm congratulations to Kuwait Times on the occasion of its 62nd anniversary, which falls on September 24. This gesture not only celebrated the newspaper's longstanding contribution to journalism, but also symbolized the strong ties of friendship and diplomacy between Spain and Kuwait.



Jana Alnaqeeb shows Spanish Ambassador and Commercial Attache the Archive room.



Jana Alnaqeeb, Spanish Ambassador Miguel Aguilar and Commercial Attache Miguel Lopez at Kuwait Times and Kuwait News studio.



Spanish Ambassador Miguel Aguilar speaking at Kuwait Times and Kuwait News studio.



Jana Alnaqeeb shows Spanish Ambassador Miguel Aguilar and Commercial Attache Miguel Lopez the olive tree inside the warehouse of Kuwait Times and Kuwait News.



Hawrah Al-Yakoob, Executive Director for Marketing and Jana Alnaqeeb discuss topics with Spanish Ambassador Miguel Aguilar and Commercial Attache Miguel Lopez.

Local

Decade after Khor Abdullah agreement, Iraq's decision neglects UN resolutions

Supreme Court makes a U-turn on agreed treaty

KUWAIT: A decade had passed since the Khor Abdullah agreement was signed between Kuwait and Iraq to organize maritime navigation at the waterway. However, the Supreme Federal Court decided to make a U-turn on the 2013 agreed-upon treaty, which implemented UNSC resolution 833/1993 of the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Boundary Demarcation Commission.

In this regard, professor of international law at Kuwait University's (KU) college of law, Dr Thugel Al-Ajmi, indicated that, in accordance with international laws and Article 27/1969 of the Geneva Convention, "A party may not invoke the provisions of its internal law

as justification for its failure to perform a treaty." He added that under Article 46, "A state may no longer invoke a ground for invalidating, terminating, withdrawing from, or suspending the operation of a treaty under Articles 46 to 50 or Articles 60 and 62."

Dr Al-Ajmi affirmed that the treaty had been implemented for a decade without objection from either party; however, if any grievances arise, the countries may consult with each other or refer the matter to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea to settle disputes. KU colleague professor Abdusalam Al-Enizi provided similar input to KUNA, saying that internal rulings on the Khor Abdullah

agreement should not annul any parties' involvement in the treaty.

The 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea stated, "Coastal States exercise sovereignty over their territorial sea, and they have the right to establish its breadth up to a limit not to exceed 12 nautical miles; foreign vessels are allowed "innocent passage" through those waters," indicated Al-Enizi. He added that the distance between the Kuwaiti and Iraqi coasts has been under 12 nautical miles for each country since approving the agreement.

The Iraqi Federal Court's annulment of the treaty is not binding on Kuwait, which has the right to maritime navigation ac-

ording to international law, affirmed Al-Enizi. He called for resolving the matter via diplomacy and economic means without hampering relations between Kuwait and Iraq to avoid conflict and strife. The issue of Khor Abdullah had garnered attention from the National Assembly's MPs, with representative and head of foreign affairs at parliament MP Abdullah Al-Mudhaf stressing Kuwait's abidance and respect of international law.

Al-Mudhaf indicated that the treaty agreed upon in 2012 and approved in 2013 had witnessed an appeal to revoke it from the Iraqi parliament in 2014; however, the Iraqi court had shut down the attempt back then. What is denounced is

that the Iraqi Federal Court nullified the agreement ten years after its inception, indicated the Kuwaiti MP.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah denounced in the strongest terms the recent Iraqi Federal Court ruling over the issue of Khor Abdullah, in which Kuwait and Iraq signed a 2012 agreement to regulate maritime navigation. A similar statement came out of the coordination meeting for the GCC FMs, which called on Iraq to take serious and urgent steps to tackle this negative development on the issue, saying that the Federal Court's decision was historical because the treaty was deposited with the UN in 2012. — KUNA

GCC ministers meet in Muscat

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Minister of Social Affairs Sheikh Feras Saud Al-Sabah held bilateral talks with his counterparts from other GCC member states in Muscat, capital of Oman, on Tuesday on the fringes of the ninth meeting of the GCC ministerial committee on social development affairs. During his meeting with Saudi Minister of Human Resources and Social Development Ahmad bin Sulaiman Al-Rajhi, the minister reviewed the role of non-government organization in social development.

They exchanged views on women and children affairs as well as the quality of services for people with special needs, according to a statement from the Kuwaiti Ministry of Social Affairs. Sheikh Feras also met Qatari Minister of Social Development and Family Maryam Bint Ali bin Nasser Al-Misnad to discuss cooperation and review the progress of the implementation of the GCC strategy for social and human development.

His meeting with Bahraini Minister of Social Development Osama bin Ahmed Khalaf Al Asfoor focused on experience sharing in the field of productive family project and entrepreneurs' incubators as well as the implementation of relevant memoranda of understanding. The two-day ninth meeting of the GCC ministerial committee on social development affairs mulls the progress of initiatives for empowering the persons with special needs, the single GCC guidelines for voluntarism and philanthropism. — KUNA



Kuwait's Minister of Social Affairs Sheikh Feras Saud Al-Sabah holds bilateral talks with his counterparts from other GCC member states in Muscat.

KUFPEC to acquire stake in exploration zone off Egypt

CAIRO: Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPEC) has inked an accord with BG International Limited, a Shell subsidiary company, where KUFPEC Egypt would acquire a 40 percent stake in the offshore "the Delta-3 Nile" zone. Mohammad Al-Haimar, KUFPEC's CEO, indicated in a statement to KUNA on Wednesday that the move was in line with the approach to expand operations with "our international partners that are active in special exploration basins."

The step will also boost the company's "marine assets and explorations," he added. KUFPEC, in 2020, was granted the "Ras Kanayez" section in the Mediterranean waters off Egypt. For his part, Khaled Kasem, the chairperson of Shell Egypt's office, indicated that the deal would enable the two sides to swap expertise. Shell and its partners started, in August, drilling the sections 3 and 4 in the Nile delta. — KUNA



Mohammad Al-Haimar

Kuwait Fire Force Chief receives GCC medal

KUWAIT: The Chief of the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Lt Gen Khaled Al-Mekrad on Wednesday received the GCC states medal for his recognizable contribution to the development of fire services in Kuwait. In a press release, KFF said that Al-Mekrad was assigned by Acting Prime Minister and

Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, to participate in the ceremony honoring a number of competencies who had noticeable roles in developing work in their departments and institutions in the GCC countries, which was held in the Omani capital, Muscat.

It added that Al-Mekrad received many praises for his success in administrative supervision and amendments. On his part, Al-Mekrad expressed his appreciation for the political leadership in Kuwait, which was the main reason for supporting and developing the Fire Force in Kuwait, and he also relayed his gratitude for the employees on their devotion and loyalty in their work. — KUNA



Chief of the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Lt Gen Khaled Al-Mekrad receives the GCC states medal.

Kuwait participates in International Business Council meeting

DUBAI: Kuwait's participation in the International Business Council meeting at Dubai's Chamber of Commerce is a reflection of its commitment to strengthening economic relations, and broadening investments horizons, stated Chief of Kuwait Business Council in Dubai, Feras Al-Salem on Wednesday. Al-Fares spoke to KUNA after the meeting saying that it is an

ample opportunity to reinforce cooperation, facilitate the exchange of expertise and become acquainted with latest developments and investment opportunities in Emirati market.

Kuwait's participation in such an event boosts communication mechanisms with the local organizational and observational bodies to further ease procedures for Kuwaiti corporations, he explained. The meeting handled discussions of organizational laws and proposals, clarified Al-Salem, as well as the technical and economic challenges facing Kuwaiti corporations in the region. Al-Salem spoke of the council's role saying that it represents the interest of Kuwaiti enterprises, and aims to share the expertise of Kuwait's private sector in overcoming obstacles and challenges. — KUNA



Bzaaarz team poses for a group photo.

Bzaaarz: A transformative software platform empowers entrepreneurs

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Bzaaarz is a transformative software platform that empowers individuals in entrepreneurship and marketing, expanding their horizons and opportunities. This versatile platform stands out by offering a myriad of services across leading technology domains, ensuring aspiring marketers have access to the tools and expertise they need.

Kuwait Times spoke with Mohammad Al-Mutawa, CEO and Founder of Bzaaarz, to learn more about Bzaaarz's holistic support system enabling everyone to become doers in the dynamic world of business. "The concept of Bzaaarz was born amid the COVID-19 pandemic during lockdown. The initial idea revolved around creating a platform where individuals could promote and sell products without the need to purchase inventory upfront. This innovative approach allowed people to launch businesses with no initial capital investment, zero risk, and the flexibility to close without incurring any losses," Mutawa said.

He added that it took him two and a half years to develop that idea. The first version was a website aimed at home businesses, where home business owners could allow marketers to list their items on their website and promote their products at a higher price, gaining profits from the sales. However, due to several obstacles, the idea evolved into an app and a new, improved system process.

Mutawa revealed that Bzaaarz stands out by allowing everyone to register through Bzaaarz.com or the Bzaaarz app in just three minutes. "It is free of charge to be a marketer and open a store; you just have to choose the desired items and sell them for a profit. In our company, we offer marketers three packages: The free-of-charge offer, KD 7.5 and KD 14 packages. The difference between each one is the percentage the marketer can get from selling the listed items and the number of items they can add to their store," he said.

"What sets this application apart from others are several distinctive features. Firstly, it offers six diverse categories, including fashion (accessories, makeup and perfumes), pets' accessories and food, motherhood and infants, gaming, traveling and electronics, catering to a wide range of interests. Secondly, it includes a year-round sales department and provides valuable insights into the sales trends within these categories. Thirdly, and importantly, it is accessible and available to everyone," he explained.

Mutawa affirmed that Bzaaarz helps all segments of society, even those with no experience in business. "We

have a community where we help them sell their products and address any problems they encounter. We also hold events twice a month, where marketers showcase their skills, such as makeup, and promote the items they have, live through social media channels."

Bzaaarz is targeting youth, females, and the elderly, aiming to educate young people about the marketplace. Mutawa mentioned a collaboration with a Canadian university in Kuwait, where they're introducing students to Bzaaarz through workshops that not only teach them about Bzaaarz, but also allow them to earn while they learn.

Mutawa pointed out that Bzaaarz stands as a comprehensive platform offering an array of indispensable services such as prioritizing customer service, providing electronic store and mobile app designs, and offering K-Net devices, storage, and delivery solutions. Most notably, the platform fosters a supportive community of marketers, facilitating knowledge sharing and promoting them on social media through visuals that empower marketers on their entrepreneurial journey.

"As an IT company, we have an in-house IT team that develops and maintains our platform. This allows us to closely monitor and guide our marketers on their journey. We use customer behavior analysis to provide valuable insights. For instance, if customers show interest in a specific item, we recommend featuring it prominently. Additionally, if a marketer's actions lead to increased sales, we provide feedback to help them better understand their customers' interests," he added. Regarding upcoming events, he revealed that Bzaaarz is preparing for clothing events and a video game tournament, and they are in discussions on a new concept for Bzaaarz.

Bodour Al-Mazeedi, PR Manager of Bzaaarz, affirmed that the main goal of the company is to give people financial freedom and an opportunity to have a business. "We offer them personal financial budgeting, where we support the items and products in Bzaaarz's stores and sell the items in many stores," she said. "We conducted an event to teach the marketers how to control their budget and increase their income through our app. Addressing a long-standing problem, we've found a solution to the challenge of people being unable to afford marketing their products, where we have enabled everyone to become a marketer," she added.

"If the marketer's primary goal is profitability, we steer them toward high-margin products. Additionally, existing business owners can create their stores with Bzaaarz to showcase their products and support the business with an app, website and a powerful brand image with zero risk," Mazeedi said.

Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan down 44.1%

TOKYO: Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan narrowed 44.1 percent from a year earlier to JPY 66.7 billion (\$451 million) in August - down for the fifth consecutive month due to weak exports, government data showed on Wednesday. The Finance Ministry said in a preliminary report that Kuwait stayed in black ink with Japan for 15 years as exports still offset imports in value. Overall Kuwaiti exports to Japan plummeted 34.2 percent year-on-year to JPY 87.8 billion (\$593 million) - down for the fourth straight month. Imports from Japan surged 49.9 percent to JPY 21.1 billion (\$143 million), up for the 16th month in a row.

The Middle East's trade surplus with Japan also narrowed 38.8 percent to JPY 877.7 billion (\$5.9 billion) last month, with Japan-bound exports from the region sliding 30.2 percent from a year earlier. Crude oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas (LNG), and other natural resources, which accounted for 95.9 percent of the region's total exports to Japan, plunged 30.4 percent. The region's overall imports from Japan also soared 37.4 percent on demand for automobiles, machinery and steel. The world's third-biggest economy logged a global trade deficit of JPY 930.5 billion (\$6.3 billion) in August for the second straight month, as surging energy bills and a weaker yen continued to push up the value of its imports.

Exports delinked 0.8 percent from the year before, weighed down particularly by sluggish shipments of mineral fuels and semiconductor production equipment, despite strong demand for automobiles in the US, and imports fell 17.8 percent on lower energy prices. Exports to China, Japan's biggest trade partner, shrank 11.0 percent amid the country's import ban on Japanese seafood starting late August. The trade data are measured on a customs-cleared basis before adjustment for seasonal factors. — KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Desert Eagle on seasonal migration rests along Kuwait coastline. — KUNA

KIPCO, LOYAC partner to offer training opportunities for teens

KUWAIT: KIPCO - Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) - announced a partnership with LOYAC, a local non-profit organization that aims to empower youth to become impactful leaders in society. Through this partnership, KIPCO will be sponsoring the '7 Habits for Highly Effective Teens' program sessions that will be offered to youth aged 12 to 18 throughout the year. The '7 Habits' is a Franklin Covey Education program. The goals of this life empowerment program include increasing self confidence and self-esteem, being responsible, defining one's values, recognizing and prioritizing goals and resisting peer pressure.

Eman Al Awadhi, KIPCO's Senior Vice President - Corporate Communications and Investor Relations, said: "Both KIPCO and LOYAC share the common desire to contribute to a prosperous society through offering young people the opportunity to evolve into highly effective leaders. We are pleased to be working with

LOYAC on this personal development program that specifically caters to teens, and we look forward to helping young people reflect on their everyday situations and choices and develop habits that will make them more effective members of the community."

On her part, Fareah Al Saqqaf, LOYAC's Chairperson and Managing Director, said: "We are proud that KIPCO has become our partner, and we are delighted that the company's management has taken interest in the '7 Habits', one of the most renowned personal development programs. At LOYAC, we work with companies that share our vision and goals, and such is KIPCO."

We do not believe in quick fixes; we seek sustainable solutions that target the root of problems, thereby building strong and confident individuals who are grounded in their principles and values. This is what the '7 Habits' program represents." The '7 Habits' workshops focus on habits of effectiveness in young people, with the objective of im-



Eman Al Awadhi



Fareah Al Saqqaf

proving student performance, reducing conflicts, enhancing cooperation and teamwork. It also helps the participants develop new skills through tools that help each individual excel.



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Kuwait sends relief planeload to Libya

KUWAIT: The seventh planeload of aid left Kuwait for hurricane-struck Libya on Wednesday with tons of relief equipment and medical supplies onboard. The relief air bridge extended by Kuwait to Libyan people comes as directed by the political leadership and instructions of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and the continuous observation of Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Sabah, Deputy Director of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Anwar Al-Hasawi, told KUNA.

He said that Kuwait's humanitarian support stems

Kuwait secures seats in WPC committees

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Oil declared on Wednesday that the State of Kuwait had won, for the first time, four seats in the executive committees of the World Petroleum Council (WPC) for the 2023-2026 period. The voting was held in the Canadian city of Calgary on the sidelines of the board's 24th session. Winners of the seats are the assistant undersecretary for technical affairs Khaled Al-Dayeen who would be in the scientific program commission,

from the keenness of its political leadership and commitment to international agreements in providing all types of support to those affected around the world. Al-Hasawi affirmed that KRCS is in constant contact with its Libyan counterpart regarding their medical needs and expressed his appreciation to the Ministries of Health, Foreign Affairs, and Defense for the constant communication, providing, and meeting the needs of Libyan people.

The first batch of supplies took off from Kuwait last Wednesday, the second on Thursday, and the third, fourth, and fifth following, all carrying tons of necessary materials on board. Since disaster struck last Sunday, perhaps the largest catastrophe to hit Libya in 30 years, leaving in its wake thousands dead and others missing and injured, Kuwaiti humanitarian bodies have hastened to rile up efforts and provide urgent relief to the Libyan people. — KUNA

In the youth committee, Dalal Al-Ohaly and Mohammad Al-Rashed won the seats. In the executive committee, Dr Al-Badhali would fill the post of the deputy president for marketing.

The statement quoted the oil ministry undersecretary, Dr Nimr Fahad Al-Malek, as saying that winning the seats crowned relentless efforts by the department for backing the national cadres. Meanwhile, the price of the Kuwaiti crude oil inched down by six cents settling at \$98 per barrel on Tuesday against \$98.06 pb on Monday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation said on Wednesday. In international markets, futures of the Brent crude edged down by nine cents to reach \$94.34 pb while those of the West Texas Intermediate crude fell by 28 cents to settle at \$91.20 pb. — KUNA



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India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi (right) shakes hand with Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau ahead of the G20 Leaders' Summit in New Delhi on Sept 9, 2023.



NEW DELHI: A man checks his mobile as he sits outside an Air Canada regional office in New Delhi on Sept 20, 2023. — AFP photos

India-Canada rift grows

Ties in turmoil as New Delhi warns on Canada travel

NEW DELHI: India on Wednesday warned its citizens against visiting parts of Canada, the latest salvo in a diplomatic row over allegations New Delhi was involved in the killing of a Sikh separatist near Vancouver. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has demanded India treat with "utmost seriousness" the bombshell revelation of its probe into the murder.

The fallout prompted tit-for-tat diplomatic expulsions and a forceful denial from India, which said any suggestion it played a role in the June killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar was "absurd". Without explicitly referring to the row, India's foreign ministry said it was concerned for the safety of its citizens in Canada because of "politically-condoned hate crimes and criminal violence". "Threats have particularly targeted Indian diplomats and sections of the Indian community who oppose the anti-India agenda," a ministry statement said. "Indian nationals are therefore advised to avoid travelling to regions and potential venues in Canada that have seen such incidents."

The advisory did not name specific cities or locations for Indians to avoid. Nijjar was shot dead by

two masked assailants outside the Sikh temple he presided over in Surrey, an outer suburb of Vancouver. An activist for the creation of a Sikh state known as Khalistan, Nijjar was wanted by Indian authorities for alleged terrorism and conspiracy to commit murder. He had denied those charges, according to the World Sikh Organization of Canada, a nonprofit organization that says it defends the interests of Canadian Sikhs. The Indian government accuses Ottawa of turning a blind eye to the activities of radical Sikh nationalists who advocate the creation of an independent Sikh state to be carved out of northern India.

'Not looking to provoke'

Relations between Canada and India have been strained in recent months since the assassination of the Sikh leader and the demonstrations that followed in Canada. Trudeau, who met with Modi on the sidelines of this month's G20 in New Delhi, said Tuesday that his government did not rush to judgment in the case and had worked closely with its intelligence agencies. "India needs to take this matter with the

utmost seriousness," he said. "We are doing that, we are not looking to provoke or escalate."

The United States has joined Canada in calling for India to reveal what it knows about the slaying. "We are deeply concerned about the allegations referenced by Prime Minister Trudeau," National Security Council spokeswoman Adrienne Watson said in a statement. "It is critical that Canada's investigation proceed, and the perpetrators be brought to justice."

'No surprise'

A representative of the World Sikh Organization of Canada, Mukhbir Singh, said his countrymen may have been "shocked" by Trudeau's assertion "but it was no surprise to the Sikh community". "For decades, India has targeted Sikhs in Canada with espionage, disinformation and now murder," he alleged.

Balraj Singh Nijjar, son of the slain leader, said: "It was just a matter of time for when the truth would come out." He added, referring to government authorities: "Hopefully, you can take this a step further and get specific individuals." The head of Canada's New

Democratic Party, Jagmeet Singh, an ally of Trudeau, called for the inclusion of India in a probe launched in September of alleged interference in Canadian affairs by other countries, especially China. "In my experience, as a Sikh Canadian, there have always been suspicions that India was interfering in the democratic rights of Canadians. Yesterday's announcement confirms that these suspicions are valid," Singh said.

There were signs of a brewing crisis before Trudeau revealed the probe into Nijjar's death on Monday. Modi expressed "strong concerns about continuing anti-India activities of extremist elements in Canada" during his meeting with Trudeau at the G20. Canada had also suspended negotiations for a free-trade agreement with India, and last week its trade minister cancelled a trip to the country planned for October. The affair could complicate US government overtures to India, which have seen both countries steadily upgrade their relations over recent years. Washington views New Delhi as a key ally in countering Chinese influence in the Indo-Pacific region. — AFP

Zelensky says strip 'criminal' Russia of veto power

UNITED NATIONS: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Wednesday confronted Russia directly at the UN Security Council, denouncing the Kremlin's invasion of his country as "criminal" and urging that Moscow be stripped of its UN veto power. Clad in his trademark military fatigues, Zelensky for the first time since the February 2022 invasion sat in the same room as a Russian official, who responded by scrolling through his smartphone with a look of conspicuous disinterest.

"Most of the world recognizes the truth about this war," Zelensky said. "It is a criminal and unprovoked aggression by Russia against our nation aimed at seizing Ukraine's territory and resources." Zelensky called on the United Nations to strip Russia of its Security Council veto power, describing it as a vital reform that would simultaneously promote greater representation at the UN for the developing world — where support for Ukraine has been lukewarm.

"Veto power in the hands of the aggressor is what has pushed the UN into a deadlock," Zelensky said. "It is impossible to stop the war because all efforts are vetoed by the aggressor or those who condone the aggressor," he said.

Zelensky repeated the Ukrainian stance that the



NEW YORK: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky addresses the 78th United Nations General Assembly at UN headquarters in New York City on Sept 19, 2023. — AFP

veto power belonged to the former Soviet Union — one of the victors of World War II after which the United Nations was created — and not to President Vladimir Putin's Russia. "Unfortunately, this seat in the Security Council, which Russia occupies illegally through backstage manipulations following the collapse of the Soviet Union, has been taken by liars whose job it is to whitewash the aggression and the genocide," Zelensky said.

Russia scoffs

Taking away Russia's veto power would be exceedingly difficult. There is, however, precedent: the UN General Assembly in 1971 stripped Taiwan of the veto power it held as the representative of China, handing it instead to the communist government of

the mainland. Tensions erupted even before Zelensky spoke, with the Russian side questioning the decision by current Security Council president Albania, represented by Prime Minister Edi Rama, to allow the Ukrainian to go first.

Russian Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia, repeatedly asking to speak, told Rama that letting Zelensky, a former comedian, appear first risked "undermining the authority of the Security Council" and turning it into "a one-man stand-up show." Rama responded calmly but with growing annoyance, telling the Russian envoy, "There is a solution here — you stop the war, and President Zelensky will not take the floor."

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres spoke before Zelensky and also strongly criticized Russia. "Russia's invasion of Ukraine, in clear violation of the United Nations Charter and international law, is aggravating geopolitical tensions and divisions, threatening regional stability, increasing the nuclear threat and creating deep fissures in our increasingly multipolar world," Guterres said.

Albania allowed a list of 63 speakers for the session. Others also scheduled to attend included Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. Lavrov, himself a former UN ambassador known for his sharp-tongued remarks, arrived in New York late Tuesday, with official Russian media saying he flew a circuitous route to avoid European airspace. Putin, who rarely travels to the United Nations, did not come this year. He has skipped other high-profile diplomatic gatherings as Western nations seek to isolate him and as he faces an arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court. — AFP

Poland in 'serious' scandal over Middle East Schengen bribes

BERLIN: The European Union and Germany on Wednesday pressed the Polish government to clear up "serious" visa fraud allegations that could impact its neighbors in the bloc. Polish media reports said a system for giving out Schengen visas to people from the Middle East and Africa in exchange for bribes was put in place through the Polish consulates and some external companies in the countries concerned.

Amid growing tensions within the EU over migration, German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser called her Polish counterpart Mariusz Kaminski Tuesday and her ministry asked Warsaw's envoy to Berlin to appear over the issue, officials said. During the talks, Berlin demanded that Warsaw provide "rapid and complete clarification" of the "serious" allegations.

The European Commission on Wednesday gave Warsaw two weeks to provide "clarifications" of the charges, calling the reports "very concerning". Berlin's queries prompted an angry response from Kaminski, who rejected the "absurd" claims regarding the scope of the affair. "Unfortunately, the German press latched onto the opposition's completely absurd narrative regarding the scale of what we were dealing with," Kaminski told Poland's Radio Zet. "I spoke to the German interior minister yesterday ... I explained the actual scale." Authorities in Warsaw say the scheme may have involved several hundred Polish work visas, while the Polish opposition says the real number could be around 250,000.

'Century's biggest scandal'

Poland's secret service said last week that seven people had been detained in the scandal ahead of October 15 elections, in which the governing party is running on an anti-immigration platform. Three of the seven are under arrest, according to the prosecutor's office, which is leading an inquiry into the alleged racket for fraudulently obtaining visas.

Polish media have reported that the foreign ministry was involved in the scheme, which the opposition Civic Platform party has branded "the biggest scandal in Poland in the 21st century". Deputy Foreign Minister Piotr Wawrzyk resigned over the scandal last week, though the official reason for his departure was "absence of sufficient cooperation".

German interior ministry spokesman Mehmet Ata later told reporters that Berlin was seeking information from Warsaw about how many visas were issued at what point in time and the nationality of the recipients. He said Warsaw had briefed Berlin on the investigation without providing further details.

Germany's federal police had already stepped up checks at the Polish border before the scandal erupted due to an increased influx of migrants into the Schengen free movement zone grouping more than two dozen European countries. Poland's governing Law and Justice (PiS) party has for years used anti-immigrant rhetoric, which was credited as one of the main reasons behind their victory in 2015 parliamentary elections. — AFP

Finland testing digital passports at Helsinki airport

HELSINKI: Finland is currently testing the use of digital passports at Helsinki airport as part of efforts to speed up border control procedures, project officials told AFP. The Digital Travel Credentials (DTC) scheme was launched on Aug 28 for direct Finnair flights to three British destinations — London, Manchester and Edinburgh. It only works at Helsinki airport, and not at the British destinations.

The pilot project, which the Finnish Border Guard said it believed was a world first, "is a first step in how the future of travel might be," border guard inspector Mikko Vaisanen told AFP. Travelers wanting to take part have to first download a special DTC app on their smartphone. They must then go in person to a Helsinki police station, where a digital version of their passport is created by scanning the enclosed chip. They are also photographed to allow facial recognition at the airport.

Once the DTC has been loaded onto the passport,



HELSINKI: Finnish border guard inspector Mikko Vaisanen demonstrates the Digital Travel Credentials (DTC) app at Helsinki airport in Vantaa on Sept 11, 2023. — AFP

travelers must send their flight details to the Finnish Border Guard up to 36 hours — but no later than four hours — before their flight. At Helsinki airport, a special queue at the border control is reserved for those with a DTC. There, travelers scan their closed passport and face a camera, where a border control officer compares the image with the picture that was taken at the police station and is now stored on the passport chip.

Since the person's information has been sent in advance, border guards have already conducted background checks and the traveler is authorized to



pass. Project participants need only go to the police station once. After that they can use their DTC as often as they like, provided they register their travel details before each trip. "We have daily passengers travelling with DTC," Vaisanen said, adding that detailed user statistics were not yet available.

The project, which received €2.3 million in funding from the European Commission, will run until Feb 2024. Finland is awaiting a legislative proposal from the European Commission before fully integrating the scheme into its current border control system. — AFP

International

Charles III welcomed in France for first visit as king

King expected to address environment, supporting entrepreneurs during visit

PARIS: King Charles III on Wednesday embarked on his first state visit to France as monarch, a three-day trip aimed at showing the fundamentals of the cross-Channel alliance remain strong despite a litany of political tensions after Brexit.

Charles and his host President Emmanuel Macron were driven down the Champs-Élysées for their talks at the Elysee Palace, escorted by 136 horses of the Republican Guard and standing up with the car roof open to acknowledge the greetings of a few thousand people lining the famed avenue.

The trip was initially planned for March and was supposed to have been Charles' first state visit abroad since becoming monarch on the death of his mother Queen Elizabeth II. But it was shelved due to widespread rioting and strikes across France against pension reforms. The original itinerary in the capital Paris and the southwestern city of Bordeaux — packed with ceremony and pomp in a country which abolished its monarchy in the 1789 revolution and then executed the king — is largely unchanged. The king and his wife Queen Camilla were welcomed at Paris Orly airport by Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne, with the visit blessed by pristine autumn clear skies, an AFP correspondent said. They then paused to remember war dead by laying wreaths at the Arc de Triomphe.

Driven down the Champs-Élysées, Macron and the king were seen chatting amicably while Camilla and Macron's wife Brigitte followed behind in a similar vehicle. The Macrons will then in the evening host the royal couple at a sumptuous state banquet at Versailles, the palace west of the capital synonymous with French royalty. The menu will include delicacies such as blue lobster cooked as a starter by star chef Anne-Sophie Pic, who has said she was inspired by the tastes of the so called "Sun King" Louis XIV. Dinner guests at the glittering Hall of Mirrors will include Charlotte Gainsbourg, the actor and daughter of Serge Gainsbourg and

Jane Birkin, Hugh Grant and French former Arsenal football manager Arsene Wenger.

'On his own terms'

Macron, who has faced accusations from left-wing opponents of himself behaving like a monarch, will likely be eager to ensure the event proceeds smoothly without showing excess at a time of economic frugality. "This image, in this context, is obviously fundamentally harmful for Emmanuel Macron even if there are diplomatic imperatives behind it which also play a role," French author and academic Benjamin Morel told AFP.

The French president, who has dealt with no fewer than four UK premiers over the last half-decade during a period of political turbulence in Britain, is known to have a strong personal rapport with Charles. Many of the engagements on the trip reflect Charles' lifelong interest in the environment, sustainability and biodiversity, as well as promoting young entrepreneurs and community.

But it is also designed to promote Charles beyond British shores, as he continues his transition from a sometimes outspoken heir to the throne to monarch. "This is King Charles, who was only just over a year ago still Prince Charles, putting himself on the international stage as a leading public figure," said Ed Owens, a royal historian and author. "We know that he's going to address things including his concerns around climate and environment, so he's playing to the crowd in that respect, but doing so on his own terms," he told AFP.

In Queen's footsteps

There are reminders throughout the visit of the late queen, a French-speaking francophile who made five state visits to France during her record-breaking 70-year reign. The Arc de Triomphe was the location for her ceremonial arrival on her last state visit in 2014.



PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron (left) and Britain's King Charles III look on during the official welcoming ceremony at the Arc de Triomphe on Sept 20, 2023. — AFP

On the first, in 1957, she lunched with President Rene Coty in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles. Charles on Thursday addresses lawmakers in the French Senate, again following in the footsteps of his mother who did the same in 2004. The queen also spent two days in Bordeaux — a former English possession in the Middle Ages — on a state visit in 1992.

Charles' visit is seen as the follow-up to moves by UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to reset relations between the two neighbors following tensions

sparked by the UK's exit from the EU. Macron had a particularly prickly relationship with Sunak's predecessor-but-one Boris Johnson, reportedly describing him as a "clown" as he took the UK out of the European Union in January 2020 in a sea of Union Jack waving and rhetoric of British exceptionalism. Coincidentally, Charles arrives one day after Macron held talks with British opposition leader Keir Starmer, whose Labour Party is increasingly confident of being able to oust the ruling Conservatives from power. — AFP

Women violating dress code to face 10 years jail in Iran

TEHRAN: Iranian women who flout the strict Islamic dress code mandating head coverings and modest clothing would face up to 10 years' prison under a bill passed on Wednesday. The push to step up penalties comes a year after a wave of protests sparked by the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, who had been arrested for allegedly breaching the rules.

Since then, a growing number of Iranian women have been seen in public without hijab head scarves or observing the rules against clothes that are deemed too tight-fitting or otherwise revealing. Iran's legislature approved "the Support for the Culture of Hijab and Chastity" bill for a trial period of three years," the official IRNA news agency reported.

Out of the 290 lawmakers, 152 voted in

favor, 35 against, and seven abstained, with the remainder absent. The bill still requires approval by the Guardian Council. Last year's protests, labelled foreign-instigated "riots" by Iranian authorities, saw hundreds of people killed, including dozens of security personnel, and thousands arrested.

Under the bill, violations would be punished most severely if they are considered linked to what Iran regards as hostile foreign forces. Women breaching the dress rules "in cooperation with foreign or hostile governments, media, groups or organizations" could face five to 10 years' prison. Those seen "half-naked in public spaces" would also face lengthy jail terms.

Women driving cars without a hijab or wearing "inappropriate clothing" would be fined five million rials, or around \$100. The draft law also imposes fines against anyone "promoting nudity" or "mocking the hijab" in the media. Business owners whose female staff break the dress rules could be banned from exiting the country.

As many Iranian women have flouted

the rules, especially in Tehran, Iran's executive and judiciary in May proposed the bill to "protect society" and "strengthen family life". Iran's ruling conservatives have argued that relaxing the rules would rupture "social norms".

In August, Iran's ultraconservative President Ebrahim Raisi declared that the practice "of women not wearing the hijab will definitely be brought to an end". A United Nations fact-finding mission warned on September 14 that the bill, if passed, would "expose women and girls to increased risks of violence, harassment and arbitrary detention".

Covering the head and neck has been compulsory for women in Iran since the republic's early years following the 1979 Islamic revolution. Authorities and police patrols have in recent months stepped up measures against women and businesses who fail to observe the dress code. Businesses have been closed over non-compliance and surveillance cameras have been installed in public places to monitor violations. — AFP



TEHRAN: A woman smiles as she walks with people across a pedestrian bridge at Hafteh-Tir Square central Tehran on September 4, 2023. — AFP

New stage of China-Kuwait...

Continued from Page 1

diplomatic relations between China and Kuwait and the later bilateral cooperation in political, economic and other fields. In 1971, the leaders of the two countries made a visionary decision to establish ambassadorial-level diplomatic relations, making Kuwait the first Arab state in the Gulf region to do so.

In the ensuing five decades and more, despite the shifting global dynamics, China and Kuwait have been committed to the original aspiration upon the establishment of diplomatic relations which features mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit, and shared development. The two countries have maintained friendly exchanges and worked closely together in the fundamental interests of the two peoples, sharing weal and woe along the journey. China-Kuwait relations now become a forerunner of relations with other countries in the region and a shining example of friendly state-to-state relations.

China and Kuwait always give each other support on the issues bearing on our respective sovereignty and territorial integrity. After Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, China expressed firm opposition to the invasion and made utmost efforts in its capacity as a permanent member of the UN Security Council for the restoration of Kuwait's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Following the Gulf War, China immediately sent a 60-member fire-fighting team that braved danger and helped Kuwait extinguish ten 10,000-ton oil wells in a short period of two months.

Chinese people will not forget that Kuwait offered China valuable support for the restoration of its lawful seat at the UN. Chinese people also bear in mind that every time China was hit by a serious natural disaster, Kuwaiti leaders would extend their sympathies and lend a helping hand to China at the earliest possible time. Facing the once-in-a-century pandemic, China and Kuwait have stood by each other to tide over the difficulties.

At the height of China's fight against COVID-19 in Wuhan, Kuwait's then-Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah instructed the Cabinet to provide \$3 million of supplies for China, which was very encouraging for the Chinese people to battle with the pandemic at that time. When Kuwait's fight

against the pandemic came to a crucial stage, China sent a medical expert team to help with its epidemic control at the request of the Kuwaiti side.

Moreover, Chinese people will keep in mind that Kuwait has made positive contributions to local infrastructure construction, environmental protection, and health and educational development in China, making itself the Arab state offering the largest amount of government concessional loans to China. The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) started to offer China loans since 1982. So far, it has provided 40 projects in China with concessional loans worth about \$1 billion in total.

Kuwait is the only GCC country where a Chinese medical team is stationed. Since 1976, China has dispatched medical teams to Kuwait where Chinese medical workers apply TCM therapies like acupuncture and moxibustion, and cupping, bringing local patients health and happiness and strengthening the friendship between the two peoples. These are just some of the many touching stories about the friendly exchange between the two sides. The Chinese saying "nothing, not even mountains or oceans, can separate those with a shared goal" aptly describes the state of China-Kuwait friendship that has grown even stronger over the years.

Over the past decade, with the personal guidance and commitment of the leaders of the two countries, China-Kuwait relations have realized a leapfrog growth. As a key gateway in the Gulf region and an important part of the land and maritime Silk Roads, Kuwait is a natural partner of Belt and Road cooperation. In 2014, Kuwait signed the Belt and Road cooperation documents with China, the first among Middle Eastern countries to do so. The two sides have worked actively to synergize the Belt and Road Initiative and Kuwait's Vision 2035 and deepen cooperation in traditional areas such as infrastructure and energy, thus injecting a strong impetus to Kuwait's economic and social development.

In 2018, Kuwait's then-Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visited China. President Xi Jinping met with him and they jointly announced the establishment of a strategic partnership between China and Kuwait, steering the bilateral relationship to a fast track. Under the framework of the Belt and Road cooperation, we have delivered a steady stream of signature outcomes for major projects including the new headquarters of the Central Bank of Kuwait, the Sabah Al-Salem University City, the Dhaman Hospital, the

Al-Zour refinery, infrastructure work for the South Al-Mutlaa City, the 7th ring road, and soil remediation. These outcomes have become an emblem of China-Kuwait practical cooperation in the new era.

The breakthroughs in bilateral cooperation in business, trade, investment, communications and other areas have delivered tangible benefits to the two countries and peoples. As of 2022, China has remained as the largest trading partner of Kuwait for seven consecutive years, with two-way trade hitting a record \$31.48 billion in 2022. Kuwait has become China's 7th largest source of crude oil imports, as a result of a steady increase of crude oil imported by China. Moreover, the Kuwait Investment Authority opened its second office in Shanghai to actively expand its financial investment in China. It has been the first foreign investor in China's high-speed rail network.

Meanwhile, statistics released by Kuwait suggest that China's direct investment in Kuwait totaled about \$550 million, making China the second largest source of foreign direct investment in Kuwait. Automobiles with Chinese brands have gained increasing popularity among Kuwaiti consumers for their superior quality and considerate service. The nationwide commercial 5G network built in Kuwait in collaboration with Huawei, the first of its kind in the Middle East, will give a strong boost to Kuwait's economic transformation.

Furthermore, our two peoples enjoy closer ties. Now there are four direct flights per week from Kuwait City to Guangzhou, compared with only one when it was launched in 2020. This air route operates just like bridges over the air, facilitating travelers between the two countries. The first China Cultural Center in the Gulf region, which was put into trial operation recently, will enable the people of Kuwait to get a first-hand experience of the fascinating Chinese culture. All this shows that the development interests of both countries are closely interwoven, the two peoples are more closely connected to each other, and our exchanges and cooperation in many areas have been thriving.

The international landscape today is going through profound transformation. China and Kuwait share similar visions and ideals in global governance. Although we are different in social system and traditional culture, both countries belong to the family of Eastern civilizations and uphold an independent foreign policy and the principle of non-

interference in other countries' internal affairs. In addition, both countries advocate multilateralism, uphold the UN-centered international system and the international order based on international law, and work to safeguard regional and international peace and stability and promote an open world economy. We both stay committed to promoting exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations, diversity of global civilizations and the common values of humanity. China and Kuwait are close partners that coordinate with each other on the international stage.

High-level exchange plays an important role in guiding bilateral relations. President Xi Jinping and HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah have kept frequent interactions and strategic communication. They expressed in their messages to each other the strong desire to take forward the traditional friendship and deepen bilateral cooperation on various fronts under the framework of the Belt and Road cooperation. In December last year, President Xi Jinping met for the first time with HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in Riyadh. President Xi Jinping stressed during the meeting that China will remain as a trustworthy friend of Kuwait and will continue to enhance the synergy of our development strategies.

China will take an active part in the construction of major projects in Kuwait, tap the potential of bilateral cooperation in such sectors as new energy, 5G communications and digital economy, and support cultural exchanges and cooperation. At the same time, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah emphasized that China is always a friend of Kuwait and that Kuwait will abide by the one-China principle and work with China to deepen mutually beneficial cooperation in various areas so as to open up new horizons for the strategic partnership.

Today, China and Kuwait face a new opportunity for expanding bilateral ties. As China is making unwavering efforts to advance Chinese modernization and promote high-standard opening up, it will bring more confidence, hope and opportunities for China-Kuwait relations and the development of other countries across the globe including Kuwait. China stands ready to work with Kuwait to create an even brighter future for bilateral relationship. I would like to wish HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal's visit to China a full success, which will thus write a new chapter of China-Kuwait strategic partnership.

International

Climate crisis has 'opened the gates to hell': UN chief

China, US barred from speaking at major UN climate summit

UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Wednesday told world leaders humanity's addiction to fossil fuels had "opened the gates to hell" as he kicked off a climate meeting where leading polluters China and the United States were conspicuously absent.

Despite increasing extreme weather events and record-shattering global temperatures, greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise and oil and gas companies reap handsome profits. Guterres has thus billed the "Climate Ambition Summit" as a "no nonsense" forum where leaders or cabinet ministers will announce specific actions that deliver on their commitments under the Paris Agreement.

In his opening speech, he evoked 2023's "horrendous heat" and "historic fires," but stressed: "The future is not fixed: It is for leaders like you to write. We can still limit the rise in global temperature to 1.5 degrees. We can still build a world of clear air, green jobs and affordable clean power for all," he said, referring to the target seen as needed to avoid long-term climate catastrophe.

The bar for the podium was set high, with the UN chief making clear that only leaders who had made concrete plans to achieve net-zero greenhouse emissions would be allowed to speak. After receiving more than 100 applications to take part, the UN finally released a list on Tuesday night of 41 speakers which did not include China, the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan or India.

Several major leaders didn't bother making the trip to New York for this year's UN General Assembly, including President Xi Jinping of China and Prime Minister Rishi Sunak from the United Kingdom, who said he was too busy. US President Joe Biden, who

addressed the General Assembly on Tuesday, sent his climate envoy John Kerry to the meeting — although Kerry won't be permitted to speak in the segment reserved for "movers and doers."

"There's no doubt that the absence of so many leaders from the world's biggest economies and emitters will clearly have an impact on the outcomes of the summit," Alden Meyer of climate think tank E3G said. He blamed competing issues — from the Ukraine conflict to US-China tensions and rising economic uncertainty — but also the lobbying power of the fossil fuel industry.

Catherine Abreu, executive director of nonprofit Destination Zero, said it was "perhaps a good-news story that we see Biden not being given a speaking slot at the summit" because the United States is continuing to expand fossil fuel projects even as it makes historic investments in renewables. "I think about this as being a correction from past summits, where leaders have been given the opportunity to take credit for climate leadership on the global stage, while they continue to pursue plans to develop fossil fuels, and continue driving the climate crisis back at home," she added. While the United States won't take the rostrum, California will be represented by Governor Gavin Newsom. From Britain, London Mayor Sadiq Khan will also attend.

Broken promises

The event is the biggest climate summit in New York since 2019, when Greta Thunberg stunned the world with her "How Dare You" speech before the UN. Anger is building among climate activists, particularly younger people, who turned out in thousands last weekend for the "March to End Fossil Fuels" in New York.



NEW YORK: Delegates attend the UN Climate Ambition Summit on the sidelines of the 78th United Nations General Assembly on Sept 20, 2023. — AFP

Observers are eager however to see what Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and European Union President Ursula von der Leyen say both on their own goals and on financing commitments for the developing world. Advanced economies vowed in 2009 to channel \$100 billion to less developed countries by the year 2020 — a promise that was broken — even as much of the funding that was mobilized came in the form of

loans. Meanwhile, a "loss and damage" fund aimed at providing financial assistance to nations most vulnerable and impacted by the effects of climate change has still not been operationalized. There are some bright spots, including the announcement that Colombia and Panama are joining a grouping called the Powering Past Coal Alliance — particularly notable as Colombia is the world's sixth biggest coal exporter. — AFP



ALMADA: Sofia Oliveira, an 18-year-old citizen from the suburbs of Lisbon and her brother Andre, 15-year-old, two of six young people taking 32 nations to the European Court of Human Rights for their inaction on climate, pose for a photograph in Almada on Aug 10, 2023. — AFP

Six young people sue 32 European states over climate

STRASBOURG: Six Portuguese youths are taking 32 nations to the European Court of Human Rights this month for not doing enough to stop global warming, the latest bid to secure climate justice through the courts. The move was sparked by the massive wildfires that struck Portugal in 2017, killing over 100 people and charring swathes of the country. Aged 11 to 24, the young people say they are suffering from anxiety over their health and "having to live with a climate that is getting hotter and hotter" with more natural disasters. Underscoring the potential impact of the case in terms of forcing countries to act, the Strasbourg-based court's Grand Chamber will examine the arguments on September 27, something that is reserved for exceptional cases. The youths argue that excessive carbon emissions are infringing — in particular, the right to life and the right to respect of private and family life. "This is truly a David and Goliath case," said Gearoid O Cuinn, director of the Global Legal Action Network (GLAN), which is supporting the youths' case. "Never before have so many countries had to defend themselves in front of any court anywhere in the world," he said. Activists are increasingly turning to courts to force greater efforts by governments to tackle climate change, amid warnings the world is falling short of the 2015 Paris Agreement goals for limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above mid-19th century levels. In August, a court in the US state of Montana ruled in favor of a group of youths who accused it of violating their rights to a clean environment.

'Game changer'

An ECHR ruling, expected in several months, in favor of the plaintiffs would be binding on the 46 member states of the Council of Europe and potentially constitute legal jurisprudence on climate cases. Nations would have to "rapidly accelerate their climate mitigation efforts", said Gerry Liston, a GLAN lawyer assisting the youths. "In legal terms, it would be a game changer."

But first, the court will rule on the admissibility of the case since the Portuguese youths filed directly to the ECHR without first seeking recourse in domestic courts. They argue that trying to file separate cases in all 32 countries would be an "excessive and disproportionate burden" on an issue requiring urgent attention. An ECHR source confirmed that it was a "unique case" in terms of the number of nations targeted by a single complaint. The court has not previously ruled on member obligations with regards to climate change. The youths say governments are contributing to warmer temperatures with carbon emissions that are provoking heat waves and wildfires in their country in particular. —AFP

India's lower house votes to increase female lawmakers

NEW DELHI: India's lower house of parliament passed a bill Wednesday that would more than double the number of women lawmakers in its ranks, following several failed attempts to enact the measure stretching back decades. A total of 454 lawmakers voted for the bill, with only two against.

"The proposal has been passed with more than a two-thirds majority of the members present in the house," said Om Birla, the speaker of parliament. The proposed law would reserve one-third of seats in India's lower house and state assemblies for women once it takes effect, which could take until at least the end of the decade. It would not take effect before national elections next year but will be a further fillip to the already commanding position of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party ahead of that poll.

When prime minister Indira Gandhi took office to lead India in 1966 she became the world's second woman head of government in a parliamentary democracy, following Sri Lanka's Sirimavo Bandaranaike six years

earlier. Two women have served in India's ceremonial presidency and others have been chief ministers, party leaders and powerbrokers in the decades since, but that has not equated to broader political representation.

Just 104 of India's 788 MPs were women after the last national election, according to government figures — a little over 13 percent. Those figures reflect a broader under-representation of women in Indian public life. Just under a third of working-age Indian women were in the formal labor force last year, according to government data.

Six earlier attempts to pass the bill stalled in the decades since it was first introduced in 1996, with sometimes vehement resistance from lawmakers. Mulayam Singh Yadav, at the time the chief minister of India's most populous state, suggested in 2010 that the bill should not be passed because it would compel men to wolf-whistle at their female colleagues in parliament. The bill proposes a constitutional amendment to enshrine a one-third quota reserved for women, requiring a two-thirds majority in both houses of parliament to succeed. Its passage through the upper house is expected to be smooth thanks to broad political support for the measure. The quota would only take effect once India redraws its electoral boundaries after the mammoth undertaking of a census for its 1.4 billion people — the last due in 2021 was postponed indefinitely because of the coronavirus pandemic. — AFP



NYAMATA: Human skulls preserved are exhibited on April 4, 2014 at the Genocide memorial in Nyamata, inside Catholic church where thousands were slaughtered during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

UNESCO memorial chance 'to heal': Genocide survivor

KIGALI: Vanessa Uwase had little chance of survival when her mother was murdered during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Today, she works at the country's largest memorial to the slaughter — one of four sites added to UNESCO's heritage list on Wednesday.

The Gisozi genocide memorial is "a resting place for many of my loved ones, and working here helps me to reconnect with them somehow and to heal", she said, recounting her extraordinary life story. Barely a few weeks old, Uwase was alone and clinging to her mother's breast when a Hutu schoolgirl spotted her by the roadside and insisted on rescuing the Tutsi infant.

"As I reached out to embrace the baby, her dying mother whispered to me, urging me to save her and take the baby to safety," Grace Uwamahoro told AFP. Uwamahoro's frightened family attempted to dissuade her, but the 10-year-old refused to let the baby go even as they fled across the border to a refugee camp in the Democratic Republic of Congo. "It was really difficult because we did not have enough resources and there was a lot of pressure inside the camp to abandon the baby but my heart loved her. She had no name so I called her Vanessa," Uwamahoro said.

'Never forget'

They would not return to Rwanda until 2004, a decade after the genocide by Hutu extremists that claimed 800,000 lives, mainly Tutsi. As the family made a fresh start in Rwanda, Uwase slowly began to piece her history together, reconnecting with relatives who found her after seeing her story featured in a TV program. After university, she began working at the genocide

memorial in Rwanda's capital — helping her heal and come to terms with her identity as the adoptive Tutsi daughter of a Hutu woman. "This memorial is very significant to me because it has been part of my healing journey. I have friends here, some of whom experienced terrible things as well," Uwase, now 29, told AFP.

"The memorial is a representation of our history and it is a final resting place for many souls that were lost. Mothers, fathers, children, friends, brothers, sisters, grandmothers, grandfathers, friends... this is where they rest." Skulls, bone fragments, torn clothing and images of piled up corpses confront visitors to the memorial, which houses the remains of around 250,000 victims. Each year, more are buried as new graves are uncovered around the country, with remains also housed at a former Catholic church at Nyamata, a school complex at Murambi and a memorial at Bisesero built in 1998. For Uwamahoro, 42, the memorial is "a constant reminder" of Rwanda's darkest chapter. "We must never forget those atrocities and the memorial is a sign that reminds us that this evil should never happen again." — AFP



NYAMAGABE: A general view of clothes of genocide victims on display at the Murambi genocide memorial on April 21, 2022. — AFP photos

For climate activists, New York's lights shine too bright

NEW YORK: New York's annual Climate Week is underway, bringing together activists, politicians and business leaders for hundreds of events aimed at addressing the planetary crisis. But the bright lights that give the "city that never sleeps" its iconic glow have long been a source of frustration for campaigners, something at odds with the spirit of conservation embodied by the yearly summit, which takes place on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

"We have a long way to go until a brightly lit city is seen for what it is, which is just an egregious waste of energy — and something that's having a direct impact on the natural world," Ruskin Hartley, director of the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA), told AFP. According to US Department of Energy figures, outdoor lighting in the United States consumes enough energy annually to power 35 million homes. At any given time, only one percent of artificial light reaches human eyes, the department says.

City-wide energy estimates are hard to come by, but it's clear from satellite images that New York is among the worst offenders in the United States, which as a country is far more wasteful than Europe, according to studies. As participants at Climate Week NYC — now in its 15th year — hold events on topics ranging from climate financing to lowering the carbon footprint of food systems, to the role of art in activism, reducing light pollution should be part of the discussion, said Hartley.

"People are looking for ways that we can make a meaningful difference in short order, given the magnitude of the crisis that is facing us. And one of the simplest things we can do is to look around and figure out where we can cut waste from the system," he argued. Globally, the IDA estimates that outdoor lighting that escapes to space is responsible for one percent of annual greenhouse emissions.

Birds, stargazing and human health affected - It's not just an energy problem, either. New York City lies along a bird migration pathway known as the Atlantic Flyway, with millions passing through every year. Dustin Partridge, director of conservation and science at the New York City Audubon, told AFP. Artificial light draws the birds into the city. During the day, they crash into buildings because they see reflections of enticing vegetation in the glass and concrete jungle, while at night they fly into lighted windows.

"In New York, we have about a quarter million birds die each year with collisions," said Partridge, with Climate Week occurring in the middle of the fall migration. The seeds these birds disperse are vital for the health of carbon-sequestering ecosystems all the way from Canada, where they began their journeys, to their destinations in South America. "You can go outside in the evening in New York City and look out and see an easy solution to protecting biodiversity and helping fight against climate change," said Partridge.

That's to say nothing of the impact of light pollution on stargazing — the reason the IDA was founded in the first place. "The light that's been traveling millions of light years is being absorbed and hidden in the last nanosecond, and what a loss to society that is," said Hartley. Other research has uncovered potential impacts on human health — for example, increased incidents of certain cancers, which could be linked to disruptions of circadian rhythms. Artificial light also brings more mosquitoes, and the diseases they bring. New York passed legislation in 2021 that required all city-owned buildings to turn off non-essential lights from 11:00 pm to 6:00 am during spring and fall migration. But these account for a small fraction of all buildings, and a bill introduced this May that would extend similar rules to privately-owned and industrial buildings, remains pending.—AFP

Business

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2023

Building boom spells success for Somali women engineers

As business grows, govt is keen to see more women in workforce

MOGADISHU: As Somalia's capital witnesses a construction boom following improvements in security, civil engineer Faduma Mohamed Ali is hard at work, supervising male laborers twice her age and breaking barriers in the conservative country.

The 22-year-old has battled social stigma, family opposition and workplace harassment, but told AFP she never doubted her choice of career. "I always liked buildings," she said.

When she enrolled in a civil engineering degree program—the only woman in her class—her relatives were quick to cast aspersions. "They said, how can a girl waste time to study civil engineering?... this is work for men." The jibes continued even after she graduated and found a job in Mogadishu.

"They used to ask—are you crazy?" In a country where women account for less than a third of the workforce, according to the World Bank, many parents frown on the prospect of their daughters working in close quarters with men. "I would not have (wanted)... my daughter to work at a construction site with men, this is not for women. I would rather she chose... a female-dominated profession," said Abdikafi Hassan Duale, a father of six.

"This is for their safety and protection from social harassment," he told AFP. But attitudes are changing. Fathi Mohamed Abdi told AFP that her parents were "very happy" and supportive of her decision to become the first civil engineer in their extended family.

"They started encouraging me in this while I was studying, and they have continued to do so now that I am working," the 23-year-old said. They even "wake me up in the morning when I oversleep (so I can) get to work", she added. At university, she was one of only two women studying civil engineering but her choices have paid off as construction activity picks up. "Due to the growing investment in the construction industry in our country, we are getting so many opportunities," she said.

'Not for women'

Hassan Mohamed Jimale, the deputy mayor of public affairs in Mogadishu, told AFP the government was keen to see more women in the workforce as business



MOGADISHU: Civil engineer Fathi Mohamed Abdi (right) holds her protective helmet as she supervises a construction site in Mogadishu, Somalia on August 13, 2023.-- AFP

grows and security improves, following an ongoing offensive against Al-Shabaab Islamists. "We encourage female engineers as a regional administration, the department in charge of city planning (employs) female engineers, and the deputy director of the department is female," he said.

Despite their growing profile, women who work as engineers told AFP they regularly faced sexism at work. "The talk and bad impression people have of us as female engineers disappoint me most. Men keep telling us that this job is not intended for women," said

Ifin Mohamed, 26. "The laborers show insubordination when supervised by female engineers and they believe we are weak compared to men," she told AFP. She also drew attention to a gender pay gap, particularly in the private sector. "Men and women are not paid equally... women are paid less than men in most cases particularly by private companies," she said.

Abukar Hussein Ibrahim, a mason who has worked under Abdi before, said he enjoyed working with women but admitted that many of his male cohorts did not share his views. "Male construction laborers find it

incredible to see a female engineer supervising their work, they spend a lot of time gossiping about her... they keep asking why a woman was chosen instead of a man," the 42-year-old told AFP. They will simply have to get used to it, said engineer Ali, pointing to a surge in the number of women studying civil engineering. "I was part of a group training recently and to my surprise there were more than 100 girls from different institutions and all of them had enlisted to study civil engineering," she said. "That was rare before but now things are changing." —AFP

Britain set to backtrack on net zero policies

LONDON: The UK looked set to backtrack Wednesday on policies aimed at achieving net zero emissions by 2050 with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak expected to water down some of the government's green commitments. The move comes amid growing concern over the potential financial cost of the government's policies to achieve net zero carbon emissions by mid-century.

A general election is expected next year and Sunak's Conservative Party is trailing in the polls behind the Labour opposition amid a cost-of-living crisis that has seen food and housing costs spiral.

Sunak will deliver a speech at Downing Street later on Wednesday. According to British media reports, the premier in particular wants to water down plans to phase out gas boilers from 2035 and delay the ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars due in 2030. In a statement late Tuesday he said that while the government was committed to the net zero target, it would try to achieve it "in a better, more proportionate way". The Conservative's narrow win in a west London by-election in July—largely put down to a campaign against the expansion of a vehicle pollution toll zone in the capital by Labor mayor Sadiq Khan—triggered calls within the party to rethink climate commitments.

Sunak said politicians "of all stripes have not been honest about costs and trade-offs" and that he would



LONDON: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is expected to water down some of the government's green commitments.

"put the long-term interests of our country before the short-term political needs of the moment". Interior minister Suella Braverman told Sky News on Wednesday morning that "we're not going to save the planet by bankrupting the British people".

"We absolutely remain committed to delivering net zero by 2050 in line with our international agreements," she said, adding that "we also need to adopt an approach of pragmatism and proportionality".

"We need to put economic growth first, we need to put household costs and budgets first, we need to put the cost of living first," she added. The gov-

press conference for any clues about its next move, including future hikes. "All the attention will be on the Fed today," said Fawad Razaqzada, market analyst at Forex.com and City Index.

"At the moment, the market is pricing in about even odds of another rate increase before the year is out," he said. Deutsche Bank analysts also expect the Fed to signal one more rate increase this year. "But they think Powell will leave open the question of when that tightening could occur, and will lean heavily on a message of data dependency," the bank said in a note.

A surge this week in crude prices, which approached the \$100-per-barrel mark, raised concerns about what the Fed may do, though they fell slightly on Wednesday. "There is still some apprehension as it's still not clear what signals the Fed will send," OANDA trading platform analyst Craig Erlam told AFP.

A slew of central banks will also make rate decisions on Thursday in Britain, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, Turkey, Indonesia and South Africa. The Bank of England had been expected to raise its own rate again but data on Wednesday showed UK inflation unexpectedly struck an 18-month low in August. Now the BoE is tipped to either signal that its hike would be the last one for a while, or pause.—AFP

Stocks advance as Fed looms, UK inflation dips

LONDON: Wall Street and European stock markets rose Wednesday as traders gear up for an expected pause in the US Federal Reserve's interest rate hike campaign. Investors also welcomed a surprise drop in UK inflation in August and cooling oil prices. But markets were focused on the Fed announcement later Wednesday, with analysts widely expecting the central bank to keep rates unchanged as it looks to avoid sparking a recession. Wall Street's main indices opened higher while London, Paris and Frankfurt were all up around one percent in afternoon deals. US monetary policymakers have hiked rates 11 times since March last year in its effort to tame inflation, which has slowed but remains above the Fed's two-percent target.

With little suspense over the rate decision, investors will be more interested in reading the central bank's statement and listening to Fed chair Jerome Powell's

ernment's expected net zero rethink sparked anger among opposition lawmakers, environmental campaigners, the car industry and some Conservative MPs, setting up a possible rift in Sunak's party.

In July, Sunak approved hundreds of new oil and gas licenses in the North Sea off Britain's east coast, angering environmentalists. Former COP26 president and Conservative lawmaker Alok Sharma warned that "for any party to resile from this agenda will not help economically or electorally."

Chris Skidmore, a Conservative former energy minister who recently led a review on net zero for the government, said Sunak "still has time to think again and not make the greatest mistake of his premiership." Reports suggested that some MPs may even be preparing letters of no confidence should Sunak go ahead with the move.

Green Party MP Caroline Lucas said "this decision would be economically illiterate, historically inaccurate and environmentally bone-headed." Ed Miliband, Labour's spokesman for energy, called it a "complete farce from a Tory government that literally does not know what they are doing day to day."

Criticism also came from industry, with Mike Hawes, chief executive of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, saying the UK should be a "leader in zero emission mobility" but "clear, consistent" messaging is required from the government for consumers to want to switch to electric vehicles. "Confusion and uncertainty will only hold them back," Hawes added. Green campaigners were angered too, as Rebecca Newsom, head of politics at Greenpeace UK, saying that "Britain has gone from leader to laggard on climate change and further planned U-turns leaked last night will only hasten our waning influence on the world stage." —AFP

TotalEnergies and Adani team up on renewables in India

PARIS: French firm TotalEnergies and Indian group Adani unveiled plans on Wednesday to create a joint venture to develop wind and solar electricity production in India.

The joint venture will include wind and solar assets that Adani Green Energy Limited (AGEL) already operates and is building and developing in India, while TotalEnergies will make an equity investment to further support their development. Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani said the investment by TotalEnergies "will further strengthen the pivotal role played by AGEL in India's glide path to decarbonization." The company has 20.4 gigawatts of renewable electricity production in operation and development, and plans to expand this to 45 GW by 2030. TotalEnergies chief executive Patrick Pouyanné said the joint venture "will enable us to speed up our development through direct access to a large portfolio of assets".—AFP



PARIS: An Apple Logo banner hangs from the facade of an Apple store near The Opera Garnier in Paris. — AFP

Workers at French stores to strike on iPhone 15 debut

PARIS: Workers at Apple stores in France are set to strike and disrupt the launch of the iPhone 15 in a battle over pay, trade unions told AFP on Wednesday. The unions called for two days of action on social media beginning on Friday, when the new handset is due to launch, saying Apple management had ignored their "perfectly legitimate" demands.

Apple has faced a rough time in France lately, with the government blocking sales of the iPhone 12 last Tuesday after it returned illegally high readings for radiation emissions. The global launch of the iPhone 15 was also overshadowed by the firm's capitulation to European Union demands for smartphones to be kitted out with universal charging ports rather than Apple's proprietary "lightning" ports.

Apple workers in France have been campaigning for a seven percent pay rise but management have offered 4.5 percent—which the unions say is too low given vast increases in the cost of living. "The launch of a new iPhone would normally be a cause for celebration but this time we're not in the mood," Albin Voullow, the CFDT union delegate for Apple Retail France, told AFP.

Organisers said most of Apple's 20 stores across the country would be affected, with staff walkouts expected at some branches and demonstrations planned at others. "The aim is not to blockade the stores but to make management and the public aware of the problem," said Voullow. The company has not yet responded to an AFP request for comment.—AFP

Business

UK inflation drops to 18-month low

Data sparks hope BoE rate could come to an end

LONDON: British inflation unexpectedly slowed in August, data showed Wednesday, hitting an 18-month low and sparking hope this week's widely-forecast interest rate hike by the Bank of England could be its last for now.

The Consumer Prices Index dropped slightly to 6.7 percent from 6.8 percent in July, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement on the eve of the BoE's latest monetary policy decision. That was the lowest since February 2022 and confounded expectations for an acceleration to 7.1 percent on higher energy prices. Wednesday's news sent the pound sliding almost 0.4 percent to \$1.2347 in morning deals, with the US Federal Reserve set to hold rates later in the day.

Finance minister Jeremy Hunt said his Conservative government's plan to lower inflation is "working" but conceded that the rate is "still too high".

It comes one day after data showed eurozone inflation also slowed slightly in August. "The surprise fall in UK inflation triggered a kneejerk selloff in sterling, as today's data cements the expectation that the Bank of England's next rate hike could also be its last," said Swissquote Bank analyst Ipek Ozkardeskaya. Despite the drop, British inflation remains the highest in the G7 group of rich nations, after peaking at a 41-year high of 11.1 percent in October last year. Elevated inflation has prompted almost 18 months of regu-

lar stoppages by public and private-sector workers whose pay is failing to keep pace.

In the latest walkout, medical consultants and junior doctors working in England for the country's National Health Service held their first ever joint strike on Wednesday. The BoE has so far ramped up its key interest rate 14 times in a row to the current level of 5.25 percent in a bid to bring down red-hot inflation. The data "probably won't be enough to prevent the BoE from raising interest rates... to 5.50 percent tomorrow", noted Capital Economics analyst Paul Dales. "But it supports our view that that will be the last hike".

Energy impact

The ONS added that food prices rose by less in August than a year earlier. This impact was only partially offset by higher energy costs. "The rate of inflation eased slightly this month driven by falls in the often-erratic cost of overnight accommodation and air fares, as well as food prices rising by less than the same time last year," said ONS chief economist Grant Fitzner. "This was partially offset by an increase in the price of petrol and diesel compared with a steep decline at this time last year, following record prices seen in July 2022."

However, economists caution that this week's rebound in oil prices toward \$100 per barrel will fuel fresh



LONDON: British inflation unexpectedly slowed in August, data showed Wednesday, hitting an 18-month low and sparking hope this week's widely-forecast interest rate hike by the Bank of England could be its last for now.

inflationary pressures. "The ramping up of crude prices over recent weeks will filter through, but there will be relief that oil prices have also snuck away from the week's highs," said Susannah Streeter, head of money

and markets at Hargreaves Lansdown. Oil prices have jumped largely because of output cuts by key producers Russia and OPEC kingpin Saudi Arabia, which will be in place until the end of the year at least. —AFP



LINKÖPING, Sweden: Astrid Linder, an engineer at the Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute (VTI), is pictured next to her creation, the world's first female crash test dummy called SET 50F. —AFP

Women in driver's seat with female crash test dummy

LINKÖPING, Sweden: Her name is SET 50F and she's the world's first female crash test dummy, designed by a Swedish engineer to help make sure women are better protected in cars.

Legislation only requires carmakers to conduct crash tests with dummies based on male proportions—a model dating back to the 1970s—even though statistics show that women are more at risk of injury in the event of a frontal collision. Carmakers have used smaller-sized versions of male dummies to represent women and children, but those have not taken into account the different morphology of women's bodies.

Astrid Linder, an engineer at the Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute (VTI), decided to change that with "the world's first average-sized female crash test dummy," according to VTI. In a warehouse in Linköping, 200 kilometers (125 miles) south of Stockholm, the female dummy is strapped into a car seat projected along a metal rail at 16 kilometers per hour (10 miles per hour), before being brought to a sudden halt. A screen shows the body moving in slow motion at the moment of impact, the mannequin's chest visibly distinguishing it from a standard male crash test dummy. "The muscles in the neck are normally weaker in a woman," says Tommy Petterson, one of Linder's colleagues at VTI, pointing to the nape of the dummy's neck, deformed by the impact. "If you compare it with a male dummy, this neck is more flexible and has more movement."

Narrow shoulders, wide hips

Tested in Sweden since late 2022, the female prototype made of rubber, metal and plastic is fitted with 24 sensors, measures 162 centimeters (5 feet 3 inches) and weighs 62 kilograms (137 pounds). That is 15 cm and 15 kg fewer than a male crash test dummy. Her shoulders are also narrower and her hips wider. These differences, as well as a lower centre of gravity, play an important role in evaluating the risks women face in a car accident. "For non-fatal injuries which can lead to disabilities, statistics show that the factor that always stands out is the difference between men and women," Linder told AFP. "The resulting suffering can last a lifetime. It is essential to establish how everyone can be protected."

According to a 2019 study from the University of Virginia in the United States, women are 73-percent more likely than men to be injured in the event of a frontal collision. They are also twice as likely to suffer whiplash injuries in an accident because of the morphology of their necks and the design of neck supports in cars. Linder's female dummy, developed with subsidies from the European Commission, is already being used by some carmakers, including Volvo in Sweden.

But there are no international regulations requiring manufacturers to do so. "In the regulation it says you have to use the model of an average man for all the testing, full stop," lamented Linder, who also teaches auto engineering. She was honored earlier this year with a prize celebrating women's contributions to the auto industry. But the market has yet to pick up speed. "In our society and culture, for a long time we focused on keeping men safe in vehicles because initially that's how the culture was. It was predominantly men that were driving," explained Emily Thomas, head of automobile testing at the US non-profit organisation Consumer Reports. "And even though the culture shifted, unfortunately the safety innovations didn't shift along with it," she said. — AFP

Developing Asia faces intensified risks, says ADB

MANILA: Developing Asia faces "intensified" risks from China's troubled property sector and high interest rates around the world, the Asian Development Bank said Wednesday, as it trimmed its regional growth expectations. Gross domestic product is forecast to expand by 4.7 percent this year, the Manila-based lender said, slightly lower than its April estimate of 4.8 percent.

It was faster than the 4.3 percent growth recorded last year. Developing Asia refers to the multilateral lender's 46 emerging member economies, stretching from Kazakhstan in Central Asia to the Cook Islands in the Pacific. "Risks to the

outlook have intensified," the bank said in its latest update of forecasts for this year and next, noting weaknesses in China's property sector could "hold back regional growth". Other challenges included high interest rates and threats to food security from the El Nino weather phenomenon and export restrictions imposed by some countries.

Inflation is also expected to drop to 3.6 percent this year from 4.4 percent last year, the ADB said, pointing to the slowdown in China. The bank slashed its China inflation estimate to 0.7 percent for this year, from its April forecast of 2.2 percent. There was a burst of consumer exuberance after China, the world's second-largest economy, lifted its strict zero-COVID policies late last year.

But weak consumption, a crisis in the massive property sector and soft demand for China's exports has complicated the recovery. Official figures show China briefly slipped into deflation in July for the first time in over two years, with prices falling 0.3 percent, year on year. It rebounded the following month. — AFP



A man walks past a housing complex by Chinese property developer Evergrande in Guangzhou, China's southern Guangdong province.— AFP

High-rises sweep Sao Paulo, but boom casts shadows

SAO PAULO: Worried by the surge of skyscrapers fast replacing the houses and historic buildings in her Sao Paulo neighborhood, Rosanne Brancatelli put up a sign on her street: "Don't take away our sun."

Brancatelli, 60, lives in the last group of houses in the upscale Pinheiros neighborhood, in the shadows of the high-rises popping up at a dizzying pace in the Brazilian mega-city of 11 million people. "Every day, (developers) call us saying, 'Your neighbors have all sold. Aren't you going to sell? You're going to end up surrounded by tall buildings,'" she says. Sao Paulo, the biggest city in the southern hemisphere, is already famous for its towering skyline, a true urban jungle of concrete and glass.

But Brazil's economic capital has grown even taller since a controversial urban planning law relaxed limits on skyscrapers in 2014, unleashing a wave of high-rise projects—but failing, critics say, in its aim of creating lower-income housing with easy access to public transportation. Fed up with what she calls the "exacerbated verticalization" and "loss of heritage" in her neighborhood, Brancatelli joined

together with neighbors in 2021 to launch an association called Pro-Pinheiros, which fights to protect local neighborhoods and the environment.

She says she has counted no less than 80 simultaneous high-rise projects in the 20 or so blocks around her house. That is a lot even for Sao Paulo, a cosmopolitan city built on waves of immigration throughout the 20th century that grew at breakneck pace into the sprawling, traffic-snarled, bubbling metropolis it is today.

'Real-estate boom'

The skyscraper bonanza has given rise to vertigo-inducing figures: the number of new apartments on the market per year in Sao Paulo has gone from 23,000 in 2015 to 82,000 in 2021, according to real-estate association Secovi. But the 2014 reform's goal of helping low- and middle-income families afford housing near public transportation arteries has fallen flat, says noted architect and urban planner Raquel Rolnik. "We're going through the biggest real-estate boom in the city's history, an accelerated vertical transformation that has no relation with people's real needs," she said.

Even as the high-rises go up, the city is in a social crisis, with tens of thousands of homeless people, she added. City hall has admitted the 2014 urban planning framework fell short of its goals, mainly benefiting swank development projects that are unaffordable for many residents.

World Bank, IMF meetings to proceed in Morocco

WASHINGTON: The World Bank and International Monetary Fund have confirmed that their annual meetings will go ahead in Morocco as planned next month despite a deadly earthquake near the event site. The 6.8-magnitude earthquake hit Al-Haouz province south of Marrakesh on September 8, killing nearly 3,000 people and injuring thousands more.

In a joint statement released Monday, World Bank President Ajay Banga, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva and Moroccan Finance Minister Nadia Feltah Alaoui, said they had worked together to "thoroughly assess" Marrakesh's capacity to host the meetings. "Based on a careful review of the findings, the managements of the World Bank and IMF, together with the Moroccan authorities, have agreed to proceed with holding the 2023 annual meetings in Marrakech from October 9 to 15, adapting the content to the circumstances," they added. The annual gathering of world leaders hosted by the two international financial institutions was initially scheduled to be held in Marrakesh in 2021, but was postponed twice due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year's meetings will be the first since the appointment of the former Mastercard chief executive Ajay Banga to lead the World Bank on a pledge to bring more private sector funding into development and climate financing. "At this very difficult time, we believe that the annual meetings also provide an opportunity for the international community to stand by Morocco and its people," Banga, Georgieva and Alaoui said. —AFP

In an attempted fix, city hall voted in June to revise the plan, allowing even more construction. "The more supply there is, the more prices will fall. Our idea is to extend the population density zone on either side of the main transportation axes, so low- and middle-income people can live there, too," said the proposal's sponsor, city councilor Rodrigo Goulart.

Under the plan, developers who dedicate part of new projects to affordable housing win the right to build bigger buildings—though they will not be required to.

Piece of history

Not everyone is a fan. "The (2022) census shows Sao Paulo's population has stopped growing. It makes no sense to keep building when there's no more demand," said Alexandre Fontenelle-Weber, director of ZeroCem, an urban planning institute. Some Sao Paulo residents say the bulldozers are also swallowing up parts of the city's history.

Stefania Gola, 51, has run the legendary bar "O do Borogodo" since 2001. She says she fears it could be torn down. "Sao Paulo's most iconic samba venue," as she calls it, has already seen all the houses around it give way to tall buildings. And the property's owner has asked her to leave, she said. "This is the last bohemian spot in the neighborhood," she told AFP. "All the places linked to samba and Afro-Brazilian culture have disappeared. We're fighting to stay, because we're part of the city's history." — AFP



Aerial view of houses surrounded by buildings in the Pinheiros neighborhood, Sao Paulo, Brazil, taken on September 5, 2023. -- AFP

Business

Gold and mercury, not books, for Venezuela's child miners

Around a thousand children working in illegal mines

EL CALLAO, Venezuela: At 10 years old, Martin cannot read, but he is an old hand at detecting traces of the gold he and his young cousins dig for at an open-pit mine in southeastern Venezuela. In the town of El Callao, extracting gold from soil starts as a kid's game, but soon becomes a full-time job that human rights activists slam as dangerous exploitation.

Small and agile, the children's size helps them shimmy into narrow wells to hack out muddy earth, hoping it will contain gold - which has become ever more precious as Venezuela's oil production has plummeted. Doubled over, they carry heavy bags of earth under the relentless sun to murky puddles of water where they rinse it in wooden trays.

Martin explains that "whatever is gold gets stuck to the mercury," a poisonous and environmentally toxic substance they use for its ability to extract gold from ore. He is one of around a thousand children in the region involved in illegal gold mining, a booming industry in the resource-rich country that has been battered by multiple economic crises.

'A matter of survival'

Martin - not his real name - lives in El Peru, a nearby hamlet. He has never been to school. Carlos Trapani of the Cecodap children's rights NGO, told AFP that the backbreaking work and its associated dangers have become "normalized" in these communities. Despite what Trapani describes as "the worst conditions," Martin says he "would rather get gold than go to school."

"My dad says that money comes from work," he told AFP, in an interview granted with the consent of his parents. "With the money I earn here

I buy my things: shoes, clothes, sometimes some sweets."

Around a thousand children are working in illegal mines in the region, according to the private Catholic university UCAB in neighboring Guyana. "It's a matter of survival," said Eumelis Moya, coordinator of the university's office of human rights. "People have postponed their aspirations to eat, to meet their needs."

'Illegal mining bonanza'

Venezuela has been going through a serious economic crisis since 2013, which experts blame on political mismanagement, US sanctions and an overreliance on its massive oil reserves.

GDP has contracted by 80 percent, and hyperinflation has eroded purchasing power. Some seven million of the country's 30 million people have left in search of a better life elsewhere. In 2017, President Nicolas Maduro vowed to rescue the economy by focusing on the country's other mineral resources, saying it could have "the biggest gold reserve in the world."

Since then, there has been what the International Crisis Group termed an "illegal mining bonanza" across the south of the country, where criminal groups - including Colombian guerrillas - run most operations, sowing terror in local communities. "It has scared me when the shootings start and there are dead people," says Gustavo, another young miner, aged 11.

According to a 2021 report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) "much of the gold earned by small miners ultimately ends up in the hands of the military and political elite."



EL CALLAO, Venezuela: Venezuelan mining children work in a puddle of water and mud while searching for gold in an open pit mine in El Peru community, El Callao, Bolivar State, Venezuela, on September 2, 2023. — AFP

Poisoning the environment

In July, Maduro ordered the deployment of the armed forces to dislodge illegal miners, and authorities have reported the destruction of some camps. The mining - much of which takes place in the Venezuelan Amazon - has had a devastating impact on the environment and Indigenous communities. In some parts of Venezuela, including the town of El Callao, grams of gold are used as currency in local businesses, rather than the unstable

bolivar. This can prove advantageous for child miners like Gustavo, who sweeps up dirt outside a liquor store in El Peru with his brothers, hoping a drunken customer may have dropped some gold. "The other day, I got a gram (worth about \$50)," he told AFP. "I gave the money to my mom to buy food." He has been mining since the age of six, and doesn't go to school either.

Children in Venezuela, who make up a third of the population, have borne the brunt of the crisis, with many left behind

after their parents emigrate. Some public schools are barely functional due to low teacher salaries. Trapani said that when the economic crisis reached a peak in 2018, it wasn't just school children heading for the mines, but also teachers, after quitting their day jobs.

Gustavo's mother, 28, told AFP her kids did not return to school after the COVID-19 lockdown, but she hopes they will eventually. "There are always risks in the mines." — AFP

Enjoy pre-registration offer on Huawei Watch GT4!

KUWAIT: Huawei has made a splash with the launch of the latest Huawei Watch GT 4, just in time for the tech frenzy. The new watch continues in the footsteps of the past iterations of the Huawei Watch GT Series, including the record-breaking 2-week battery life. But this time, there are many pretty impressive features and two brand-new Octagonal and Pendant designs, depending on the size. The upgraded TruSeen 5.5+ heart rate monitoring and the brand new Stay Fit app that helps users control their calories and manage weight take health and fitness tracking to a whole other level.

And for users, this is the opportunity to get their hands on one of the most anticipated smartwatches of this year for an amazing price. Huawei is offering a pre-registration offer on the new smartwatch. Customers can register now for 10 percent off and get the chance to win Huawei Watch GT 4. The pre-registration offer is valid only for a limited time and only for a limited number of customers. So hurry up and pre-book the Huawei Watch GT 4 today!

Classic design with modern technology

Huawei is perhaps one of the few brands that have been pioneering smartwatches that blend the elements of traditional luxury watches with innovative and modern-looking designs. The Huawei Watch GT 4 definitely lives up to this. It will be available in two unique designs in two sizes - a larger 46mm version with an octagonal bezel design and a smaller 41mm version with a pendant design.

For those who want that polished, chiselled look of the octagonal design but desire all the smart, convenient features of the smartwatch, the Huawei Watch GT 4 in 46mm have the perfect balance. On the other hand, the smaller 41mm version is designed to look like a bracelet for an understated minimalist look - almost like jewelry statement pieces that complement cocktail looks or even casual dress-down denim outfits.

The Huawei Watch GT 4 will be available in 8 different colourways, with easy-to-swap Huawei Easyfit Straps and thousands of watch faces to choose from. Anybody who enjoys experimenting with different styles will definitely benefit from the product's vast design offerings.

Huawei Watch GT 4 offers exceptional battery life, with up to 14 days of usage on the Huawei Watch GT 4 46mm and 7 days on the Huawei Watch GT 4 41mm. This extended battery life ensures that you can rely on your watch for continuous usage without frequent recharging.

The Huawei Watch GT 4 also introduces new health monitoring features, with upgrades to the watch's sensor for even better precision. Notably, the new TruSeenTM5.5+ will provide more accurate readings and in-depth analysis of the wearer's physiological metrics, leveraging the power of AI algorithms.

It incorporates a multi-channel signal enhancement algorithm rooted in deep Huawei-exclusive AI learning, ensuring the most accurate heart rate readings possible. This would also enhance existing sports features and sleep monitoring features, allowing users to have a more comprehensive overview of their health and sleep cycle.



Credit administration training.

NBK launches 'credit administration and credit operations certification'

KUWAIT: Reflecting its unwavering commitment to investing in the human capital, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) greatly focuses on training, developing and upskilling its employees. In this context, the bank has launched the first staff training on "Credit Administration and Credit Operations Certification," in partnership with one of the globally reputable training agencies in this field.

The launch ceremony was attended by Shaikha Al-Bahar, Deputy Group CEO of National Bank of Kuwait, Mohammad Al-Kharafi, Chief Operating Officer - Head of Group Operations & Information Technology, and Emad Al-Ablani, GM - Group Human Resources.

The program stretches across three months starting from the second week of September and includes a blended approach (physical training, online training and E-Learning courses). The training involves 18 employees from different departments and overseas branches, and aims to enhance both the ana-

lytical and critical thinking skills of the delegates as well as providing them with comprehensive and in-depth company and industry research, to ensure the competency level of NBK Credit and Finance professional is constantly being upgraded. Commenting on this, Emad Al-Ablani, GM - Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait said, "NBK provides training and development opportunities aimed at building employees' technical competencies and skills, including digital and leadership capabilities, and interpersonal and professional skills. Moreover, we offer mandatory annual or bi-annual trainings to ensure all employees' acknowledgment and understanding of NBK's commitments and expectations."

"Developing future leaders has always been a key focus for NBK, as its training model enhances leadership capabilities, stemming from a concrete vision of our perception of authentic leadership," he added. "NBK is increasingly investing in talent through offering specialized programs at every level, from NBK Academy through which we select high potential fresh graduate local talent and prepare them for their career, to Middle Management Programs, and to Executive Education. Developing our talent is an ongoing and crucial aspect of our workforce management practices," he noted. "Human capital development is at the core of NBK's per-

formance and sustainable success. Our people are our success, and to that extent, our ESG strategy sets the pathway towards building an agile, diverse and inclusive workforce that fosters trust, creativity and transparency," he explained.

The training partnership with leading institutions reflects NBK's strategy to upgrade its human assets, being the cornerstone of all leading institutions, by providing the best training programs. It also translates the bank's endeavors in establishing a growing path in the career of its employees to enable them to face the challenges in the banking sector. It is worth mentioning that all the programs and courses delivered to employees are designed within an integrated training plan developed according to methodological and scientific standards to meet the needs of all relevant departments, in cooperation with the best banking experts and globally reputable training agencies.



Emad Al-Ablani

US government at rising risk of shutdown

WASHINGTON: The United States is less than two weeks away from a potential government shutdown, with the stakes increasing as lawmakers struggle to agree on a short-term spending bill. Several budget bills are currently being discussed in Washington, but none have enough votes to clear both the Democrat-majority Senate and the Republican-controlled House of Representatives.

Lawmakers have until midnight on September 30 to reach an agreement, before funding for government services is due to dry up.

Government shutdowns put at risk the finances of hundreds of thousands of workers who may be sent home without pay as parks, museums and other federal properties close. Although policymakers are generally keen to avoid this situation, some supporters aligned with former president Donald Trump have so far opposed every bill on the table.

"With less than two weeks before the

end of the fiscal year, extreme House Republicans are playing partisan games with peoples' lives," said the White House in a statement on Tuesday.

Ukraine aid uncertain

The impasse could have repercussions on the war in Ukraine, with the White House seeking for any budget bill passed by lawmakers to include \$24 billion in military and humanitarian aid for Kyiv. While such a plan is supported by Democrats and Republicans in the Senate, it is radically opposed by some members of the House.

"I will not vote to fund a single penny to the war in Ukraine, COVID anything, and the political weaponized government," said far-right Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene on X, the social media site formerly known as Twitter. This comes as US President Joe Biden is due to meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in Washington later in the week.



WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden delivers remarks on the contract negotiations between the United Auto Workers and the Big 3 auto companies, in the Roosevelt Room of the White House in Washington, DC, on September 15, 2023. — AFP

"At the very same time that President Zelensky comes to the United States to make the case for standing firm against (Russian President Vladimir Putin), Republican leadership in the House of Representatives are essentially telling him 'You're on your own'," said Senate Democratic Majority Leader Chuck Schumer.

The looming shutdown marks the second time in recent months that the world's top economy faces a financial gridlock. In June, the United States narrowly avoided a possible debt default, as US senators voted to suspend the federal debt limit after weeks of fraught negotiations. — AFP

Lifestyle

OVER 15 MILLION COPIES SOLD WORLDWIDE

Book Review

Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus

By Ghadeer Ghloum

Although John Gray's *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*, might seem stereotypical to some modern readers, it remains a powerful non-fiction (self-development) reference to explore the complexities of relationships between males and females, where the author breaks down such complexities through offering valuable advice and guidance for better understanding between the two sexes. The book includes multiple simplified pieces of advice that improve communication between males and females and builds trust and understanding, hence healthier relationships. Gray uses the metaphor of different planets (Mars and Venus) to identifying the differences between

men and women by referring to them as creatures from two different planets (men from Mars and women from Venus). This metaphor functions as the book's foundation for understanding the differing perspectives, misunderstandings and conflicts that each gender brings to the relationship. The author explains that males and females have different emotional priorities and communication styles through simple psychological terms, thus, showing how recognizing these differences can mitigate several misconceptions and conflicts in a relationship, besides decoding how men and women express their love and affection. The book is not only applicable to relationships, but also can be of valuable use for friendships, family relations and work interactions, as it helps the reader



John Gray

develop effective communication skills through the validation of others' feelings, which enhances one's consciousness and maturity while interacting with

others. Gray also provides techniques and examples of real-life incidents from his seminars, which can be very relatable to the readers' experience with the opposite sex, creating a sense of trust between the reader and the author. John Gray is an American relationship counselor, lecturer, and author. His book *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* was first published in 1992, now viewed as a modern classic. The book is one of the bestselling relationship books of all time. Over 50 million copies were sold in 50 different languages around the world. This book is highly recommended for people who seek to develop healthy and mature relationships with their partners and people around them.



Scientists rediscover small Brazil tree, 185 years on

A species of small holly tree that was last seen nearly two centuries ago and was feared extinct has been rediscovered pluckily clinging to life in an urban area in north-eastern Brazil, scientists said Tuesday. The tree, "Ilex sapiiformis," was found in the city of Igarassu, in Pernambuco state, by an expedition that spent six days combing the region in hopes of finding it, said the conservation group that backed the project, Re:wild, co-founded by Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio. Better known as the Pernambuco holly, the tree was first documented in Western science by the Scottish biologist George Gardner in 1838. His col-



This handout picture shows a species of small holly tree, better known as the Pernambuco Holly, after being rediscovered in Igarassu, Pernambuco State, Brazil. — AFP photos

lection was the only confirmed sighting—until March 22, when the new expedition found four of the trees on the bank of a small river in the city of Igarassu, just outside the state capital, Recife. "It's incredible that the Pernam-

buco holly was rediscovered in a metropolitan area that is home to nearly six million people," Re:wild's lost species program officer, Christina Biggs, said in a statement. "We don't often think of plants as

being lost to science, because they don't move like animals, but they are every bit as integral to the ecosystems they are native to." The team found the plants after following a trail of small white flowers characteristic of the species. "It seemed that the world had stopped turning its gears," said expedition member Juliana Alencar. "Nature surprises us. Finding a species that hasn't been heard of in nearly two centuries doesn't happen every day. It was an incredible moment." The expedition leader, ecologist Gustavo Martelli, said the group now hopes to start a breeding program for the tree.—AFP

Taylor Swift takes on Hollywood

She already rules music, so now it's on to Tinseltown: Taylor Swift's concert documentary is poised to dominate the fall movie season, challenging the hegemony of film studios and consecrating her business empire. Swift is taking a break from her wildly popular tour that began in March—performances will resume in November and run late into next year. But in the meantime, the 33-year-old is hitting the silver screen: "Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour" is slated for release on October 13, and has already broken the record for pre-sales in the United States in one day, with \$37 million in revenue.

The film could exceed \$100 million in its opening weekend, said Jeff Bock, an analyst for box office tracker Exhibitor Relations. "I think we could be talking about the biggest film of the fall season, which is pretty incredible," he told AFP—even if, for now, only screenings in the United States are on the books. Swift opted for an unconventional release, announcing it less than two months before its premiere and directly working with the theater giant AMC, while bypassing the traditional film studios.



A fan of US superstar Taylor Swift holds a poster with the image of a singer before her presentation at the Foro Sol in Mexico City. — AFP



A gallery worker cleans the frame of the painting "Liberty Leading the People" by Delacroix (1798-1863) at the Louvre Museum in Paris as the painting is taken for restoration work that is due to last until spring 2024. — AFP

France's iconic Liberty gets Louvre facelift

One of France's most iconic paintings, "Liberty Leading the People" by Eugene Delacroix, was taken down from the walls of the Louvre on Wednesday for a restoration expected to last until next spring. The famous topless woman, brandishing the red, white and blue flag on a revolutionary barricade was painted by Delacroix in 1830. The oil painting, which measures 3.25 by 2.60 meters, has pride of place in one of the large red rooms of the Louvre in Paris. The restoration has been prepared long in advance using X-ray analysis of the canvas. It is part of a major restoration campaign launched in 2019 for large-format paintings from the 19th century, said Sebastien Allard, director of the painting department. One priority is to remove the varnish that has oxidized on the surface, giving a yellow tint to the red, white and

blue sections of the painting, he said. The painting commemorates the July Revolution of 1830, when King Charles X was overthrown and replaced by his cousin, Louis Philippe, marking a shift towards constitutional monarchy. But the powerful image of the female figure leading a diverse group of revolutionaries has come to represent struggles for rights and freedoms far beyond its origins. The Louvre has carried out some 200 restorations since 2015, including of Leonardo da Vinci's "La Belle Ferronniere", Titian's "Jupiter and Antiope" and several by Delacroix such as "Women of Algiers" and "The Massacre at Chios". The Louvre, the largest museum in the world, contains around 6,400 paintings, including some 4,500 on permanent display.—AFP

All BTS members renew contracts with HYBE

All seven members of K-pop sensation BTS have renewed their contracts with agency HYBE, the company said Wednesday, with the group currently on "hiatus" as some of them perform South Korea's mandatory military service. Since their debut in 2013, BTS have been credited with generating billions of dollars for their country, as well as boosting the image and soft power of South Korea—now a global cultural powerhouse. The K-pop juggernaut announced a "hiatus" from group activities last year and two members are currently undertaking their some 18 months of military duty. Local reports have said the band could reunite around 2025, when all of its seven members will have completed their service in the army. "Our company has completed the Board of Directors' resolution to renew the exclusive contracts of seven BTS members," the band's agency, HYBE, said in a regulatory filing on Wednesday. "This fact was judged to be a management matter that could affect the company's financial status and investor decision-making, and was therefore disclosed," it added. Since their

debut 10 years ago, the band had previously renewed their contracts with HYBE in 2018, which would have expired in 2024. The company did not disclose details of how long the new contracts were or when they would expire, but the latest announcement indicates that all seven members of the group will likely remain with the label even after they have completed their military service. Some male K-pop stars have faced challenges in resuming their careers after fulfilling their duties, in an intensely competitive industry where artists can be easily replaced. In March, Bang Si-hyuk, chairman of HYBE and the mastermind behind BTS, said making BTS do their military service was slowing the global growth of K-pop. All able-bodied men in South Korea must serve at least 18 months in the military and, after a years-long debate about whether BTS deserved an exemption, Jin, the oldest member of the group, enlisted last year. His bandmate J-Hope started his mandatory service in April. A third member, SUGA, will begin his service on Friday.—AFP



BTS Group



Models present creations during a catwalk presentation for British fashion house Burberry's Spring/Summer 2024 collection, at London Fashion Week in London. — AFP photos



British fashion house Burberry's Spring/Summer 2024 collection.



British model Jourdan Dunn.



British fashion house Burberry's Spring/Summer 2024 collection.

ALL EYES ON GUCCI AS MILAN FASHION WEEK OPENS



Australian singer Kylie Minogue.

The top names in Italian fashion are showcasing their work at Milan Fashion Week starting Wednesday, with expectations high for the first Gucci collection under its new creative director. Almost 70 catwalk shows are scheduled over six days in the northern Italian city, with Fendi, Prada, Versace, Dolce & Gabbana, Bottega Veneta and Giorgio Armani among those showing their spring-summer 2024 collections. The hottest ticket in town is Friday's Gucci show, the first under new artistic director Sabato De Sarno.

The Italian, who previously supervised the men's and women's collections at Valentino, was named in January to replace star designer Alessandro Michele. The legendary brand, owned by French luxury group Kering, has also seen the departure of long-time chief executive Marco Bizzarri this year as it grapples with stagnating sales.

There are other new faces this week, with Tom Ford making its Milan debut under the leadership of Peter Hawkins and Simone Bellotti's first collection as design director at Bally. Off the catwalk, 76 presentations and 33 events are planned, including Moschino's 40th birthday celebrations. Moncler, known for its puffer jackets, is presenting Wednesday its new collection in collaboration with musician turned designer Pharrell Williams, who made his debut for Louis Vuitton in Paris in June.

And Diesel is repeating an initiative trialed with success last year, with a show Wednesday to which ordinary members of the public were able to obtain tickets. According to data from Italy's national fashion chamber, industry sales were up seven percent over the first six



British actor Jason Statham (right) and his partner British actress and model Rosie Huntington-Whiteley (left).

months of 2023. "We estimate annual sales to increase by 4.5 percent compared to 2022, at more than 103 billion euros (\$110 billion)," said chamber president Carlo Capasa. Exports are forecast to be up six percent over the year. Between January and May, exports to China and Japan were up more than 18 percent.

Matteo Zoppas, head of Italy's trade and investment agency, said the "Made in Italy" brand remained strong. "Compared to general growth in Italian exports of 4.8 percent in the first five months of 2023, fashion exports rose 7.4 percent in the same period—and female fashion was up 11.4 percent," he said in a statement. —AFP



British fashion house Burberry's Spring/Summer 2024 collection.



British top model Naomi Campbell.



British-Swedish singer Mabel and British-Swedish singer Neneh Cherry.



British rapper Skepta.



Nigerian actor Temi Otedola.



British fashion house Burberry's Spring/Summer 2024 collection.



British fashion house Burberry's Spring/Summer 2024 collection.



British fashion house Burberry's Spring/Summer 2024 collection.

British fashion house Burberry's Spring/Summer 2024 collection.

Lifestyle

'The Super Models', the original influencers, come to Apple TV



US model Christy Turlington arrives for the Kering Foundation's second annual Caring for Women Dinner at The Pool in New York City.

Naomi, Christy, Linda and Cindy are back, recounting how they revolutionized fashion as the first supermodels in the 1990s in a new series for Apple TV. "The Super Models", which launches on the streaming platform on Wednesday, looks back on the four women who created a template for today's uber-influencers by injecting an element of personality into the job of modeling.

Britain's Naomi Campbell, 53, Canada's Linda Evangelista, 58 and the two Americans, Cindy Crawford, 57, and Christy Turlington, 54, dominated the fashion scene during one of its most explosive periods. They worked with the top designers and photographers, though it was a music video, George Michael's "Freedom", which helped cement their status in the public consciousness as the first "supermodels".

"(The 1990s) was a very unique time historically, where everything was converging—fashion, music, you had MTV just starting -- ...right before the brink of the internet," said co-director Larissa Bills. "These women were like the original influencers. Prior to the in-



Canadian model Linda Evangelista arrives for the Kering Foundation's second annual Caring for Women Dinner at The Pool in New York City.

ternet, prior to social media, they were able to bring a whole world to the public in a way that hadn't been done before."

It is the first time they have shared their story together. "The fact that they're all in their 50s now... it was the right time. They're in a more reflective space in their lives," said Bills. All from modest backgrounds, the foursome made millions of dollars and reveled in their stardom.

But they also faced many of the horrific aspects of the fashion indus-



US model Cindy Crawford presents a creation during the Women's Fall/Winter 2022/2023 Ready-to-Wear Off-White collection show during the Paris Fashion Week in Paris.

try—addiction, eating disorders, sexual harassment. Evangelista faced perhaps the most challenging moments, with a husband accused of rape by other women (the case was finally dropped in early 2023), breast cancer and a botched cosmetic surgery which she says left her "disfigured".

Age is an under-current of their discussions, and was underlined again in recent days after the foursome featured on the cover of Vogue in the



English model Naomi Campbell attends the Victoria's Secret New York Fashion Week kickoff event celebrating Victoria's Secret The Tour '23, at the Manhattan Center in New York City. — AFP photos

United States and Britain. The distinct lack of wrinkles led many to accuse the magazine of doctoring the images.

For Bills, though, the series is a celebration. "They shouldered such a giant responsibility—to be 16 years old and the face of a brand. The industry was not regulated at the time and they really did it on their own. Well done to them," she said.—AFP

I.Coast's 'leke' sandals for the masses become fashion statement

In Abidjan, the rainy season is coming to an end, but people never put away their "leke"—cheap, water-resistant, plastic sandals, which have become a symbol of Ivorian cultural identity. "Everyone has worn leke," said Rokia Daniogo, a 33-year-old shopkeeper, as she sat on a street corner in the huge market in the bustling Treichville district, where shoppers browse hundreds of stalls. "All the children wear leke, even the babies," she added. "They go off to play ball wearing them, they go off to school with them on," said the mother-of-four, whose children have all been wearing the sandals since they could walk.

A few meters (yards) away stood Ousmane Kaba, who sells—and wears—leke "every day". "They sell well", especially to people aged 18 to 35 like him, and during the May-September rainy season, he said. Fellow shopkeeper Mounir Ben said that leke were invented after World War II in France, Ivory Coast's former colonial ruler. They have been sold in Ivorian markets "for 30 or 40 years" and not even the worldwide success of flip-flops has usurped what has become a sym-



Customers look at Leke shoes at a store.

bol of Ivorian identity. "You will find leke in Senegal and Mali, but not as much as you'll see them in Ivory Coast," said Senegalese trader, Samba Basse.

Luxury leke
There are various leke models—plain, transparent or patterned. They

are usually in one, or all, of the national colours of orange, white and green. Some bear the name of famous footballers, such as Ivorian-born French player Basile Boli or Argentinean superstar Lionel Messi. The price of the footwear is a major factor in their success: they retail at around 1,000 CFA

francs, or 1.50 euros (\$1.6).

The most expensive leke available in the market cost 2,000 francs. These have thicker soles and are less likely to slip. Ivorian fashion critic Emmanuelle Keita traces the leke back to the 1980s, when they were worn solely by people with "limited financial means". "People who played zouglou (a style of music whose early singers denounced the precariousness of student life) had leke on their feet, and zouglou remains the country's best-known musical identity," she said.

"For me, it's an essential fashion accessory for the masses, for the guy who hustles, who works hard," Keita said. But the item has now reached the level of street chic. Luxury brands have got in on the leke act, bringing with them luxury prices.

Gucci offers a pair for 400 euros, while Prada's wedge version costs 500 euros—nowadays, all social classes wear them. "When you're poor, people think that's all you've got," but "when you're rich, it makes you look cool and humble", Keita said.—AFP



Men wear Leke shoes in Treichville, Abidjan. — AFP photos



A man holds a pair of Leke shoes at a store.



A customer looks at Leke shoes at a store.



Senate John Fetterman (D-PA) walks through the Senate subway on his way to a nomination vote at the US Capitol. — AFP

US senators can wear workout clothes to work under new rules

Critics warn decorum is falling apart at the seams in the US Senate after the Democratic leadership changed the rules to end the old requirement on wearing a jacket and tie in the tradition-bound chamber. Majority Leader Chuck Schumer told the Senate Sergeant at Arms that the chamber's unwritten dress code need no longer be enforced. The relaxed attire rule applies to all of the chamber's lawmakers, but the switch was seen as a special deal for Democratic Senator John Fetterman, whose love of shorts and hoodies has turned dress-down Friday into dress-down every day.

Fetterman's dress style, or perhaps lack of style, became his signature on the campaign trail before entering the Senate this year. He also gained sympathy from many after he had to undergo treatment for clinical depression soon after taking office. Schumer said senators will be able to wear what they want, even if "I will continue to wear a suit." But the new rules, first reported by Axios, were met with mockery on the right. Republican Susan Collins joked to NBC that she planned to "wear a bikini."

"I think there is a certain dignity that we should be maintaining in the Senate, and to do away with the dress code, to me, debases the institution," she said. Senator Bill Hagerty, a Republican, told Fox Business that the move was "just another step in the movement by the Democrats to transform America, to take us to a place that is much less respectful than we historically have been."

Lawmakers dropping in to vote in gym clothes or other unusual attire had previously been able to circumvent the rules by keeping one foot in the adjacent cloakroom, according to US media. Fetterman said he may "dress like a slob," but the sartorial sniping meant "the right have been losing their mind."

Both the House and Senate have in recent years relaxed rules to allow women to wear sleeveless dresses. And in 2019, the House green-lighted religious headwear to allow for the hijab worn by Representative Ilhan Omar.—AFP

Met returns two antiquities to Yemen, retains possession for now

The Metropolitan Museum of Art on Tuesday announced it had transferred ownership of two antiquities to Yemen, but that the war-torn country had agreed to leave them in New York for safe-keeping. Both pieces are stone sculptures—a sandstone female figure and a marble mortar—and date to the third millennium BCE from areas in modern-day Yemen, the Met said in a statement. The museum said it had acquired the statue in 1998 from collector Jean-Luc Chalmin, who also donated the mortar in 1999.

"Provenance research led by Met scholars established that the works were found near Marib in 1984 and rightfully belong to the Republic of Yemen," the statement said, without any additional information. The Met and other prestigious museums in the United States and around the world have agreed in recent years to work with investigators on identifying looted or stolen art.

In New York, the Manhattan district attorney's office has been leading such a campaign since 2017. Under District Attorney Alvin Bragg, in office since 2022, more than 950 pieces worth \$165 million have been returned to 19 countries, including Cambodia, China, India, Pakistan, Egypt, Iraq, Greece, Turkey and Italy.

The Met announced in May that it would examine the provenance of "several hundred or more" objects that were possibly stolen from their country of origin, and then return them where necessary. Separately, US authorities announced in February the return of 77 antiquities to Yemen but that they would remain stored at the Smithsonian in Washington.

A similar agreement was struck between the Met and Yemen's government, the nation's ambassador to the United States said Tuesday. "Due to the current situation in Yemen, it is not the

appropriate time to return these artifacts back to our homeland," said Mohammed Al-Hadhrami. "We are pleased to have these objects remain on loan with The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, one of the world's most prominent and prestigious cultural institutions," he added. Yemen has been devastated by an eight-year civil war that has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and plunged the poorest country on the Arabian Peninsula into one of the world's worst humanitarian tragedies.—AFP



This undated handout photo provided by the Metropolitan Museum of Art shows a rectangular mortar made of veined marble. — AFP



This undated handout photo provided by the Metropolitan Museum of Art shows a standing female figure wearing a strap and a necklace, made of sandstone and quartzite.—AFP

Sports

Rule changes turning rugby into 'power contest': Jones

Use of technology 'another contentious issue in rugby'

News in Brief

Piastrì signs new F1 deal

LONDON: Australian driver Oscar Piastrì has signed a new deal to keep him at McLaren until 2026, the Formula One team announced on Wednesday. Piastrì joined the British outfit as a reserve driver last year and made his F1 debut this season at Bahrain, finishing fourth at the British Grand Prix in July. The 22-year-old further showed his potential with a second-place showing in the sprint race at the Belgian Grand Prix and will now continue alongside British racer Lando Norris at McLaren. "I am thrilled to be extending my partnership with McLaren for many years," Piastrì said. "I want to be fighting it out at the front of the grid with this team and I am excited by the vision and foundations that are already being laid to get us there." McLaren chief executive Zak Brown said: "I'm delighted to be continuing our partnership with Oscar through to the end of 2026. He's an incredible talent and an asset to the team so it's fantastic to be committing to each other in the long term." — AFP

Ohtani undergoes surgery

LOS ANGELES: Japanese baseball superstar Shohei Ohtani underwent surgery to repair his injured elbow on Tuesday, with a top sports injury surgeon stating that the Los Angeles Angels ace will be ready to hit and pitch again in 2025. Ohtani has not pitched since being diagnosed with a torn ligament in his right elbow last month, and has since been shut down for the remainder of the regular season after suffering a side strain. "Shohei had his procedure this morning at Kerlan & Jobe Orthopedic Clinic in Los Angeles," Ohtani's agent Nez Balelo said in a statement on Tuesday. "The final decision and type of procedure was made with a heavy emphasis on the big picture. Shohei wanted to make sure the direction taken gave him every opportunity to hit and pitch for many years to come." Los Angeles surgeon Neal ElAttrache, who last week operated on Aaron Rodgers after the New York Jets quarterback ruptured his Achilles tendon, performed the procedure on Tuesday. — AFP

Preston remain on top

LONDON: Preston came from behind to remain on top of the Championship with a 2-1 win over Birmingham, while Ipswich's impressive start continued in a 1-0 victory at Southampton. Birmingham threatened to end Preston's unbeaten start when Jay Stansfield opened the scoring. But a Krystian Bielicki own goal leveled before Milutin Osmajic's first goal in English football gave North End a sixth consecutive win. Preston's lead at the top of the table remains just a single point, though, after Ipswich inflicted more pain on Southampton. The Saints have now lost three consecutive games in a stuttering start on their return to the Championship. Chelsea loanee Omari Hutchinson scored the only goal on 30 minutes as Ipswich moved up to second. At the other end of the table, pressure continues to grow on Middlesbrough boss Michael Carrick after a 1-1 draw at Sheffield Wednesday left both sides joint bottom. Cardiff beat Coventry 3-2, while Bristol City were 4-1 winners over Plymouth. — AFP

Asian champions banned

TOKYO: Asian club champions Urawa Red Diamonds have been banned from Japan's domestic Emperor's Cup competition next season after their fans rioted following a game last month. A group of Urawa supporters ripped down barriers, shoved over a security guard and threatened opposition fans after a 3-0 loss away to Nagoya Grampus in the last 16 of the competition on August 2. The Japan Football Association's disciplinary committee handed down the unprecedented one-season ban on Tuesday evening. The JFA had already given 17 Urawa fans indefinite bans from domestic games in late August. Urawa's fans have landed the club in hot water before, with the J-League ordering them to play a game behind closed doors in 2014 after supporters hoisted a banner that said "Japanese only". Urawa have won the Emperor's Cup eight times, a joint record they hold alongside Keio University. — AFP

Messi misses Atlanta trip

MIAMI: Lionel Messi will skip Inter Miami's game at Atlanta United on Saturday having not travelled with the team due to fatigue, a club source has told AFP. The Major League Soccer clash at the Mercedes-Benz Stadium had been expected to attract a crowd of over 70,000. Messi had sat out Argentina's World Cup qualifier against Bolivia in La Paz but watched his team-mates from the bench. The forward had been substituted in the final minutes of the 1-0 win over Ecuador on September 7, after scoring the winner, but there have been no reports of an injury. He had played 11 games in 44 days for Miami before the international break. Asked about Messi's involvement in the game on Friday, Miami coach Gerardo 'Tata' Martino said: "He is fine... obviously, we will be very cautious going forward with Leo because we have a lot of important games in a short span, and we don't want Leo or any other player to get injured." — AFP

SAINT-GALMIER: Rugby's global governing body has turned the sport into a power contest at the World Cup, according to outspoken Australia head coach Eddie Jones. But the former England head coach said it was nonetheless "fascinating" to see where the sport was heading, with various changes to tackle rules and the use of technology having had a major impact on the game.

"You can see in this World Cup the game's evolving into these 30-second bouts of absolute power, (with) big people playing the game," said the 63-year-old ahead of his team's Pool C clash with Fiji. "So you've got these 30-second bouts of power then interspersed with a two-minute burst of soccer, football, where there's a lot of transition and you've got to be able to play really quickly." Jones said World Rugby's attempts to mitigate danger had been directly responsible for the changes he sees in the game.

"World Rugby have tried to make the game safer but they've made it more powerful by having more stoppages in the game and there's risks to that," he said. "I think this World Cup is going to be decided by who can win those power contests." And that's not the kind of rugby Jones wants to see. "I've always said you need the game to be more continuous. The average ball in play is 30 seconds, the average break in play is 70 seconds, so you encourage a power contest," he said. It is a trend that has also been noticed by Samoa's forwards coach Tom Coventry. "If you go back over the year, ball in play was more than a minute. Not anymore," he said.

Changes not improving spectacle

Use of technology is another contentious issue in rugby, with the television match official (TMO) and new 'bunker system' resulting in several on-field yellow cards being up-



ANDREZIEUX-BOUTHEON: Australian players run through a drill under the scrutiny of Australia's head coach Eddie Jones (left) during a training session at the Roger Baudras Stadium in Andrezieux Boutheon. — AFP

graded to red. "Our use of the TMO in rugby is fraught with danger," said Jones. "It's not making the game a better spectacle, it's not making it a better game for the players."

And yet, Jones noted, fans still come out in their tens of thousands to watch international matches, with more than 80,000 watching France beat Australia 41-17 in a pre-tournament warm-up match. "International rugby is so popular we could almost put anything on the field and people are still going to come because of the nationalism and patriotism of the teams, but I think we need to improve the game," said Jones. England head coach Steve Borthwick is another

to have questioned the role of the TMO. He pointed to an apparent inconsistency in how the high tackle rule has been interpreted at this World Cup.

The TMO has been used to upgrade yellow cards given to England's Tom Curry and New Zealand's Ethan de Groot, while France's Romain Taofifenua's yellow card was confirmed and South Africa's Jesse Kriel avoided any sanction at all - and all for tackles that were seemingly similarly high and dangerous. Veteran Argentina hooker Agustin Creevy is not convinced by the changes. "I respect the decisions, but you see more yellow, more red cards" he said earlier this

week, pointing out that rugby is supposed to be "a contact sport". "I am not a specialist, but I feel that we are heading towards a different rugby."

Jones said on Friday that there would be an opportunity after the World Cup to improve the game but that World Rugby bosses "don't want to know." However, a World Rugby spokesperson said Jones has been involved, alongside other coaches, in forums aimed at shaping the future of the game "that led to the law application guidelines introduced this year aimed at promoting ball in flow." "He has also served on World Rugby's Rugby Committee," added the spokesperson. — AFP

Verstappen primed to roar back at 'old school' Japan GP

SUZUKA: Runaway Formula One championship leader Max Verstappen will be determined to roar back at Sunday's Japanese Grand Prix after his record streak of 10 straight wins ended in Singapore. The Dutchman finished fifth under the Marina Bay lights after starting 11th on the grid, meaning he will not be able to clinch his third straight world title at Suzuka. But Verstappen, who has won 12 of the 15 races so far this season, can move to the cusp of retaining his crown while his Red Bull team can seal the constructors' championship.

The 25-year-old told reporters after struggling with Singapore's street circuit, where overtaking is all but impossible, that "this track is so different to Suzuka and it doesn't relate". "We have learned a bit from today and have a few ideas with what we got wrong," he said after Carlos Sainz triumphed for Ferrari to ruin Red Bull's perfect record this season. "I cannot go into details but I feel good about Suzuka." Verstappen certainly enjoyed his last visit to Japan, beating Ferrari's Charles Leclerc to clinch last season's championship there.

The Dutchman won a chaotic race shortened by rain and then saw nearest rival Leclerc relegated to third by a five-second penalty, handing Verstappen the title. Verstappen was only informed he had clinched the championship midway through the post-race TV interview, and even the driver himself was not sure if he had secured the title. With Verstappen a whopping 151 points clear of Red Bull teammate and nearest challenger Sergio Perez in the current campaign, he could be crowned champion again as early as next month's Qatar Grand Prix.

'Old-school' circuit

This year's race in Japan has been shifted two weeks earlier in the Formula One calendar and the forecast is for dry conditions. That should give Verstappen the chance to cut loose on Suzuka's sweeping bends and



SINGAPORE: Haas F1 Team's Danish driver Kevin Magnussen (bottom) drives in front of Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen during the Singapore Formula One Grand Prix night race at the Marina Bay Street Circuit in Singapore. — AFP

dramatic elevation changes. He could barely contain his excitement last year as the race returned after a three-year absence because of the coronavirus pandemic. "Nothing feels like here in Suzuka because of just the old-school nature - the gravel and the grass," he said. "You know you have to really build up your confidence and really build up to the limit."

Perez finished eighth in Singapore in a rare weekend to forget for Red Bull, whose hopes of sweeping every race in 2023 came to an end. The last time neither Verstappen nor Perez stood on the top step of the podium was in Brazil in November 2022. Instead it was Ferrari's Sainz who took the honors in Singapore, ahead of McLaren's Lando Norris and

Dupont and full-back Thomas Ramos, and the returns from injury of barn-storming centre Jonathan Danty and Cyril Baille, arguably the world's best loosehead prop on his day. Galthie insisted that rotation among the squad was primordial, even quoting Darwin to justify his selection. "Our method is based on adaptability," the coach mused. "It's a bit like Darwin's theory: it's not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent. It is the one that is most adaptable to change."

Be that as it may, France will anyway be massive favorites going into the match against Namibia, the African side having already lost 52-8 to Italy and 71-3 to the All Blacks in Pool A. France wrap up their group stage with a game against Italy in Lyon on October 6, bidding for top spot in the group. Centre Danco Burger replaced the injured Le Roux Malan in one of nine changes to the Namibia side. Malan suffered a fracture and dislocation to his right ankle in last Friday's heavy loss to New Zealand.

24 straight WCup losses

Captain Johan Deysel, at outside centre, and wing Gerswin Mouton are among three backs to keep their spots while the other, Cliven Loubser,

Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton. Hamilton's teammate George Russell was pushing hard for the victory until he crashed on the final lap.

After the drama and unpredictability of Singapore, the Red Bulls will start as heavy favorites to restore normal order on Suzuka's high-speed circuit. Red Bull lead nearest challengers Mercedes by 308 points in the constructors' championship and will clinch the title this weekend with a one-two finish with the fastest lap. Like with Verstappen, it is only a matter of time. "I'm expecting Red Bull to be dominant again for the next few weekends," conceded Norris. "We're getting there, we're making progress and that's the best thing that we can do at this time." — AFP



AIX-EN-PROVENCE: France's head coach Fabien Galthie holds rugby balls during a training session at the Stade Georges Carcassonne in Aix-en-Provence. — AFP

switches from full-back to fly-half. Namibia, in their seventh World Cup, have lost all 24 previous matches. The closest they have come to victory was a one-point defeat by Georgia in 2015. After facing Les Bleus they end their Pool A campaign against Uruguay on September 27 and they have made it no secret that that final game was "their" World Cup. — AFP

Sports

City overcome early scare

Felix hits double as 'best' Barca thrash Antwer

PARIS: Manchester City overcame an early scare to get their Champions League defense off to a solid start on Tuesday but nine-man Celtic endured a rough night in Rotterdam. Barcelona cruised past Antwerp and Kylian Mbappe helped Paris-Saint Germain to an opening win on a breathless beginning to the group stage of Europe's top club competition. Newcastle returned to the high table of European football for the first time in two decades with a battling goalless draw against AC Milan at the San Siro and Lazio grabbed an equalizer deep in injury time to hold Atletico Madrid.

In Manchester, Pep Guardiola's City were stunned when Red Star's Osman Bukari opened the scoring in first half stoppage time. But Julian Alvarez continued his sparkling early season form by leveling just two minutes after the break. The Argentine then got some help from Red Star goalkeeper Omri Glazer as he flapped at Alvarez's free-kick to allow the ball to fly into the far corner. Rodri rounded off a 3-1 win with a composed finish 17 minutes from time. "If we scored two goals early in the beginning it would've been completely different," said Guardiola, who was frustrated at his side's finishing. "Having 22 (first-half) shots on goal means you are playing really good. It has to be the responsibility of the people in front to score the goals."

City are next away to RB Leipzig, who share top place in Group E after a 3-1 win at Swiss champions Young Boys. Mohamed Simakan earned the distinction of scoring the first goal of the group stages with the 2023/24 competition only three minutes old. The French-born defender's header put Leipzig into a lightning lead in Bern but Elia levelled for the Swiss hosts before Xaver Schlager and Benjamin Sesko wrapped up the win for the Austrian visitors.

In Catalonia Joao Felix struck twice as Barcelona flexed their muscles with a crushing 5-0 win over Royal Antwerp to show their determination to be considered among Europe's elite once again. After consecutive humiliating group stage eliminations Barcelona are desperate to go deep in this season's competition, last winning it eight years ago.

Felix shone for the Spanish champions on a stroll on a warm night in the Catalan capital, helped on their way by an own goal, with Robert Lewandowski and Gavi also scoring. That lifted them top of Group H from Porto, 3-1 winners over Shakhtar Donetsk. Barca's victory followed a 5-0 thrashing of Real Betis on Saturday, leading coach Xavi Hernandez to say: "I



ROTTERDAM: Feyenoord's Calvin Stengs (center) celebrates after scoring during the UEFA Champions League Group E football match between Feyenoord and Celtic FC at the Feyenoord Stadium in Rotterdam, on September 19, 2023. — AFP photos



BARCELONA: Barcelona's French defender #23 Jules Kounde (top) fights for the ball with Antwerp's Dutch forward #18 Vincent Janssen during the UEFA Champions League 1st round day 1 Group H football match between FC Barcelona and Royal Antwerp FC on September 19, 2023.

think these last two games are the best level we have shown with me as coach - it's the path to follow."

'Almost perfect'

At Parc des Princes, PSG may have lost Neymar and Lionel Messi over the summer but they held on to Mbappe who set them up for a 2-0 victory over Borussia Dortmund. The French champions went ahead four minutes after the break when Mbappe scored a spot-kick awarded for a Niklas Sulee handball. Achraf Hakimi added a memorable second, and PSG could have won the Group F encounter by a far more handsome margin in the end.

"It was an almost perfect evening," purred new

coach Luis Enrique. PSG's next date is at Newcastle, whose manager Eddie Howe was proud of his side's dogged return to the competition against seven-time European kings AC Milan. Howe was the happier of the two managers after taking a point from the clash at the San Siro as his team were mostly on the back foot against last season's losing semi-finalists. "Definitely pride in result and the performance and the mentality shown," Howe told reporters.

Over in Rotterdam a "bitterly disappointed" Celtic manager Brendan Rodgers was left to rue the "inexperience" of two players sent off in their 2-0 loss to Feyenoord but said the Scottish champions had proved they could be competitive. Midway through

the second half defender Gustaf Lagerbielke was shown a second yellow card after pulling back Brazilian striker Igor Paixao in the box. He was barely down the tunnel when substitute Odin Thiago Holm also saw red for a studs up late challenge.

"Unfortunately for us, we got the two players sent off and it's a difficult level 11 v 11, but 11 v nine is really difficult," said Rodgers who was heartened by the "spirit and mentality" of the nine men left on the pitch. On Wednesday, record 14-time winners Real Madrid host German debutants Union Berlin, and Bayern Munich with Harry Kane welcome Manchester United who are seeking solace in Europe after a troubling start to the Premier League season. — AFP

Most Spain women footballers agree to play after a deal

BARCELONA: Most of Spain's women's national team have agreed to stay with the squad, the government said Wednesday, following a strike by the World Cup winners sparked by the disgraced former president of the football federation forcibly kissing a player. The announcement followed hours of overnight negotiations over player demands for further changes at the Spanish football federation (RFEF) after ex-president Luis Rubiales resigned.

"We have arrived at a series of agreements which will be drawn up and signed tomorrow" between the RFEF and the Spanish government, Victor Francos, secretary of state for sports, told reporters, adding that two of the 23 called-up players did not wish to continue with the squad. The departing duo, Mapi Leon and Patri Guijarro, were among 15 players who went on strike before the World Cup in protest at the methods of then national coach Jorge Vilda and other issues with the federation. Neither played a part in the triumphant campaign in Australia and New Zealand and upon leaving the team camp on Wednesday said they were "not in the right state" to play.

A total of 19 players from new coach Montse Tome's squad had been on strike over changes they want made to the RFEF, sparking concerns they would not play in upcoming Nations League games, jeopardizing the team's chance of playing in the 2024 Olympics. In the hours before the deal was announced, internationals selected by Tome gathered for training despite declaring themselves unavailable, some expressing fear of facing sanctions if they refused to play. "We have been forced to come. But if they want to sanction us, then we have to come," Leon said on her way to the camp.

The striking players issued a statement Monday in which they had reiterated their wish not to be called up, while acknowledging the potential for legal consequences may force them to attend. They had faced possible fines of between 3,000 and 30,000 euros (\$3,200 and \$32,100), while they could also have lost their licences to play for up to



OLIVA: Spain's midfielder Patri Guijarro (left) and Spain's defender Mapi Leon talk to the press after announcing they are leaving the national selection, in front of their hotel in Oliva near Valencia, on September 20, 2023 ahead of the UEFA Nations League football matches against Sweden and Switzerland. — AFP

five years. Secretary of state for sport Francos, who is also the president of Spain's High Council for Sports (CSD), said Wednesday those who decided not to play would not face sanctions.

"It's a reality that the situation for me and for Patri is different to the rest of our team-mates. We already knew this was not the right way to return, and we are not in the right state," Barcelona defender Leon told reporters. "We are content because the truth is that changes are being made, and in this we are giving full support to our team-mates." Guijarro said: "They are working on the changes and of course we are with our team-mates, but it's true that it's a different situation. "It's quite difficult and quite hard, and ... mentally we are not right to be here."

Outrage

The scandal which rocked Spanish football erupted just moments after Spain won the World Cup on August 20, when then president Rubiales

forcibly kissed midfielder Jenni Hermoso on the lips as the team received the trophy. He eventually resigned three weeks after the incident and controversial coach Vilda was sacked, but many players demanded more wide-ranging improvements and structural changes.

Hermoso was not named in the squad in order to "protect" her, the new coach Tome, Vilda's former assistant, said Monday. That decision too proved controversial. "Protect me from what? And from whom?" Hermoso posted on X on Tuesday. She accused the RFEF of seeking to "intimidate and threaten" the world champions by calling them up against their will for the upcoming matches. Spain face Sweden on September 22 and Switzerland on September 26 in the Nations League. The eventual finalists of the Nations League will qualify for the 2024 Olympic Games. Spain plan to fly to Sweden on Thursday morning before their match in Gothenburg on Friday. — AFP

Morocco to begin WCup qualifying against Eritrea

JOHANNESBURG: World Cup history makers Morocco will host minnows Eritrea - 181 places lower in the FIFA rankings - when they start their quest for a place at the 2026 tournament. The first two of 10 matchdays in Africa are scheduled for November 13-21 and, after Eritrea, the first semi-finalists from Africa face a potentially tricky visit to improving Tanzania. Last December in Qatar, Morocco became only the third country outside of Europe and South America to reach the World Cup semi-finals, emulating the United States and South Korea.

They shocked Belgium and held Croatia in the group stage, then eliminated Spain and Portugal in knockout matches before falling to France. In 16 pre-Qatar World Cup matches spanning five tournaments, the north Africans had won only two and suffered nine defeats. Morocco were given little chance of surviving the first round in Qatar, especially after a late change of coaches with local Walid Regragui succeeding Bosnian Vahid Halilhodzic.

But Yassine Bounou, Achraf Hakimi, Sofyan Amrabat, Hakim Ziyech and Youssef en-Nesyri inspired their teammates to defy the odds. Apart from Eritrea and Tanzania, Morocco will face Zambia, Congo Brazzaville and Niger in Group E, with the team topping the final standings qualifying for the finals. Morocco should justify being the top seeds in the mini-league, which stretches from November to October 2025, with Patson Daka-inspired Zambia and Tanzania probably the biggest threats.

Egypt, reigning African champions Senegal, Nigeria, Cameroon, the Ivory Coast, Algeria, Tunisia and Mali are the other countries seeded to top final tables and qualify automatically. Like Morocco, they will kick off their campaigns at home to the lowest ranked side in the group, then visit the team ranked fourth. Seeding was based on the FIFA rankings, and Mali are the only top seeds not to have featured at a World Cup. Cameroon lead the way with eight appearances and have been drawn with Cape Verde, Angola, Libya, Eswatini and Mauritius in Group D. Nigeria, six-time qualifiers but shock absentees from Qatar after losing a play-off against arch rivals Ghana, could find South Africa and Zimbabwe troublesome Group C rivals. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381

Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I, **Yannabathula Abhinash** holder of Indian Passport No P5748086 having permanent address Telangana, India - 500068 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: Abhinash (given name) and Yannabathula (surname) (#4231) 21/9/2023

I, **Geja** (current name in passport) Gurmej Singh holder of Indian Passport No. P7110431 having permanent address Punjab State, India 144620

residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Gurmej and Singh (surname) (#4230) 20/9/2023

I'm **Balu Krishnamumari**, holder of Indian Passport No. T8986396, resident of Kakarlavaripalli, Chakrmpeta, 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

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Zain accompanies Team Kuwait to Asian Games



Al Khashti and Hayat with Zain's team and Kuwait's champions at the airport.

KUWAIT: Zain, the proud Official Partner of Team Kuwait at the upcoming 19th Asian Games in collaboration with the Kuwait Olympic Committee, announced that it is accompanying the team's athletes and administrators to China. The move came in support of Kuwait's players who will compete for gold at Hangzhou. At Kuwait International Airport, Minister of Commerce and Industry & Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Aiban visited the team before their departure.

In attendance were Public Authority for Sport GM Yousef Al Baidan, Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer of Zain Kuwait Waleed Al Khashti, Head of Team Kuwait and Kuwait Olympic Committee Board Member Fatima Hayat, Zain's team

- Company's team will be at Hangzhou to support Kuwaiti athletes
- Company proud to partner with Kuwait Olympic Committee

who's accompanying the delegation, along with the athletes and administrators of Team Kuwait. Zain is most proud to be at the national team's side in China, reflecting a fruitful partnership between the country's private and public sectors to support local athletes in international arenas to inspire them to raise Kuwait's flag high in the biggest competitions and bring gold back home.

Under this partnership, Zain supports 141 players representing Kuwait in 25 sports: golf, football,

tennis, squash, shooting, archery, cycling, taekwondo, karate, boxing, kurash, judo, fencing, jujitsu, wrestling, rowing, diving, triathlon, handball, swimming, athletics, sport climbing, rhythmic gymnastics, chess, and equestrian. The Asian Games is a multi-sport event that brings together athletes from across the continent of Asia. It is organized every four years by the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) under the supervision of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). This year, the 19th Asian Games is

set to feature 483 games in 40 different disciplines.

Zain is proud to support Team Kuwait in this major sporting event in collaboration with the Kuwait Olympic Committee. The company is always keen on shouldering sports programs and local athletes to elevate the Kuwaiti sports scene. The company strongly believes in the role played by the sports sector in progressing national economy. As a leading private sector company in Kuwait, Zain is constantly looking to identify and support excellence across the sports sector. The company will continue to put Kuwaiti sports and athletes at the forefront of its priorities and pledges to continue motivating them to achieve all the recognition and support they deserve.

Kurash, wallop and bang: Five unusual Asian Games sports

HANGZHOU: The Asian Games is home to some sports that are a little more quirky than the Olympic staples of athletics, swimming and cycling. AFP Sports highlights five unusual sports to be contested when the Asian Games, an Olympic-sized extravaganza, begins in Hangzhou on Saturday:

Sepak Takraw

Wildly popular in Southeast Asia, this gravity-defying "foot volleyball" has become an Asian Games smash-hit since it was first introduced in 1990 and is largely dominated by Thailand. It is an explosive sport in which players acrobatically contort their bodies to launch a lightweight rattan ball over a net using their feet, head or chest with the sort of skill that would make Lionel Messi envious.

Kurash

An ancient form of wrestling from Uzbekistan which historians say dates back thousands of years, kurash was a training technique for soldiers of 14th-century conqueror Timur, whose empire stretched from Persia to central Asia. Like sumo - though less roly-poly in nature - kurash focuses on strength and stamina. Wrestlers hold their opponents by their judo-like robes with bouts won by throwing or tripping an opponent onto their back.

Kabaddi

A tag-meets-rugby contact team sport rooted in Indian mythology and said to date back 5,000 years, kabaddi has proven to be a fan favorite at the Asian Games. The game requires yoga-like breath control as two

seven-player teams send a raider into enemy territory to tag an opponent and return to safety - all while chanting "kabaddi, kabaddi" to prove they're not using more than one puff. India will be desperate to get their hands on the title again having won every men's gold since it became an Asian Games sport in 1990 until Iran stunned them at the 2018 Asiad in Jakarta.

Bridge

The card game of bidding, trumps and tricks is more associated with rainy afternoons in community halls but made a surprising Asian Games debut at Jakarta 2018. The ages of competitors at Jakarta ranged from 11 to 81 with the Indonesian tobacco and banking multi-billionaire Michael Bambang Hartono, then a sprightly 78, taking a bronze in the supermixed team event. His medal was a long time in the making - he took up the game at the age of six, a year after the end of the Second World War.

Xiangqi

"Chinese chess" has been hugely popular for hundreds of years across Asia and is often seen played in Chinatown neighborhoods across the world. Also called elephant chess, it will make its second Asian Games appearance after its debut at Guangzhou 2010, where China won both golds. It shares similarities with chess because it is a battle between two armies of pieces. But in Xiangqi pieces move on the lines of a 10x9 grid, instead of on the squares of an 8x8 board. The object is much the same as chess, however, to checkmate (capture) the enemy general (king). — AFP

Kuwaiti shooter wins Players Committee membership

KUWAIT: The president of the Kuwait Shooting Federation and a member of the Executive Office of the International Federation of the Game, Duajj Al-Otaibi, announced that the Kuwaiti shooter Abdullah Al-Turqi Al-Rashidi won the membership of the International Shooting Federation in the Clay Target Category.

Al-Otaibi said in a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Wednesday that the election for this important position came after the meetings of the International Federation, which also witnessed the election of Italian Daniel De Spigno and American Amber English to the mem-



Duajj Al-Otaibi



Abdullah Al-Turqi Al-Rashidi

bership committee in addition to the election of members of the committees for pistol and rifle shooters.

He stressed that this victory is considered an important sporting achievement for Kuwaiti shooting sports and in recognition of its important role

internationally. Al-Turqi confirmed in a similar statement that he and the members of the committee seek to support shooters. He expressed his joy in representing Kuwait in this committee and lauded the support of the Kuwait Federation. — KUNA

Ronaldo lifts Al Nassr to a historic Asia Cup win

TEHRAN: Cristiano Ronaldo enjoyed a winning debut in the Asian Champions League as he helped Al Nassr to a 2-0 victory against 10-man Persepolis in Iran on Tuesday night. The five-time Ballon d'Or winner, who has five UEFA Champions League titles to his name, captained the Saudi Arabian side to an opening three points in Group E. The match at the Azadi Stadium in Tehran was played without fans after the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) upheld a one-game ban for Persepolis supporters dating back to 2021. That clearly helped Nassr, who grabbed both goals in the second half against the two-time runners-up, through a Danial Esmailifar own goal and a fine strike by defender Mohammed Qassem.

It marked the first time a Saudi club played in Iran since 2016, after the AFC announced a "ground-breaking agreement" earlier this month between the two countries' federations. Iran and Saudi Arabia severed diplomatic ties seven years ago, meaning Asian Champions League matches had been since played at neutral grounds. Ronaldo, 38, was heavily involved throughout, twice going close in the first half. His initial chance - a powerful, close-range header - was sent straight at Persepolis goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand which left Ronaldo beating the post in frustration.

Nassr's hopes grew considerably at the beginning of the second half, when Persepolis midfielder Milad Sarlak was given a second yellow card, this time for appearing to stamp on Ronaldo's boot. Replays showed it was unintentional, the contact minimal. Ronaldo played a key role in Nassr's opener just after the hour, the Portuguese instigating the move that led to Abdulrahman Ghareeb's



TEHRAN: Nassr's Portuguese forward #07 Cristiano Ronaldo and Persepolis' Iranian defender #08 Morteza Pouraliganji vie for the ball during the AFC Champions League Group E football match between Persepolis FC and Al-Nassr FC on September 19, 2023. — AFP

blocked shot cannoning off Persepolis full-back Esmailifar and nestling in the net. Ten minutes later, Nassr left-back Mohammed Qassem broke down the left and thumped his shot high past Beiranvand to double the visitors' advantage and secure the points.

In the group's other match, Iran's Istiklol were held to a goalless draw in Dushanbe by Qatari heavyweights Al Duhail. In Group A, 2003 winners Al Ain secured an impressive 3-0 victory at Pakhtakor in Tashkent, while Turkmenistan side Ahal defeated Saudi opponents Al Fayha 1-0 at home to record only a second win in

the competition. In the East Asian side of the draw, South Korea's Incheon United opened their Group G account with a 4-2 win over J.League champions Yokohama F Marinos in Japan. As a result, Incheon sit on three points alongside Chinese Super League side Shandong Taishan, who were made to work for their 3-1 victory in Manila over Kaya-FC Iloilo of the Philippines. In Group I, South Korean champions, and 2020 Asian Champions League winners, Ulsan Hyundai won at home over Thailand's BG Pathum United 3-1, while Japan's Kawasaki Frontale saw off hosts Johor Darul Ta'zim 1-0 in Malaysia. — AFP

Unusual events at the 19th Asian Games

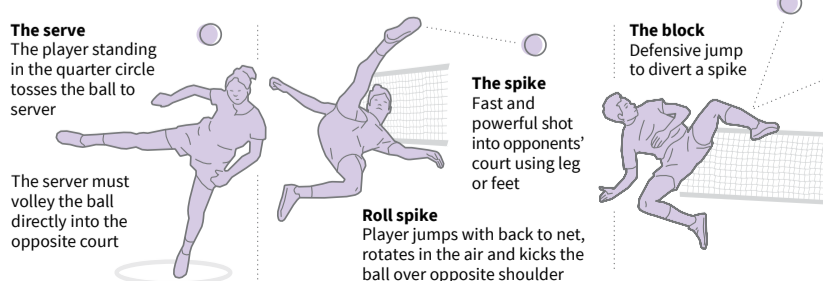
SEPAK TAKRAW

The sport originated over 500 years ago from rural Southeast Asia

- OBJECTIVE**
- ▶ Players volley the ball over a net to the opponent's side without using hands or arms
 - ▶ Each side is allowed 3 contacts with the ball to get it over the net

BASIC MOVES

Players can use the feet, legs, shoulders and head to keep the ball in play



Source: TheSportsBook/SepakTakraw.org