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Crown Prince concludes China visit

Sheikh Mishal, Xi agree to boost relations • Ministers hail productive visit



HANGZHOU/KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah arrived in Kuwait Sunday after attending the opening ceremony of the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou and holding official talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping. HH the Crown Prince had a constructive and productive visit to Hangzhou, during which Kuwait and China signed seven memoranda of understanding over wide-ranging vital projects that would have positive impacts on development in Kuwait.

His Highness the Crown Prince's visit was at the invitation of President Xi to attend the opening ceremony of the 19th Asian Games, as well as holding summit talks over a host of mutual interest issues. This was the second time HH the Crown Prince met Xi since December in Saudi Arabia. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investments Dr Saad Al-Barrak described the visit as "very important" amidst the Kuwaiti government's quest to update its 2035 vision to be from 2024-40.

On HH the Crown Prince's summit talks with Xi, Barrak said "we should make very good use of this important meeting to develop the foundation of Kuwait vision 2035 to be 2024-40". The vision, he explained, would "be an extension of the same spirit in order to overcome the political and economic developments that took place in the past three years, like the coronavirus pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine".

Barrak signed an MoU on the completion of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port. "Around 50 percent of the first phase of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port is completed and we seek to final-

ize the first phase in order to launch and operate the port as swiftly as possible," he said. "China excels in construction and other domains like management and operation of the port, so we have signed the MoU and will continue the talks on execution," he said.

Barrak also spoke of the "wonderful history" Kuwait and China shared, which began when Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah visited China when he was finance minister in 1965, to the establishment of relations in 1971, making Kuwait the first Gulf country to have relations with the People's Republic.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah said the MoUs would have positive impacts on development in Kuwait. "We witnessed the signing of seven MoUs dealing with huge construction projects that include Chinese companies in Kuwait, among them are housing cities and renewable energy," Sheikh Salem said. He elaborated that MoUs also dealt with water treatment. The projects, he added, "will have huge impact on the State of Kuwait, and I believe they are projects that will indeed have direct and positive impact on our people".

Speaking about the meeting between HH the Crown Prince and President Xi, Sheikh Salem said the talks were very "positive and productive", describing the atmosphere of the summit talks as "very amicable". He said the two leaders discussed the history of bilateral relations and how to develop them further. "President Xi talked a lot about the history of China-Kuwait relations and highly appreciated the fact

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NEWS IN BRIEF

MoI to test emergency sirens

KUWAIT: The interior ministry announced the General Department of Civil Defense will test emergency sirens on Monday at 10:00 am in all six governorates. The tests aim to inspect the sirens' efficiency and make citizens and residents aware of various indications of the sirens' tones, the ministry said. It added the tests will also remind citizens and residents of the safety precautions that must be taken in case of emergency or danger. — KUNA

PAM verifying job titles

KUWAIT: The Public Authority of Manpower is verifying educational qualifications of expat workers and linking them to their job titles on work permits. This move aims to prevent the manipulation of job titles and ensure that specialized positions, particularly in the financial and administrative sectors, correspond directly to academic certificates held by employees. Approximately 17,000 work permits of expatriates in the private sector were revoked during the past year. Through the Sahel app, companies can align job titles with employees' qualifications.

KD 4m collected in fines, bills

KUWAIT: In the span of two months, nearly KD 4.077 million has been collected at air and land ports from GCC nationals and expats departing the country. This total comprises over KD 1 million in traffic fines and approximately KD 2.936 million in electricity and water bills (from Sept 1 to 23). Additionally, around 5,042 bill transactions worth KD 300,422 were collected in just a month. There were 11,230 violations involving vehicles owned by GCC citizens, resulting in KD 841,015 in collections. These figures pertain exclusively to traffic violations and utility bills and do not encompass bills from the communications or justice ministries.

KISR exposes 'flawed' Iraqi court ruling

KUWAIT: A Kuwait-based research center on Sunday said that an Iraqi court ruling that invalidated an agreement with Kuwait over regulating navigation in the Khor Abdullah waterway is riddled with flaws, citing the "historical fallacies" contained in it. Upon

closer inspection, the Iraqi federal supreme court ruling, which rendered the agreement as "unconstitutional" earlier this month, comes across as highly paradoxical, since it had previously ratified the deal in 2014 after Iraqi lawmakers unanimously voted in favor of the agreement a year earlier.

In its thorough analysis of the Iraqi court ruling, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), citing Kuwait University's Faculty of Law professor Dr Ali Al-Rashidi, slammed the mere notion that the deal proved detrimental to Baghdad, saying the ruling does

not contravene constitutional procedures in any way since it was made with legal validity. Shining light on the paradoxical nature of the ruling, it said that Iraq's parliament, being the country's legislative power, not only supported the agreement, but an Iraqi court even rejected an appeal by a lawmaker to invalidate the agreement in a testament to how "contradictory" the latest court ruling appears to be.

Citing the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, an international agreement that regulates treaties among sovereign states, the KISR

analysis underlined that since Iraqi lawmakers had ratified the agreement, it was a clear "gesture of consent", since the same Iraqi court had also given its approval of the "constitutionality" of the ruling. Emphasizing the principles of the aforementioned convention, all parties involved in a treaty are obligated to "implement the agreement in earnest", while any attempt by a party involved in a treaty to question its validity after it had been ratified is inappropriate, according to the analysis.

Continued on Page 6

Zionists kill 2 Palestinians in West Bank

TULKAREM: Zionist forces shot dead two Palestinians in a pre-dawn raid Sunday in the West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said. Violence has surged since early last year, particularly in the West Bank, where eight Palestinians have now been killed in Zionist incursions since Tuesday. "Two Palestinians were killed by live (Zionist) bullets to the head," the ministry said.

The Palestinian health ministry identified the two killed as Osaid Abu Ali, 21, and Abd al-Rahman Abu Daghsh, 32. Palestinian group Hamas said that "martyr Osaid Abu Ali" was one of its fighters. Ibrahim Al-Nimer, a representative of the Palestinian Prisoners' Club advocacy group in the

camp, told AFP that "the army entered the camp after 2:00 am ... and demolished streets and some houses".

An AFP journalist who toured the Nur Shams camp hours after the raid saw that a roof of a building and its walls had fully caved in, as residents inspected the damage. Several military vehicles had entered the camp during the night, resident Omar Sabhan told AFP. "The situation was very scary. Snipers were stationed ... and they shot anything that moved," he said. He added that residents of the camp backed Palestinian "resistance" groups. "Everyone wants this resistance. This is a legitimate right," he said.

Later on Sunday, crowds of mourners attended the funeral of the two Palestinians. Zionist forces had raided the same camp on Sept 5, and a member of the Islamic Jihad militant group had been shot dead at the time. Recent months have seen a surge in military raids and a rise in Zionist settler attacks against Palestinians in the West Bank. — AFP



TULKAREM: Mourners carry the bodies of Palestinians killed in a Zionist raid — Osaid Abu Ali (right) and Abd al-Rahman Abu Daghsh — during their funeral in the Nur Shams refugee camp in the occupied West Bank on Sept 24, 2023. — AFP

Major asteroid sample brought to Earth in first

DUGWAY, Utah: A seven-year space voyage came to its climactic end Sunday when a NASA capsule landed in the desert in the US state of Utah, carrying to Earth the largest asteroid samples ever collected. Scientists have high hopes for the sample, saying it will provide a better understanding of the formation of our solar system and how Earth became habitable. "Touchdown of the Osiris-Rex sample return capsule!" a commentator said on NA-

SA's live video webcast of the landing. It completed a 6.21 billion-km journey. It marked "the US's first sample return mission of its kind and will open a time capsule to the beginnings of our solar system," the US space agency said in a post on X, the former Twitter. The Osiris-Rex probe's final, fiery descent through Earth's atmosphere was perilous, but NASA managed to engineer a soft landing at 8:52 am local (1452 GMT), in the military's Utah Test and Training Range.

Four years after its 2016 launch, the probe had landed on the asteroid Bennu and collected roughly 250 gm of dust from its rocky surface. Even that small amount, NASA says, should "help us better understand the types of asteroids that could threaten Earth" and cast light "on the earliest history of our solar system," NASA Administrator Bill Nelson said. — AFP



DUGWAY, Utah: Video grab shows NASA safety team members preparing the Osiris-Rex asteroid sample return craft sitting in the Utah desert on Sept 24, 2023. — AFP



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German ambassador visits Kuwait Times on anniversary



German Ambassador to Kuwait plays basketball at Kuwait Times' warehouse.



Kuwait Times' team discussing topics with German Ambassador. - Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



German Ambassador holds the special edition of Kuwait Times.



(Left to right) Zena Nseir, Press and Public Relations Officer at German Embassy, German Ambassador Hans-Christian Reinnitz, Jana Alnaqeeb, Kuwait Times Public Relations and CSR Manager, Mustafa Qamhiya, Managing Editor and Faten Omar, Deputy Managing Editor.



German Ambassador Hans-Christian Reinnitz with Jana Alnaqeeb in the archive room at Kuwait Times.

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: German Ambassador to Kuwait Hans-Christian Freiherr von Reinnitz paid a visit to Kuwait Times and Kuwait News on Sunday. He was accompanied by Press and Public Relations Officer Zena Nseir. During the visit, the German ambassador engaged in a productive discussion with Managing Editor Mustafa Qamhiya on various aspects of the Kuwaiti-German partnership, focusing on key areas of mutual interest.

Public Relations and CSR Manager Jana Alnaqeeb guided the German ambassador through various departments within Kuwait Times and Kuwait News, offering him a comprehensive tour that includ-

ed stops in the newsroom, printing press, studio and the creative coworking space of the newspaper. Throughout the tour, Alnaqeeb provided the ambassador with valuable insights into the illustrious history of Kuwait Times, the first English-language daily newspaper in Kuwait and the Arabian Gulf.

Reinnitz discussed economic ties between the two countries and the Schengen visa, which plays a vital role in facilitating travel and business exchanges between citizens of both countries. Concluding his visit, the ambassador conveyed his heartfelt congratulations to Kuwait Times on its 62nd anniversary, a milestone that was celebrated on Sept 24, 2023.



The ambassador photographs a vintage German Heidelberg GTO printing machine.



German Ambassador to Kuwait Hans-Christian Freiherr von Reinnitz with Zena Nseir, Press and Public Relations Officer.

Congratulatory messages pour in



German Ambassador to Kuwait Hans-Christian Freiherr von Reinnitz

On the occasion of the 62nd anniversary of Kuwait's leading English language newspaper Kuwait Times I extend my heartfelt congratulations to editors and staff. Your excellent work stands out among the leading papers in the region, providing readers from all walks of life with a wealth of information, reports and opinions. Professional journalism - being challenged by the ever-accelerating pace of digital and social media - has a home in Kuwait: the Kuwait Times!

I wish the Kuwait Times team a further expanding readership, fuelled by the zeal to stick to objectivity and by steadfastness in safeguarding the principles of a free, courageous and responsible press in the State of Kuwait.

It is great pleasure that I convey to you and all staff, on behalf of the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia and Indonesian Community in Kuwait, heartfelt congratulations on the occasion of 62nd Anniversary of Kuwait Times.

We would like to take this opportunity to express my hope that the bonds of friendship and cooperation that exist between us will further be strengthened in the years to come for mutual benefit of us.

We are looking forward to continue to maintain and strengthen this good relationship between the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia and the Kuwait Times, and open to the possibilities to create a joint program in the near future that may be beneficial to both Institution.



Ambassador of Indonesia to Kuwait Leena Marianna



Chung Byung-ha, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea

On behalf of the Embassy of the Republic of Korea to the State of Kuwait, I would like to convey sincere congratulations to the management and staff of the Kuwait Times on its 62nd anniversary.

Throughout these years, the newspaper has taken a worthy place in the media sector of the country, having established itself as a leading source of timely and reliable information. Our Embassy has always appreciated the professional quality of its output and is very happy to collaborate with it in all these years.

On this commemorative occasion, I wish the Kuwait Times greater success in years to come!



KUWAIT: The St Regis Kuwait management team poses for a photograph with KT's marketing and PR team. The team from St Regis brought a birthday cake (inset) to the offices of Kuwait Times on Sunday as the newspaper celebrated its 62nd anniversary. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



The Ministry of Information sent flowers to Kuwait Times on Sunday to congratulate the newspaper on its 62nd anniversary on Sunday.



Well-known Arabic newspaper Al-Anbaa sent congratulatory flowers to Kuwait Times on Sunday on the occasion of its 62nd anniversary. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Local

Information ministry, KGOC organize event to celebrate Saudi National Day

Officials congratulate King Salman, Crown Prince and Saudi people on the occasion



Saudi Ambassador participates in ardah performance.



The Ambassador watches the ardah performance.



Children wave flags on the occasion.



A group photo of KGOC team.



Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad Al-Saud.

By Ghadeer Ghloum

KUWAIT: In collaboration with the external media department at the ministry of information, Kuwait Gulf Oil Company celebrated the National Day of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The CEO, his deputies and employees of Kuwait Gulf Oil Company extended their congratulations to King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and the Saudi people on the occasion of the Saudi National Day.

KGOC celebrated this day by organizing an event at The Avenues mall on Sept 23, 2023, where they showcased some traditional Saudi songs and dances, such as the ardah. Flags were distributed to everyone. Competitions were held and gifts were distributed to the audience. The event was attended by Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad Al-Saud and an embassy delegation, in addition to the ministry of information's delegation, KGOC executive management, represented by DCEO of

Finance and Administration Affairs Nayef Al-Anezi, and several employees from the head office and joint operations.

Kuwait Gulf Oil Company is the entity responsible for managing Kuwait's share of hydrocarbon resources in the jointly-operated areas of the Khafji and Wafra fields, which are located on the border between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The two countries share the oil wealth in these areas equally, and they work together to explore, produce and export it for mutual benefit.

KGOC was established on Feb 10, 2002 to manage Kuwait's share of hydrocarbon resources in the offshore joint area. It officially began its operations on Jan 5, 2003, taking over the responsibility from Arabian Oil Company, which had been operating in the joint area since 1958. In 2006, KGOC assumed the responsibility for managing Kuwait's share of hydrocarbon resources in the onshore joint area as well, which had previously been managed by Kuwait Oil Company through joint operations in the Wafra field.

Bioprinting could lead to major breakthroughs

KUWAIT: Bioprinting is a technology that could bring about major breakthroughs in the medical world, as it grants the ability to grow human cells and organs in labs with the very same shape and function, stated the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences on Sunday.

Organization Chief Dr Mohammad Al-Jarallah spoke while inaugurating the symposium, "Bioprinting.. Opportunities and Challenges from an Islamic Perspective" held over two days with participation of more than 15 states and 400 participants. This technology, explained Dr Al-Jarallah, is used in the treatment of unhealthy organs, tissues or cells to improve vital functions. This, he added, could save millions of people awaiting their treatment on donor waitlists. It is a comprehensive biological process, employing the use of modern three-dimensional printing technolo-

gies, Al-Jarallah expounded saying that thus far they have successfully printed skin grafts, outer ear tissue and liver tissue, while full organs printing remains in preliminary stages. This congregation, he stated, aims to provide better healthcare while finding a fine-tuned balance between technological advancements, and ethical and legal principles.

Director of World Health Organization for Middle East, Dr Ahmad Al-Manthari, spoke of recent innovations in direct cell printing mechanisms and called for collecting and analyzing more data on cell and tissues donations. As for head of Islamic research complex at Al-Azhar, Nazir Ayad, he affirmed that bioprinting does not go against the principles of Islam, saying that it is a religion that supports the promotion of physical health. He stated that while this pushes the world towards the precipice of medical revolution, it requires the implementation of tightly-woven regulations.

In this regard, former Jordanian Islamic affairs minister Abdunnasser Abu Albasal commented that this drives the Islamic nation to adapt to rapidly changing world and technologies. Cardiologist Dr Hanan Shamsi indicated that while it is a highly promising technology, it is faced with many technical challenges. — KUNA

AU students achieve 3rd place at Carbon Neutrality Cup contest

KUWAIT: Petroleum Engineering students from Australian University (AU) recently participated in the inaugural Neutrality Cup Competition organized by the Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association (GPCA). The event, themed "Shaping a Sustainable Future with Innovative Solutions", was held in Bahrain. AU's team made their mark, clinching the third spot in this prestigious and innovative competition. The AU team consisted of students, Faisal Al Balool and Abdullah Al Rabaie, supervised by Dr. Jean El Achkar, Assistant Professor of Petroleum Engineering at AU.

The competition, which took place from the 5th to 7th of September 2023 in Manama, gathered industrialists, stakeholders, and participants from 15 prominent universities across the GCC region. Initiated by the GPCA Youth Council, the GPCA Carbon Neutrality Cup aims to foster the development of science-based carbon neutrality solutions, bridging the gap between the chemical industry and academia. In its inaugural edition, the competition garnered several innovative projects from senior undergraduate and postgraduate STEM students from various universities across the GCC region.

The students' journey involved presenting their projects in a presentation session by delivering a 10-minute oral presentation before a substantial audience, which included an eminent panel of industry experts who critically evaluated their work by engaging in discussions and inquiries, and thus enhancing the competitive spirit of the event.



Winners with Dr Jean El Achkar

Reflecting on this achievement, Dr El-Achkar said: "The achievement signifies the culmination of the dedicated research efforts of AU towards integrating its students into faculty-led research initiatives and has yielded outstanding outcomes the competition brought together STEM students, industry leaders and academia to share knowledge and inspire one another. I congratulate our students and all participants and wish them all a successful future."

Gender segregation: Kuwait's phantom menace

By Dr Mai Al-Nakib

On 13 September 2023, four days before the start of classes at Kuwait University, the Values Promotion Committee of the National Assembly met with the acting president of Kuwait University, along with the Minister of Education and Higher Education. The outcome of the meeting was a decision to cancel mixed-gender classes in the College of Law at Kuwait University. This despite the fact that doing so contradicts the 2015 decision by the country's Constitutional Court, which clarified that the 1996 gender segregation law entails separating young men and women within the classroom; it does not necessitate separate classes for each gender.

As a professor at Kuwait University for the last twenty years, I am witness to the fact that many classes are fully segregated, and those that are not technically segregated are in practice segregated: without exception, young men never sit beside young women. Young men and women rarely even speak to each other inside the classroom. This generation of students is self-segregating in classrooms and on campus, where - as they are fully aware - they are being surveilled by cameras positioned in every corner of the university. Our students do not need policing by any committees; they do it themselves.

Leaving aside the question of why a modern nation state would even require a Values Promotion Committee within its parliament, let's address the more urgent question of why this committee would feel the need to beat the dead horse of gender segregation at this particular historical moment? What problem exactly does gender segregation in universities and schools solve? None at all, it would seem, given that life outside the classroom is unsegregated - hallways, cafeterias, meetings, conferences, parking lots, malls, and ministries, to say nothing of the post-education job market.

Yet, we must assume that the Values Promotion Committee, along with the acting head of Kuwait University, and the Minister of Education and Higher Education have based their decision on some kind of logic with some strategic outcome in mind. Deflection seems to be the most obvious goal. Again, speaking from experience, my institution, Kuwait University, has much work to do toward raising academic and research standards, as well as safeguarding institutional autonomy and efficacy. Capitulating to politicians does not serve the interests

of our academic institution or our students. Instead of prioritizing the segregation of already effectively segregated classrooms, Kuwait University should be laser focused on how to improve quality of education, research, and institutional advancement.

As for the interfering politicians, this little song and dance has garnered them an avalanche of attention in our attention-seeking society. Their position seems fortified. If we look beyond the surface, however, the menace being masked by their victory is a many-headed Hydra, threatening the very survival of the country. Here are some of the issues that gender segregation attempts to divert attention away from: the climate catastrophe that will threaten Kuwait's future habitability; the woefully low academic standards at the elementary, secondary, and university levels, as confirmed by numerous national and international reports published over the last decade; the over-taxed healthcare system in dire need of development and support; a non-diversified economy that lags behind our regional neighbors; our government's lack of planning for a sustainable future in the face of climate threats and a post-oil economy; our rising racism and xenophobia, effective at harnessing and misdirecting rage, worthless at solving any actual problems; among many other issues.

The Values Promotion Committee wants to stop time by focusing on issues that play no role in the present, nor in preparing the conditions for a viable future. But time stops for no committee and for no country, either. It is no longer up to outdated politicians to decide nor for the weak administration of any institution to decide. It is up to young people to decide for themselves how they want to navigate their fragile and threatened future. Politicians, administrators, and adults in almost every capacity have failed our youth again and again. While I cannot speak for them, I imagine that they care much less about gender segregation in the classroom than they do about whether they will have fulfilling jobs once they graduate; about whether they will have a future in this country thanks to irreversible climate damage; about how their bodies are being affected by the poison spewed into the air by cars and oil production; about whether their rights and freedoms as citizens will be protected by their constitution and their parliament. They deserve more, and they deserve it now - we all do. We see straight through these diversionary tactics to the real menaces threatening us, and we've had just about enough.

NOTE: Dr Mai Al-Nakib is the author of the collection of short stories *The Hidden Light of Objects* (Bloomsbury 2014) and the novel *An Unlasting Home* (Mariner Books-HarperCollins 2022). She is Associate Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Kuwait University where she has been teaching for the last 20 years.



Dr Mai Al-Nakib

News in Brief

Govt launches trial of
Tawasul on Sahel app

KUWAIT: Head of the Local Affairs Sector and Government Spokesman Amer Al-Ajmi announced Sunday the start of the trial launch of the Tawasul system available on the Sahel application, which provides services, suggestions, inquiries, and complaints, to all ministries and government agencies. Tawasul contributes to the process of government electronic transformation to make it easier for citizens and residents to deliver suggestions and complaints directly to leaders. Al-Ajmi stated in a post on the account of the Center for Government Communication on X, formerly known as Twitter. — KUNA



Amer Al-Ajmi

DGCA's projects division earns ISO

KUWAIT: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation announced on Saturday that the division of projects management earned the ISO certification for the section's successful administration. Saad Al-Otaibi, the deputy director general for planning and projects, said in a statement to KUNA on Saturday that the ISO 9001 quality management division assesses the level of quality and operations' management. The DGCA projects management division's earning of the ISO certificate affirms the department's keenness on overhauling operations in the various sections, attaining top administrative procedures, backing innovation and providing solutions to challenges that face the various work divisions. It has earned the certificate from the US Global Inter after executing a project for a period of eight months and concluding all the required phases, namely training, documenting, applying and internal auditing. — KUNA



Saad Al-Otaibi

Kuwait's humanitarian gesture
portrays plentiful relief actions

Five planeloads of supplies dispatched to hurricane-hit Libya



Kuwaiti associations have been dispatching substantial aid to the afflicted abroad.



KUWAIT: Kuwait's long record of humanitarian aid for the needy has become quite rich due to unaccountable relief programs and campaigns to relieve peoples suffering from poverty or entangled in repercussions of catastrophes. Kuwaiti organizations and associations have scrambled for many years to respond to crises and disasters, adding a new concept in diplomatic work, the humanitarian diplomacy.

Anwar Al-Hasawi, the deputy chairman of Kuwait Red Crescent Society, affirmed in an interview with KUNA, marking the World Humanitarian Action Day (August 10), that Kuwait is highly visible on the international map for relief work, given enormity of the relief campaigns it has launched over many years. Kuwait had to deal with two major recent catastrophes that afflicted Libya, ravaged with the devastating hurricane Daniel and Morocco that suffered a powerful quake rendering whole villages heaps of ruins.

As part of Kuwait's relief air bridge for Libya, at least five planeloads of supplies had been dispatched to the stricken country. Hamad Al-Aoun, the deputy director general of "Al-Salam" charity told KUNA that the association had dispatched detergents and chemical substances to fight viruses, amid fears that Libya might witness epidemics' outbreak due to rotting dead bodies, many still submerged in mud or drowned, particularly in Derna, the hardest hit region. The tons of supplies included masks, beds, wheelchairs and other medical accessories, he said. Ab-

dullah Al-Traji, Chairman of Kuwait Scout Association, declared that the society along with Arab counterpart associations have raised donations to relieve the victims in both Libya and Morocco. Omar Al-Thuwaini, the general supervisor of the relief campaign, "Fazaat Al-Maghreb," said 14 Kuwaiti societies joined hands to assist the quake victims in Libya. He indicated that the aid included blankets and food parcels. Meshari Al-Enezi, an official of "Al-Najat" charity, said the next phase of the humanitarian operation would be rebuilding houses, schools and medical centers.

Moreover, the Kuwaiti embassy in Morocco organized a blood donation campaign for helping the injured. Kuwait, since start of 2023, has established an air bridge sending 16 planeloads of tons of relief, medical and food supplies to the Sudanese people. It had scrambled to relief hundreds of thousands of Rohingya who fled persecution in their country to Bangladesh where they ended up in impoverished camps. The ICRC Regional Head of Delegation for the Gulf Cooperation Council, Mamadou Sow, lauded Kuwait for backing the ICRC efforts to relieve the Rohingya. In Turkey, the Kuwaiti medical team "Shifaa" was present in the south of the country in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that jolted the nation earlier this year. They had been present there attending to the needs of hundreds of thousands of Syrians who escaped war in their home country. Dr Husam

Bechir, the head of a Kuwaiti team of surgeons, said the group arrived in Hatay, South Turkey, to follow-up on previous missions that had been undertaken by other Kuwaiti doctors with backing from Kuwait Zakat House. The "Shifaa" team has a record of executing relief missions in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Gaza and Somalia. Up to 8,500 patients have been treated or given medical aid in these countries. Also regarding the region, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and Sheikh Abdullah Nouri Charity signed a cooperation agreement for aiding Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The UN-HCR acting representative in Kuwait, Maher Ishaqat, said in a statement the accord was the third to be inked with Abdullah Al-Nouri society, indicating that the two entities have become bonded with a strategic partnership and involved in joint fund raising for aiding the refugees in winter times. The Kuwaiti good hands have been stretched for many miles across the region reaching Egypt, where Kuwait Office for Charitable Projects delivered 24 fishing boats and tools to limited income Egyptian fishermen.

Up to \$30,000 had been granted by the Kuwaiti Al-Najat charity to assist fishermen who depended on ramshackle boats to earn bread. For its part, the International Islamic Charity Organization distributed 11,000 sacrificed live stocks to 440,000 people in 25 countries. It distributed sacrificial meat to the needy every year during Eid Al-Adha. The granted meat

reached people in need in Kuwait and many countries. "Rahma around the world" launched a project in Gaza to aid cases of special needs—with support from the Kuwaiti Al-Awqaf Secretariat General. In the aftermath of the fiery blast that rendered Beirut port and nearby residential districts largely heaps of ruins, Kuwait Red Crescent Society renovated and re-equipped the maternity ward of Al-Makassed Hospital.

Kuwait had also given aid to other hospitals that were damaged in the explosion that affected wide sections of the Lebanese capital. Khaled Al-Zaid, the KRCS director of public relations and media, said that the Kuwaiti humanitarian aid for many years helped in shaping a positive image of the State of Kuwait abroad. "Kuwait's diplomacy has constituted a soft power for the state especially that it has gained a humanitarian aspect," he said.

Al-Zaid, who was speaking during the Qatari Red Crescent celebration of International Day for Humanitarian Law in Doha, said the participants in the event discussed a task paper themed "media and the humanitarian diplomacy," shedding light on Kuwait as an oasis for good deeds. The name Kuwait has become synonymous with humanitarian deeds, he said. Heartened with Kuwait's generous assistance for peoples in need, the UN had designated it as the center for humanitarian action and the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as the leader for humanity. — KUNA



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stc continues its
'inspireU' initiative

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, is pleased to continue the activities of the first phase of the 'inspireU' initiative, an entrepreneurial state-of-the-art incubator and accelerator designed to support start-ups and SMEs. 'inspireU' in Kuwait falls under stc's 'Weyak' umbrella that focuses on supporting Kuwaiti SMEs and start-ups as well as other Kuwait-based innovative concepts.

As this the 10th intake of inspireU program hosted by stc, 3 start-ups were selected from the Kuwaiti market based on the criteria defined under the program to be among the 20 companies participating in the tenth edition of the inspireU program. Following the selection process, the start-ups will then go through a rigorous 6-month training camp in order to accelerate their growth and define the key objectives that will propel their business models forward. Additionally, the start-ups will visit the inspireU location in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia where they will attend intensive courses that will assist them in reaching their desired growth trajectories.

inspireU provides entrepreneurs with workspaces in both Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and assists in obtaining permits and licenses for winning projects in addition to providing practical guidance and targeted trainings. Winning

projects will have access to several networking opportunities through participation and visits to international conferences. In addition, inspireU provides financial support to enable start-ups to realize their ideas and dreams.

Danah Al-Jasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc, said, "It brings us great joy to shortlist the 3 winning projects in our first edition of the inspireU program in Kuwait which is a program that has been running for 10 years by stc group. 'inspireU' falls in line with the core objectives behind our 'Weyak' SME and entrepreneurship initiative, as stc is a strong supporter of Kuwaiti SMEs and start-ups, especially those who implement their digital transformation strategies to innovate and streamline their operations." Al-Jasem added "We are proud to launch 'inspireU' in Kuwait and to witness the successful turnout of this initiative, and we would like to congratulate and wish the shortlisted projects the best of luck in their training camp and overall journey."

Al-Jasem concluded, "stc has designed an innovative CSR framework that enables the Company to support various projects and initiatives within Kuwait, while playing a role in stimulating the economy. Amongst the key pillars defined under our CSR program, we have dedicated a special focus on empowering entrepreneurs, SMEs and start-ups in different ways, such as the inspireU program. We believe in the true potential behind these ventures, and the constructive role they can play in making lasting and sustainable differences within our community. Moving forward, stc will continue to leverage its network and expertise to organize platforms that can bolster these ventures by providing supportive outlets for long-term success."



A group photo of the participants with the jury from inspireU.



'Are we safe?': Migrants risk lives to reach US

Karabakh refugees cross into Armenia

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Libyans unite to cope with flood

Volunteers across politically-split country step up aid for stricken eastern cities



TRIPOLI: Women work at a training and development center, contributing to relief efforts supporting flood-stricken populations in eastern Libya. — AFP photos



A chef and kitchen staff volunteer to prepare meals for people displaced from eastern Libya.

TRIPOLI: About a dozen women hunch over sewing machines in Libya's capital, urgently making clothes for the living, and shrouds for the dead, two weeks after a huge flood devastated the eastern city of Derna. In the war-battered north African country that has long been divided between two rival governments, the tragedy that killed thousands has sparked a nationwide sense of solidarity. "Our center was already helping needy families, so you can imagine our mobilization when it involves a disaster of this magnitude," said Mohamed Kamour, the director of the center that trains women to become dressmakers.

Since the flood struck on September 10, the apprentices have worked at full speed, cutting and sewing fabric for the needy in Derna, a city more than 1,300 kilometers (800 miles) to the east. All normal courses have been suspended for the

aid effort, said Kamour, whose workshop usually helps widows and divorced women gain financial independence. "That is the priority," he said. "We interrupted all types of training."

The workshop has already sent 1,300 school uniforms, 850 abayas and 650 shrouds to cover corpses to Derna, and a second shipment is being prepared. Derna had a population of about 100,000 before the flash flood broke through two ageing dams after a hurricane-strength storm lashed the area. The official death toll passed 3,800 on Saturday. The flood, which witnesses likened to a tsunami, may have left 10,000 or more people missing, international aid groups said. Many were swept out to sea, from where bodies are still washing ashore. Others are thought to be buried beneath the mud and debris that carpets entire neighborhoods of Derna.

Libya 'unites us'
Since a 2011 NATO-backed revolt toppled longtime dictator Muammar Gaddafi, Libya has seen more than a decade of stop-start conflict. It is now divided between an internationally-recognized administration in Tripoli in the west and another in the east, whose forces launched a failed assault on the capital which ended in a 2020 ceasefire.

Despite Libya's political split, Kamour said he received the requests of stricken residents from charities based in the east and has stepped up production in response. The women stand over a large table crowded with the day's output, which they sort and fold: grey and green abayas, a traditional full-length robe; white medical smocks; shrouds for the bodies. Karima Wanis, 39, the center's trainer, said she feels as if she lost members of her own family. While sewing machines hummed in the background,

she said that it is "normal to come to the aid of our Derna brothers". "We are part of the same family" Wanis said. "West or East. Ultimately, it's Libya that unites us."

Volunteer effort

Yann Fridez, head of the Libya delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross, spent three days in the disaster zone where he reported seeing people from all regions of Libya, even the southern city of Sebha hundreds of kilometers away. People went to Derna "on their own initiative, tribes did too," Fridez said about the country where tribal structures and loyalties remain important. Restaurateurs have organized meals to feed the displaced. Businesspeople and others with the means have also mobilized in the country's west and the south to help those suffering.

The International Organization for Mi-

gration said on Thursday that more than 43,000 people have been uprooted from the disaster zone. Appeals to shelter them have spread on social media. "A family has just arrived in Tripoli from Derna. They quickly need lodging," one Facebook post said. In response, volunteers offered their telephone numbers, a first step in providing help.

Libyan authorities said it is difficult for them to respond to survivors' urgent needs, but international assistance has arrived from several countries and humanitarian groups. Qatar's embassy in Libya announced the arrival on Saturday in Benghazi of two planes carrying 60 tons of assistance. That brings to eight the number of shipments sent by the Gulf emirate. On Thursday a plane bringing aid from the United States also landed in Benghazi, the eastern city about 300 kilometers by road from Derna. — AFP

Somalia bombing toll climbs to 21

MOGADISHU: The death toll from a truck bombing in central Somalia rose to 21 on Sunday after emergency workers dug through rubble to recover more bodies buried under broken bricks, concrete and metal. A suicide bomber drove the vehicle which was loaded with explosives towards a security checkpoint in the town of Beledweyne on Saturday, triggering an explosion that razed nearby buildings, trapping residents and injuring dozens.

"The death toll from yesterday's explosion has increased today from 13 to 21 people after more dead bodies were recovered under the debris of the destroyed buildings, some ... burnt beyond recognition," Ahmed Yare Adan, a local police officer, told AFP by phone. "People ... are still looking for the missing members of their families, they don't know if they are dead or alive," he said. Sayid Ali, deputy commander of the Beledweyne police station, told AFP that the bomber had targeted a busy neighborhood that housed businesses and residential buildings. "The search and clearing operation is going on at the site of the explosion," he said.

Somalia's President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud condemned the attack, doubling down on his vow to "eliminate" Al-Shabaab militants who have waged an insurgency against the country's fragile central government for over 15 years. "Incidents like this will never deter us from continuing to eliminate the ... terrorists," he said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for Saturday's bombing, which came after Somalia's beleaguered government admit-

ted to suffering "several significant setbacks" in its fight against the Al-Qaeda-linked militants. Somali deputy health minister Mohamed Hassan said late Saturday that "around 13 seriously wounded people (were) evacuated from Beledweyne tonight" and brought to the capital Mogadishu for treatment. Mohamud took office in May last year vowing "all-out war" against Al-Shabaab, who were driven from Mogadishu in 2011 but still control swathes of the countryside. An African Union force deployed in Somalia in 2007 with a six-month mandate but remains on the ground.

'Heinous attack'

UN resolutions call for the African Union Transition in Somalia (ATMIS) force to be reduced to zero by the end of next year, handing over security to the Somali army and police. But this has proved challenging, with the government now seeking to delay a planned reduction of ATMIS troops. The head of ATMIS condemned Saturday's bombing, saying it was "intended to divert attention" from the losses suffered by Al-Shabaab following an offensive launched by Mogadishu last year. "ATMIS strongly condemns the heinous attack on innocent civilians," Mohamed El-Amine Souef said.

Somalia launched a major offensive against the Islamists in August last year, joining forces with local clan militias in an operation backed by ATMIS troops and US air strikes. But Somalia's national security adviser recently wrote to the United Nations requesting a 90-day delay to the planned pullout of 3,000 ATMIS troops by the end of September. In the letter, seen by AFP, he said the government had "managed to re-liberate towns, villages and critical supply routes" during its offensive but had suffered "several significant setbacks" since late August. — AFP

Iran says plot for 30 explosions in Tehran foiled

TEHRAN: Iranian authorities have arrested 28 people linked to the Islamic State group for plotting to target Tehran during the anniversary of last year's protests, the intelligence ministry said on Sunday. The protests erupted after the death in custody on Sept 16, 2022, of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd arrested for allegedly flouting the Islamic republic's strict dress code for women.

"In recent days, during a series of simultaneous operations in Tehran, Alborz and West Azerbaijan provinces, several terrorist bases and team houses were attacked, and 28 members of the said terrorist network were arrested," the ministry said on its website. "These elements are affiliated to the professional crime group of Daesh (Islamic State group) and some of them have a history of accompanying takfiris in Syria or being ac-

tive in Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Kurdistan region of Iraq," it added.

In Shiite-dominated Iran, the term "takfiri" generally refers to jihadists or proponents of radical Sunni Islam. The intelligence ministry said two security personnel were wounded during the arrest operations, and a number of bombs, firearms, suicide vests and communications devices were seized. It said it had neutralized a plot to "carry out 30 simultaneous terrorist explosions in densely populated centers of Tehran to undermine security and incite riots and protests on the anniversary of last year's riots".

The months-long demonstrations saw hundreds of people killed, including dozens of security personnel, in what Tehran called "riots" fomented by foreign governments and "hostile media". On Thursday, a court sentenced to death a Tajik IS member convicted over a deadly gun attack on a Shiite Muslim shrine in August. The attack on the Shah Cheragh mausoleum in Shiraz, capital of Fars province in the south, came less than a year after a mass shooting at the same site that was later claimed by the IS group. — AFP

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International

Karabakh refugees cross into Armenia

Pashinyan signals rift with Russia, slams security alliance as 'insufficient'

KORNIDZOR: Ethnic Armenian refugees began to leave Nagorno-Karabakh on Sunday for the first time since Azerbaijan launched an offensive designed to seize control of the breakaway territory and perhaps end a three-decade-old conflict.



YEREVAN: Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan delivers a video address to the nation in this handout photograph taken and released on Sept 24, 2023.

This week's lightning operation could mark a historic geopolitical shift, with Azerbaijan victorious over the separatists and Armenia now publicly distancing itself from its traditional ally Russia. "Yesterday, we had to put down our rifles. So, we left," a man in his thirties from the village of Mets Shen told AFP as a first group of a few dozen people crossed the border and registered with Armenian officials in Kornidzor.

Most of the other refugees who crossed were women and children, including some from nearby Eghtsahogh, who had taken shelter around a Russian peacekeeping base after their village allegedly came under Azerbaijani shelling. Separatist leaders have said they are negotiating the fate of some 120,000 ethnic Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh in talks with Azerbaijani officials mediated by Russian peacekeepers. Many have seen shortages of food, water and power during a nine-month blockade.

Rift with Russia

The Armenian health ministry said 23 ambulances were carrying seriously wounded citizens of Nagorno-Karabakh to the border, accompanied by medics and Red Cross workers. Crowds of angry relatives gathered on the Armenian side awaiting

news. As drama unfolded on the border, Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan — himself a target of protests over Karabakh's defeat — sought to deflect the blame onto long-standing ally Russia, signaling a breakdown in the countries' security pact.

In nationally televised comments, the Armenian leader said the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and Moscow-Yerevan military-political cooperation were "insufficient" to protect the country, suggesting that he would seek new alliances.

The CSTO members pledge to defend one another from outside attack. But, bogged down in its own war in Ukraine, Russia refused to come to Armenia's assistance in the latest Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, arguing that Yerevan itself had recognized the disputed region as part of Azerbaijan.

Now, Russian peacekeepers are helping Azerbaijan disarm the Karabakh rebels. Pashinyan said Armenia should ratify the treaty which established the International Criminal Court (ICC), which has issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin over the Ukraine war. Armenia also announced that Pashinyan would meet his Azerbaijani counterpart President Ilham Aliyev at the summit of the European Political Community in the Spanish city of Granada on October 5, along with EU leaders like President Emmanuel Macron of France and Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

Meanwhile, tension was running high at the Kornidzor crossing, five kilometers from the Hakari bridge on the convoy's route, where angry relatives had gathered to await news and one man was so frustrated he pulled out a knife in front of police. Wild rumors spread through the agitated crowd and concern for missing relatives was mixed with fury over the lightning Azerbaijani offensive that this week seems to have defeated Karabakh's separatist rebellion after decades of fighting.

"My son was in the army in Artsakh. He's alive, but I'm worried for him," said Alik Blbuyan, 43, using the name Karabakh's ethnic Armenian population gave their breakaway statelet. "I came here to get news but I'm also hoping armed groups will cross the border. If they do, I'll go with them to rescue my son."

Sons and brothers

On the other side of the border in Azerbaijani settlements like Terter and Beylagan, locals had no



KORNIDZOR: Refugees sit in their vehicle as they speak to Armenian police near a registration center of the Armenian foreign affairs ministry on Sept 24, 2023.— AFP photos

sympathy for their Armenian neighbors and were celebrating their government's victory over the rebels. State television played music paying tribute to the nation and its army, and the roadsides were lined with flags and portraits of dozens of local "martyrs", fallen in the fighting during the previous 30 years.

Famil Zalov's 18-year-old brother was among those killed, and he's in no mood to forgive. "I support the operation. Our beautiful land got liberated. I'm proud my brother was avenged," the farmer, now in his early fifties, told AFP. Asked whether he could imagine living alongside ethnic Armenians in peace now, he said he could not: "The president has shown them the way. The corridor is open. They can use it and go away."

Turkish victory visit

While some argue that Armenians have no future in Azerbaijan, others like Minaya Valiyeva, a smallholder in her seventies, go further and argue

they have no past there either. "If you take a shovel and dig in the mountains you will find belongings: the wool jacket of our grandfather. You will find our grandmother's combs. You'll not find anything that belongs to Armenians or Russians," she said.

The bad blood between the communities will only fuel international concern that Azerbaijan's sudden victory could trigger another round of persecution in a conflict that has seen abuses on both sides. In a call on Saturday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told Pashinyan that Washington had "deep concern" for ethnic Armenians there, a spokesman said.

But Baku's Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov told the General Assembly: "Azerbaijan is determined to reintegrate ethnic Armenian residents of the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan as equal citizens." Baku will also secure further diplomatic backing from key ally Turkey, whose leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan will visit Azerbaijan's Nakhchivan exclave on Monday. — AFP

Kosovo police officer killed in attack blamed on Serbia

BANJSKA: Gunmen holed up in a northern Kosovo monastery clashed with authorities Sunday, according to Prime Minister Albin Kurti, hours after a police officer was killed when a patrol was hit by an ambush involving firearms and explosives. Kurti said that the group of at least 30 heavily armed gunmen were now surrounded by authorities near the village of Banjska, where the patrol had been ambushed earlier Sunday, and called for their surrender. The attack and ongoing firefight marks one of the gravest escalations in Kosovo in years, following months of mounting tensions and stalling talks between the government in Pristina and Serbia.

"There are at least 30 professional, military or police armed people who are surrounded by our police forces and whom I invite to surrender to our security agencies," said Kurti during a press conference. The Serbian Orthodox Church confirmed that gunmen had stormed a monastery in Banjska, where pilgrims from the northern Serbian city of Novi Sad were staying.

Pictures released by Kosovo authorities showed several heavily armed gunmen wearing uniforms, barricading themselves at the monastery. "We can see armed people in uniforms... they are firing on us and we are firing back," Kosovo police official Veton Elshani told AFP by phone from Banjska.

Police later said in a statement that at least three attackers had been killed and one arrested. Another four civilian suspects carrying radio equipment



BANJSKA: Kosovo's police officers stand guard at the entrance of the village of Banjska on Sept 24, 2023.— AFP

and weapons were also arrested. Kosovo police also confirmed that the Jarinje and Brnjak border crossings between Serbia and Kosovo had been closed following the incident.

'Standing ready'

Kurti's comments came hours after he called the ambush that killed one police officer and wounded another an act of terrorism and pinpointed the blame on the Serbian government. "Organized crime with political, financial and logistical support from officials in Belgrade is attacking our country," Kurti wrote on social media. The NATO-led KFOR mission said its forces were present in the area, "standing ready to respond if required".

According to Kosovo law, government authorities are not allowed to enter Orthodox properties, including churches and monasteries, without first receiving permission from the Serbian Orthodox Church. Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic was set to address the media Sunday evening. According to the Serbian government's office for Kosovo, the president's press conference would "debunk all the lies and hoaxes of Albin Kurti, the creator of chaos and hell in Kosovo."

Tensions

The attack comes more than a week after talks between the leaders of Serbia and Kosovo centered on improving ties failed to make a breakthrough during EU-mediated negotiations in

Brussels. The EU has been trying for years to resolve the long-running dispute between the Balkan neighbors that has soured relations since their war more than two decades ago.

Brussels believed it had broken the logjam by hammering out a plan to normalize ties in March, but since then there has been minimal progress. The EU's top diplomat Josep Borrell condemned Sunday's attack, calling the targeting of police "hideous".

"The responsible perpetrators must face justice," Borrell wrote on social media. The diplomatic stalemate comes as tensions in the troubled north have been smoldering for months, following the Pristina government's decision to install ethnic Albanian mayors in four Serb-majority municipalities in May. The move triggered one of the worst bouts of unrest in the north in years. Demonstrations followed, as well as the arrest of three Kosovar police officers by Serbia and a violent riot by Serb protesters which saw more than 30 NATO peacekeepers injured.

Kosovo remains overwhelmingly populated by ethnic Albanians, but in the northern stretches of the territory near the border with Serbia, ethnic Serbs remain the majority in several municipalities. The tussle in the north is just the latest in a long list of incidents to rock the area since Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008. That was nearly a decade after NATO forces helped push Serbian troops from the former province during a bloody war that killed around 13,000 people.

Belgrade — along with its key allies China and Russia — has refused to recognize Kosovo's independence, effectively preventing it from having a seat at the United Nations. During an address to the United Nations General Assembly last week, Serbia's Vucic accused the West of hypocrisy. He said its recognition of Kosovo's independence was based on the same justification as Russia's war on Ukraine. — AFP

Crown Prince concludes...

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait was the first Gulf country to establish relations with Beijing in 1971, as well as the role of Kuwait Fund in offering loans to China in 1980s which contributed to projects in China," he said.

The two leaders agreed to further boost relations and cooperation to higher levels, said the foreign minister. The MoUs signed between the two countries dealt with a joint statement regarding a cooperation plan for 2024-28, establishment of a low-carbon recycling green system and infrastructure of water treatment stations. They also deal with power systems and renewable energy, economic and free zones, and development of housing projects.

Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr Jassem Al-Ostad said HH the Crown Prince issued clear instructions to construct renewable energy stations in order to provide clean and cheap energy on one hand, and honor Kuwait's commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 on the other. Ostad called on the importance of changing to clean energy through environment-friendly projects. He noted that solar panels could be installed on roofs of schools and houses, and

could be connected to the power grid. The minister cited similar projects in neighboring countries that proved to be successful.

Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Housing Faleh Al-Ruquba said Kuwait would benefit from Chinese expertise to develop housing cities in Kuwait. "The MoU will boost cooperation through work teams, exchange of visits and exchange of technical details," he said, with the objective of creating strategic cooperation to develop housing projects. The MoU would pave way for development of advanced housing cities as part of the government plans to provide housing care for citizens.

During his visit, HH the Crown Prince also met with Huawei's executives, an audience described by Minister of Commerce and Industry Mohammad Al-Aiban as "very productive". Kuwait, he told KUNA, sought to enhance cooperation with Huawei, a giant company with many projects around the world. HH the Crown Prince informed the Huawei executives about projects and urged them to continue providing information technology and communication (ICT) services to Kuwait, he said. "His Highness the Crown Prince promised to remove all obstacles facing them," said Aiban, with Huawei's executives showing keenness to contribute to the development plan 2023-27 and the New Kuwait vision. — KUNA

KISR exposes 'flawed' Iraqi...

Continued from Page 1

Afterwards, the center confirmed that the court's decision dated Sept 4, 2023, ruling that the agreement was unconstitutional, contradicts the idea of the final ruling issued by the Federal Supreme Court on Dec 18, 2014, which was confirmed by article 94 of the Iraqi constitution, as well as article 5 of the federal supreme court law number 30/2005. The center stated that this comes in addition to the fact that the court's recent decision contradicts the previously mentioned texts regarding the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. Especially since the highest Iraqi court, the federal supreme court, had previously explicitly confirmed in its final ruling in 2014 the constitutionality of the law issued by the Iraqi Council of Representatives regarding ratifying the agreement regulating maritime navigation between the Iraq and Kuwait.

KISR indicated in its reading that after both Iraq and Kuwait approved the bilateral agreement regarding the regulation of maritime navigation in Khor Abdullah, a copy of the agreement was deposited at the United Nations in Dec 2013 through the permanent representatives of Iraq and Kuwait, Muhammad Ali Al-Hakim and Mansour Al-Otaibi respectively. It continued that this bilateral deposit comes in line with the first paragraph of article 102 of the United Nations Charter, which stipulates that "every treaty and every international agreement concluded by any member of the United Nations after the im-

plementation of this agreement must be registered in the secretariat of the UN and published as soon as possible".

In line with what was stipulated in the second paragraph of article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations, "No party to an international treaty or agreement that has not been registered in accordance with the first paragraph of this article may invoke that treaty or that agreement before any branch of the United Nations." According to KISR's reading, the permanent representative of the Republic of Iraq to the United Nations, Muhammad Al-Hakim, stressed on that agreement, which regulates maritime relations between the two countries on the basis of United Nations resolutions, especially Resolution 833, which says that both parties are committed to it, and that it also means that the two countries agree to facilitate the process of the passage of ships and traffic in Khor Abdullah.

KISR pointed out that the official gazette of Iraq published on 11/25/2013, issue no. 4299, the law ratifying an agreement between the government of Iraq and the government of Kuwait regarding the regulation of maritime navigation in Khor Abdullah. The second article of the law stipulates "this law shall be implemented by date of publication in the official gazette". Moreover, the center said the Iraqi government accordingly deposited a copy of the agreement with the United Nations in Dec 2013.

The first paragraph of article 16 of the agreement stipulated that this agreement come into effect after the exchange of notices, by which the last party notifies the other party of its completion of the procedures. The internal legal requirements necessary for its implementation. This was achieved

after the Iraqi copy deposit in Dec 2013, in accordance with article 15 of the agreement. The Iraqi federal supreme court in 2014 also issued its ruling confirming the constitutionality of the law issued by the Iraqi Council of Representatives regarding the ratification of the agreement, which means it is effective for both parties.

KISR pointed out that the second paragraph of article 16 of the agreement stated that the agreement remains in effect for an unlimited period, provided that the agreement may not be terminated except with the consent of both parties. Therefore, article 16 requires bilateral approval to terminate this agreement, meaning that it may not be terminated by one party only. Article 14 of the convention stipulates that any dispute that arises between the two parties regarding the interpretation or application of the agreement shall be settled amicably between them through consultations. In the event that they are unable to reach an agreement regarding this dispute, it shall be referred to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

Regarding the objective facts and historical allegations in the ruling, the KISR stated in its reading that "the ruling of the Iraqi federal supreme court was supposed to be limited to a specific issue, which is the agreement on regulating navigation in Khor Abdullah, but it descended into a maze of allegations about the historical existence of Kuwait". "These allegations that had no reliable scientific response to it, no evidence, no maps and no studies have been published regarding it, which makes it a waste of time. Kuwait, as a land, a people, and a state, is a historical fact, and there is no room or claim to deny it," KISR added. — KUNA

International

‘Are we safe?’: Migrants risk lives to reach US

Harrowing journey for a better life rife with criminals, natural obstacles

EAGLE PASS: After weeks of travel on dangerous roads and rugged trails, hundreds of Venezuelan migrants experienced a bittersweet moment Saturday when they reached Eagle Pass, Texas, on the US border with Mexico, only to encounter a thicket of barbed wire and armed soldiers. “Are we safe?” asked Karlen Ramirez, who was in tears after crossing the Rio Grande, the natural border separating the two countries, and struggling through the barbed wire barriers.



EAGLE PASS: A young migrant from El Salvador kisses a Mario doll before walking to a processing area with his family. — AFP photos

Eagle Pass, a town of almost 30,000, has for decades been one of the border points most heavily used by arriving migrants searching for opportunity or escaping from hunger, violence, or political turmoil in their home countries. Next to a golf course that extends under a bridge between the two countries, the US authorities have placed new rolls of barbed wire, the latest challenging obstacle for migrants pursuing the American “dream.”

“I was frightened when I saw this,” said Luis Duran, 37, one of roughly 500 migrants, nearly all of

them Venezuelans, to arrive on Saturday. “I thought they were going to mistreat us.” He alternately cried and nervously smiled after managing to wriggle through a gap in the fencing. “They robbed us in other countries; they mistreated us,” said Duran, who was limping after leaping from the roof of a train that had carried him, his brothers and nieces across a stretch of Mexico.

“Over there,” he said, pointing to the river, “some armed men tried to take my niece.” In tears again, he hugged a seven-year-old girl, who fixed an empty gaze on the horizon. “But Venezuela is worse,” Duran added. “We are afraid to be there.” “Now we are calmer,” said his sister, 28-year-old Lexibel Duran, as border authorities approached. “Now that we are here,” the mother of three added, “everything is better.”

‘No comparison’

With 2.2 million migrants intercepted at its southern border — 1.8 million of them at relatively remote places like this crossing — the United States will end its fiscal year on September 30 in record territory. The numbers convey a sense of the enormous challenge the US government faces in dealing with immigration.

The issue divides American society, bitterly pitting Republicans against Democrats. With tensions rising in the conservative border state of Texas, US Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas was to meet Honduran President Xiomara Castro on Saturday in the Texas city of McAllen for talks on migration.

President Joe Biden’s handling of the crisis has drawn criticism from both political sides. His administration has attempted to stem the migratory flow through special programs to process asylum and visa requests in migrants’ home countries. Authorities on the ground have applied other deterrent strategies.



EAGLE PASS: A family holds on as they try to navigate swift currents in the Rio Grand river as they cross the US-Mexico border to Eagle Pass, Texas on Sept 23, 2023.

On Saturday, a US military convoy arrived to close gaps in the wire fencing made by earlier arrivals. Scraps of clothing hanging from the barbed wire provide a reminder of the ferocity of this final obstacle. But for migrants who have walked sometimes thousands of miles on foot, and many of whom passed through the treacherous Darien Gap from Colombia into Panama, determination has been their guide.

They burrow through the sand under the wire, or squeeze through, inch by painful inch, as soldiers

watch unmoving. The troops act only once the migrants make it through. They are then turned over to nearby border patrols. “This here,” says 17-year-old Venezuelan Dileidys Urdaneta, “is nothing. Because what we have experienced, what we have gone through, is much worse. And what we left behind — don’t even mention it. “There is no comparison.” She had reached Eagle Pass carrying only her documents, a phone with no battery and the clothes she was wearing — shorts and a sports top. “Now,” she added, “it can only get better.” — AFP

Outcry after France’s ‘chilling’ journalist arrest

PARIS: It was just after six in the morning on Tuesday when the agents came to the home of French journalist Ariane Lavrilleux. “They searched my home, and in particular the tools of my work, my computers, my telephone and my USB keys. They used a load of cyber methods to extract the data. Then I was thrown into jail,” she said.

She then spent 39 hours in detention, repeatedly interrogated by agents of France’s DGSi internal security service, for simply, she says, doing her job and reporting on the ultra-sensitive issue of France’s military cooperation with its ally Egypt. Lavrilleux was eventually released late Wednesday from her detention in Marseille, with no further action taken at this stage. But a former soldier suspected of being one of her sources has been charged and could be put on trial.

Her arrest shocked fellow journalists and activists in France but has also raised new questions about how the government employs controversial laws on issues of national secrecy, in a country that is supposed to cherish the right to freedom of expression. Amnesty International secretary general Agnes Callamard described the arrest as “chilling” and described it as part “of a wider attack on public interest journalists who attempt to expose the opaque actions of the French intelligence services.” In an unrelated but parallel incident, police in the northern city of Lille Thursday summoned three journalists from the Liberation daily for questioning over an investigation they had written into the killing of a young man in the region by police.



PARIS: French journalist Ariane Lavrilleux addresses a press conference on Sept 21, 2023, after passing nearly 40 hours in custody. —AFP

‘End of journalism’

“If we don’t protect sources, it’s the end of journalism,” Lavrilleux told a news conference in Paris organized by press freedom group Reporters Without Borders (RSF). “I consider this arrest to be scandalous and profoundly illegitimate. Its only aim was to prevent me and all journalists from doing our work,” she added.

Lavrilleux had in November 2021 authored articles for French investigative website Disclose that alleged a French counter-intelligence operation in Egypt, code-named “Sirlil”, was used by the Egyptian state for “a campaign of arbitrary killings” against smugglers. The articles, based on hundreds of secret documents, said French forces were complicit in at least 19 bombings against smugglers between 2016 and 2018 in the region. A complaint against the articles was then rapidly filed with prosecutors by the defense ministry.

France has close military cooperation with Egypt under President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who opponents accuse of arbitrarily jailing opponents. Disclose said the DGSi agents had also interrogated Lavrilleux about articles dating back to 2019 over France’s arms sales abroad. On Wednesday, while Lavrilleux was still under arrest, government spokesman Olivier Veran repeatedly refused to answer questions on the issue. —AFP



SOUTH CHINA SEA: A Filipino fisherman is seen aboard his wooden boat sailing past a Chinese coast guard ship in disputed waters of the South China Sea on Sept 20, 2023. — AFP

Filipino fisherman chased by China in disputed waters

SOUTH CHINA SEA: Filipino fisherman Arnel Satam guns the motor of his tiny wooden boat as he makes a dash for the shallow waters of Scarborough Shoal in the disputed South China Sea, with Chinese coast guard speedboats in hot pursuit.

In a high-seas chase lasting several minutes, Satam tries in vain to outrun the faster boats in the hope of slipping inside the ring of reefs controlled by China, where fish are more abundant. Friday’s pursuit was witnessed by AFP journalists on board the Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources ship BRP Datu Bankaw, which was delivering food, water and fuel to Filipino fishermen plying the contested waters, sometimes for weeks on end.

The fishermen complained that China’s actions at Scarborough Shoal were robbing them of a key source of income and a place to shelter safely during a storm. “I want to fish in there,” a defiant Satam, 54, told journalists as he stood barefoot on his light blue outrigger bearing a Superman “S” emblem. “I do this thing often. They already chased me earlier today,” he said, adding the Chinese speedboats had bumped his vessel. “I just laughed at them.”

Scarborough Shoal is 240 kilometers (150 miles) west of the Philippines’ main island of Luzon and nearly 900 kilometers from the nearest major Chinese land mass of Hainan. Under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which China helped negotiate, countries have jurisdiction over the natural resources within about 200 nautical miles (370 kilometers) of their shore.

China, which claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea, snatched control of Scarborough Shoal from the Philippines in 2012. Since then, it has deployed coast guard and other vessels to block or restrict access to the fishing ground that has been tapped by generations of Filipinos. Philippine officials also accused the Chinese coast guard of laying a 300-metre (-yard) long floating barrier across the entrance to the shoal shortly before the BRP Datu Bankaw arrived.

The temporary barrier “prevents Filipino Fishing Boats from entering the shoal and depriving them of their fishing and livelihood activities,” the Philippine coast guard and fisheries bureau said in a joint statement condemning its installation.

Resupply missions

It took 18 hours for the BRP Datu Bankaw to make the more than 300 kilometer journey to Scarbor-

ough Shoal from a port in Manila Bay. More than 50 wooden outrigger fishing vessels, which Filipinos call “mother boats”, were operating in the deep waters outside the shoal when the Philippine ship dropped anchor last Wednesday.

Some of the fishing crews had been there for two weeks already using nets, lines and spears to catch tuna, grouper and red snapper. To enable them to stay at sea for longer and catch more fish, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources carries out regular resupply missions. Four Chinese coast guard boats patrolled the waters, keeping the BRP Datu Bankaw and Filipino fishermen away from the shoal.

The voice of a Chinese coast guard radio operator crackled over the airwaves 15 times, ordering the BRP Datu Bankaw to “immediately” leave “Chinese territory”. The instruction was repeated in English on a scrolling digital message board on one of the Chinese coast guard vessels. Unfazed by the warnings, the 12 crew members of the BRP Datu Bankaw distributed 60 tons of fuel in blue plastic jerry cans to the fishing boats, as well as food packs for those running low on provisions. The supplies were free for the fishermen, but some showed their gratitude by giving the BRP Datu Bankaw crew tubs of freshly caught fish.

‘This is ours’

“We are very grateful for this assistance,” said Johnny Arpon, 53, whose 10-metre boat “Janica” arrived at the shoal in time to stock up on extra diesel. Some of the Filipino fishermen crowding around the BRP Bankaw in small outriggers to receive provisions climbed aboard to eat snacks and drink fresh water.

They told journalists they had been chased and water cannoned by Chinese vessels in the past and even had their anchors cut. “They should give it back to us because this is ours,” said Nonoy de los Reyes, 40, referring to Scarborough Shoal. “They should leave this place.”

After decades of overfishing by countries surrounding the waters, the men have to spend longer at sea to catch enough fish to cover their costs and, hopefully, make a small profit. China’s blocking of the shoal had made the situation even tougher and the fishermen said they hated them for it.

“We barely have any catch so we’ll probably need to stay two more weeks,” said Alex del Campo, 41, who had already spent more than a week at sea. A day earlier, del Campo and two other fishermen had made a daring bid to enter the shoal in their small boats but were chased away by Chinese coast guard personnel in rigid-hulled inflatable vessels. “We are defenseless because they are armed and there was just one fisherman in each of our three boats,” del Campo said. “If they ram and sink our boats who will save us?” — AFP

Venezuela offers a peek at prison run by gang

MARACAY: Venezuela’s Tocoron prison was like a town all unto itself, boasting restaurants, a pool, a zoo, a playground for inmates’ kids and so much more as a powerful gang ruled the roost, using the facility as a criminal operations center. “Steak House. Enjoy,” reads a sign on the wall of one of the restaurants in the prison, which thousands of soldiers and police stormed this week.

Tocoron is now empty of the 1,600 prisoners who lived here and have been moved elsewhere. Gone is the gang that controlled it, called Tren de Aragua, which has tentacles in various countries of Latin America. “Life was nicer and safer in prison than out on the street,” said the wife of a prisoner transferred elsewhere, declining to give her name.

Venezuelan authorities took some 30-odd journalists on a controlled and limited tour of the prison on Saturday. The reporters did not get to see the concrete tunnels that the prisoners dug — pictures of them are circulating on social media — or what is left of the zoo with its pink flamingos. The few streets that reporters touring the prison were allowed to see were littered with beer bottles, clothing, TVs, appliances, and stuffed animals. Near the pool and a basketball court were abandoned food stands.

Interior Minister Admiral Remigio Ceballos has said four prison officials had been arrested and charged with complicity with the criminals. The Tren de Aragua, which reportedly numbers some 5,000 criminals, emerged in 2014, specializing in classic mafia activities: kidnapping, robberies, drugs, prostitution and extortion. It has extended its influence to other activities, some legal, but also to illegal gold mining.

The head of the gang, Hector Guerrero, and other leaders were tipped off before the big raid on Wednesday and managed to flee the prison and the country a week beforehand, according to the Venezuelan Prison Observatory (OVV), a group that follows developments in the country’s notoriously dangerous detention centers. As reporters toured the prison, bulldozers tore down a small settlement of houses made of brick, wood and metal. The authorities gave no explanation as the machines rolled noisily over walls, bed linens, curtains and other housewares.

Rubeles Mejias, aged 25 and the fiancée of an inmate serving a 13-year term for manslaughter, said she lived in the jail for seven months and left only when her four-year-old daughter had to start school. Her man, whom she planned to marry in a few weeks, was one of the so-called “baptized” people in the prison — devout Christians who wore white and were treated as a separate caste within the prison hierarchy. Gang members would leave them alone. —AFP



TOCORON: A view of food stalls in the Tocoron prison in Venezuela, taken on Sept 23, 2023. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2023

Scottish port feels force of UK fishing storm

Brexit offered a wave of complications instead of 'a sea of opportunity'



PETERHEAD, UK: Crew members of a fishing vessel prepare the net ahead of a fishing trip from Peterhead Harbor, on the north east coast of Scotland. — AFP photos

PETERHEAD, UK: In Peterhead, a major port in northeast Scotland and Europe's largest wholesale market for white fish, Brexit was supposed to offer "a sea of opportunity" for locals. Instead they have suffered a wave of complications and added financial costs in recent years, even before the impact of surging inflation.

"Careful what you wish for, it hasn't turned out as they promised," Mark Addison says in front of his trawler, the Benarkle II, which is moored just behind Peterhead's fish market.

"It's been the hardest three years," he tells AFP. "Brexit followed by the (Ukraine) war was just a double whammy." Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent prices soaring worldwide, with the fishing industry hit hard by rocketing fuel prices and large cost increases for key equipment such as nets.

Even though fishing represents just a small fraction of Britain's economy, it became a key negotiating issue in the country's new trade deal with the

EU, as UK politicians rallied behind the island's rich maritime history.

In 2019, Boris Johnson, prime minister at the time, visited Peterhead as he sought re-election for his Conservative party on a platform of Brexit promotion, telling locals: "It's a sea of opportunity up here."

Johnson also made a trip to Grimsby, a major fishing market in northern England. But for Addison, he was "sold a lie" over Brexit. "There's been issues with queues, passports, paperwork... There's always something, which is a big problem with fresh-produce fish," he says.

Delays to UK exports have caused the prices of some white fish to drop. Together the problems have offset what Addison calls a welcome increase in fishing quotas for the UK in the English Channel and North Sea waters separating the island nation from mainland Europe. Although the quotas are larger, Addison says he must be more selective in what he catches. Fish whose flesh spoils quickly are



PETERHEAD, UK: Buyers and workers attend Peterhead Fish Market, on the north east coast of Scotland.

no longer worth catching.

Before Brexit, his family business caught as much as it was allowed to, with the assurance of earning a good price at the Peterhead auctions. Despite the changes, "you have to make it work", he says with a look of resignation. "I have three sons on that fishing boat." In a hall the size of a football pitch, hundreds of boxes of fresh-caught fish are lined up under a pale neon light, ready to be sold. Around fifty sellers, wearing plastic boots, raincoats or padded jackets to guard against the chill inside, will have sold 6,000 cases of fish in under two hours to the bidders gathered in the early morning.

Graeme Sutherland, co-director of Whitelink Seafoods, was in favor of Brexit but says promises made by the UK government have yet to bear fruit — and he remains hopeful of even higher quotas. "It's still not delivering at the moment, we're still hoping," he says with a smile. His family business, which catches and processes fish, employs nearly

200 people. It has been hit by a cost-of-living crisis, resulting in less income from the sale of prime produce such as monkfish.

Brexit ended the free movement of people between Britain and the EU, which means for Alistair Brown, operations director at Nolan Seafoods, finding staff has become difficult.

"Labour shortages are crazy. We need foreign people for processing," he says. "Fishermen thought Brexit was going to be utopia for processors. It's been a disaster, it only brought extra costs. Everything is strained because of costs, inflation in the end." Fisheries biologist Bryce Stewart of the University of York said there were some large fisheries that had seen benefits from Brexit.

"On the other hand, small scale fishermen, which make up the majority of boats... they've seen basically no benefits at all," he said. "If you talk to the average fisherman, he would probably tell you that it's left them either no different or worse off." — AFP

Recycling plastic not enough: UN environment chief

UNITED NATIONS: With the production of plastic on the rise worldwide and creating ever more pollution, the UN environment chief warned that humanity cannot just recycle its way out of the mess, and she called for a total rethink about the way we use plastics.

"There are different sort of onramps to the highway to solutions. But I think everybody recognizes that the status quo is just not an option," said Inger Andersen, director of the UN Environment Program, in an interview Thursday with AFP on the sidelines of the General Assembly in New York.

Andersen was talking two weeks after the publication of the first draft of a future international treaty on plastic pollution, which is expected to be finalized by the end of 2024. It reflects the wide range of ambitions of the 175 countries involved, notably the gap between those who argue for a reduction in the production of raw polymers and those who insist on reuse and recycling.

First, Andersen said the aim was to get rid of as many single-use plastics as possible, "eliminating what's frankly not necessary: that thing that is wrapped in plastic that's completely mindless, that is maybe even wrapped by nature itself," like an orange or a banana.

Then, "there is thinking about the product itself. Does the product need to be liquid? Can we rethink the product... can it be powder, can it be compressed, can it be concentrated?" she said, saying that when entering a supermarket, she goes straight to the soap aisle to see if solid versions are available.

"We also have to reduce the overall supply of new raw polymer," she said, noting that this was one option in the draft text of the treaty. For sure, "we have to recycle as much as we can. But as we look at it now, plastic uses is increasing," Andersen told AFP. "So what is clear is that we cannot recycle our way out of this mess."

Annual production of plastics has more than doubled in the past 20 years, to reach 460 million tons. It could triple by 2060 if nothing changes. However, only nine percent is recycled. Plastic waste of all sizes is found today at the bottom of the oceans, in the stomachs of birds and on the tops of mountains, while microplastics have been detected in blood, breast milk and placentas.

"If we continue to pump into the economy all this



Inger Andersen, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of the UN Environment Program, speaks during an interview at UN headquarters in New York City. — AFP

new raw polymer, there is no way that we will stop the plastic flow into the oceans," she said. And the health of the oceans is crucial for the future of humanity. The future treaty on plastic pollution would complement the global arsenal to protect the oceans, including the new historic treaty to protect the high seas signed this week by some 70 countries. "The fact that we're going to move forward and protect that piece of the ocean that is beyond national boundaries is mind-blowingly important," Andersen said. "And something that I'm just very, very happy about. And the whole world should be because this is our common heritage." — AFP

UK minister: PM could put brakes on high speed rail

LONDON: A UK government minister on Sunday said it would be "irresponsible" to keep ploughing money into a new high-speed train line if there has been a change to the country's "fiscal picture".

Defense Secretary Grant Shapps was speaking after a string of reports said Prime Minister Rishi Sunak was considering scrapping the colossal HS2 rail project which has seen costs spiral. The UK is currently in the grip of a cost of living crisis that has seen housing and food costs hiked, prompting a wave of crippling strikes across the economy from doctors to train drivers. The country's defence budget is also under pressure faced with a range of new challenges including the war in Ukraine.

"There are various different estimates and I think that's one of the things that the government wants to check, particularly on the costs now post the inflationary picture out of the war in Ukraine," Shapps told BBC television. "I have to say that it would be irresponsible to simply spend the money, carry on as if nothing had changed, if there has been a change in that fiscal picture," he added.

Designed to bring the major cities in the north of England closer to London, the HS2 project was estimated at £37.5 billion (\$46 billion) in 2013, but has since soared to around £100 billion. It will be Britain's second high-speed line after HS1 - used by Eurostar in southeast England. Shapps, a former transport secretary, told Sky News a decision would be taken "in due course".

But if costs kept increasing "there has to be a point at which you say 'hold on a minute, let's just take a break here'", he said. A general election is expected next year with Sunak's Conservative Party currently trailing the main opposition Labour Party in polls. The 134 miles (215 kilometres) of track between London and Birmingham, the first section of the line, will cost £396 million per mile (£247 million per km), more than eight times as much as the Tours-Bordeaux high-speed line that entered service in 2017, the organization estimated. Dumitriu pointed out that building railways, tramlines and roads is much more expensive in the UK than in other European countries.

This is partly due to the broad opportunities given to local residents and environmentalists to make objections, which "are often taken onboard," he explained. In the case of HS2, this has led to an increase in the number of tunnels. There is also a lack of qualified personnel due to the rarity of major projects (HS2 is the first line to be built in north London in 150 years), and projects are often more ambitious - and therefore more expensive - than in other countries. "Why is it more expensive to build in Britain than in say China?" asked HS2 chairman Sir Jon Thompson in a Daily Telegraph article published in February. "Here we do not ride roughshod over the environment, over planning law, over local authorities and local people." — AFP

Sanctions deepen economic misery in post-coup Niger

NIAMEY, Niger: Acute deprivation is endemic in Niger, one of the world's poorest nations. But West African sanctions aimed at forcing a return to democracy after a coup are making people's lives worse. Food and medicines are scarce in the landlocked country, prices are skyrocketing and blackouts after regional powerhouse Nigeria cut its electricity supplies mean that factories are lying idle.

Earlier this month, the UN said 7,300 tons of food aid destined for Niger was stuck in transit because of border closures. "Almost all prices have risen due to the sanctions," shopkeeper Elhadji Ali tells his customers defensively at the bustling Dar-es-Salaam market in the capital Niamey. Regional bloc ECOWAS — the Economic Community of West African States — banned trade with Niger after rebel elite soldiers on July 26 overthrew Mohamed Bazoum, the democratically elected president.

Negotiations to restore civilian rule have yet to bear fruit, with the junta demanding a three-year transition and ECOWAS calling for Bazoum's immediate return. Imported rice — a national staple — is way more expensive, with a 25-kilo bag now costing 14,500 CFA francs (about \$25, 22 euros) against 11,500 CFA francs before the coup. "For the moment there are no shortages and the prevailing



Artisans sit outside their workshop at the Niamey craft centre on September 21, 2023. — AFP

stocks will see us through till December," said Chai-bou Tchiombiano, general secretary of the main association of Nigerien exporters and importers.

But he warned that reduced rice imports from China and Thailand could eventually lead to shortfalls. Medicines are also getting scarcer. The main supplies come from Cotonou — the main port and economic heart of neighboring Benin, which has closed its frontier with Niger.

Roughly 80 percent of Niger's imports transits through Cotonou. "Medicine stocks have fallen by 30 to 55 percent since September 19 while the ac-

ceptable level is seven percent," said Amadou Seyni Maiga, the general secretary of Niger's main association of pharmacists.

Maiga called for an immediate lifting of a ban on medical supplies. On the frontier with Benin, hundreds of trucks are blocked on the border and the sole bridge traversing the Niger River is choked with stationary trucks and containers. Niger shares southern frontiers with ECOWAS members Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Benin, but it is also a major trading route with other nearby members of the bloc such as Togo, Ghana and Ivory Coast. — AFP

Business

Fed has more work to do to tackle high inflation: Official

Central banks in no rush to cut interest rates

WASHINGTON: The US Federal Reserve has more work to do to tackle high inflation despite making "considerable" progress in the last 18 months, a senior bank official said Friday. Earlier this week, Fed officials unanimously voted to hold interest rates at a 22-year high while indicating they expect another hike will be needed to bring inflation down to the US central bank's long-term target of two percent.

The decision postponed additional pain for millions of Americans already struggling with the impact of the Fed's existing hikes on mortgages and other loans.

Although the Fed has made "considerable" progress on lowering inflation, it remains "too high," warranting further action, Fed Governor Michelle Bowman told a conference in Colorado, according to prepared remarks. "I continue to expect that further rate hikes will likely be needed to return inflation to two percent in a timely way," she added.

Bowman said it would be appropriate for the Fed's rate-setting committee to hold interest rates "at a restrictive level for some time," in order to bring inflation down to target, mirroring the Fed's forecast of just two interest rate cuts next year. After 11 interest rate increases since March last year, inflation has fallen sharply but remains stuck stubbornly above the Fed's long-term target.

Inflation has crept up again in recent months due to a spike in energy costs, underscoring the need for policymakers to keep up the fight through tight monetary policy.

"I see a continued risk that energy prices could rise further and reverse some of the progress we have seen on inflation in recent months," Bowman said Friday. "We should remain willing to raise the federal funds rate at a future meeting if the incoming data indicates that progress on inflation has stalled or is too slow," she added.

Investors were hoping to hear central banks finally signal this week that they were close to being done raising interest rates in their battle against inflation. Instead, policymakers indicated that high rates are here for a while yet, with more hikes on the cards and few, if any, cuts in the near future.

The US Federal Reserve set the tone on Wednesday when it paused its rate-hike campaign but caused a stir by leaving the door open to another increase before the end of the year.

The central bank also unsettled investors by saying that only two cuts were expected next year instead of four as anticipated. The Fed has more room to keep its "hawkish" stance as the US economy has performed



WASHINGTON: US Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell speaks during a press conference in Washington, DC. — AFP

better than feared despite the rate increases. This firm position is shared by other central banks. Norway's rate hike Thursday was anticipated, but it also warned further tightening was "likely" in December, while ruling out any easing before next year.

Growth or inflation

This firm tone came "as a surprise to the markets," which have "decided that the peak" of rate hikes is "happening right now," HSBC economist Fabio Balboni told AFP, even though "central banks' communications leave the door open to the possibility of further hikes". It leaves "real uncertainty about the level of inflation next year", he said. Their decision "reflects a compromise between growth and inflation", he added.

The rate hikes raise the cost of credit for businesses and consumers, which theoretically in turn reduces demand and inflationary pressures. But if demand slows too much, it runs the risk of triggering a recession. Faced with this dilemma, the European Central Bank (ECB) chose inflation-limiting measures, with a 10th consecutive rate hike. That took its benchmark rate to 4.0 percent, the highest since 1999.

"We can't say we have peaked," ECB president Christine Lagarde said, although other officials indicated that the cycle of raising rates might be

coming to a close. "Our future decisions will ensure that the key ECB interest rates will be set at sufficiently restrictive levels for as long as necessary," the bank's chief economist Philip Lane said Thursday in New York.

Return to lower rates

There are other signs, however, that rates are reaching their peak. The Bank of England on Thursday announced its first pause on raising rates since December 2021, following a slight decline in UK inflation in August. Switzerland and Japan—like half of all central banks—have also chosen to halt raising rates in the past 10 days.

"We expect no more rate hikes in the future" for the US, England and Europe central banks, said Balboni. Jennifer McKeown of Capital Economics said she expected the last hikes to come in the fourth quarter, and that the easing cycle would take hold as 2024 approaches.

"By this time next year, we anticipate that 21 out of the world's 30 major central banks will be cutting interest rates," she wrote. Although Balboni, taking a more measured stance, said "in the context of weak growth, it will be very complicated to reduce rates" while inflation remains "too high". — AFP

UK oppn leader denies he will try to undo Brexit

LONDON: The leader of the UK's opposition Labour Party on Friday denied he wanted to re-join the European Union after recent comments led the ruling Conservatives to accuse him of wanting to "unpick Brexit".

Keir Starmer, whose party has for months been consistently well ahead in opinion polls, has just completed a foreign tour aimed at boosting his international stature. On his return to London, he was quizzed about remarks made several days ago, which largely went unnoticed at the time. At a centre-left forum in Montreal, he declared that he did not want to "diverge" from European Union rules, sparking reaction from heavyweights in the ruling Tory party.

Chancellor Jeremy Hunt accused him of wanting to "unpick Brexit" while Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said he "wants to rejoin the EU in all but name". The issue remains highly sensitive in the UK, particularly in traditionally Labour leaning areas of northern England that voted in favor of leaving the EU.

Starmer insisted on Friday that there was no case for returning to the EU, its customs union or the single market. "But that does not mean that a Labour government wants to lower standards on food, lower standards on people's rights at work," he said. "The Labour Party has been completely consistent on those issues for many, many years... it is also government policy," he added.

The 61-year-old leader promised in a Financial Times interview published Sunday that he would attempt to negotiate a "much better deal" with the UK than the one currently in place. That was negotiated under the premiership of Boris Johnson and came into force in 2021, with a review set for 2025. Its implementation has not been smooth, particularly with regards to Northern Ireland, and economists say that leaving has, and will continue to have, a negative impact on the British economy. — AFP



Grand Hyper opens its 37th branch at Mirqab, Kuwait City

KUWAIT: Grand Hypermarket, a leading retail chain, opened its 37th outlet at Al-Tujjar Tower building on Mirqab Abdul Aziz Hamad Al-Saqr Street on Wednesday, September 20th at 5 pm in the presence of hundreds of customers. The new outlet is spread over a sprawling 21,500 sq. ft. area on one floor. Sheikh Dawood Salman Al-Sabah and

Jassim Mohammad Khamis Al-Sharah inaugurated the new showroom at Mirqab. Grand Hyper Managing Director Anwar Amin Chelat, Regional Director Ayyub Kacheri, CEO Muhammad Suneer, DRO Tahseer Ali, COO Muhammad Aslam, Amanullah and other distinguished guests and well-wishers besides Grand Hyper Kuwait top management members attended the event.

The new outlet offers a range of products from across the globe of the Grand Hypermarket, including fruits, vegetables, food and non-food items and consumer goods. Management sources said that the new outlet offers a variety of products that cater to the tastes and needs of expatriates and locals at attractive prices in a convenient manner for customers.



The residents of Strasskirchen, around 90 minutes' drive from Munich with a population of around 2,700, are being called upon to vote in a referendum on the construction of the factory.

for the future", he said. The two camps have been at loggerheads for months.

BMW wants to invest "several hundred million euros" in the plant, which will be "at the heart of the development of electric vehicles in Germany", according to Alexander Kiy, who is in charge of the project. The factory would employ more than 3,200 people and churn out 600,000 high-voltage batteries a year to supply electric cars made at BMW's plants in Regensburg, Munich and Dingolfing, the company's largest European site. — AFP

Bavarian village to decide future of key BMW factory

FRANKFURT: A sleepy Bavarian village could decide the future of BMW's drive towards electromobility as it goes to the polls on Sunday over the German automobile giant's plans to build a huge battery factory.

The residents of Strasskirchen, around 90 minutes' drive from Munich with a population of around 2,700, are being called upon to vote in a referendum on the construction of the factory.

With German industry in a slump amid slowing global demand and high energy costs, the project is billed as a vote of confidence in the future of products "made in Germany". It also comes at a crucial time for BMW as the car industry transitions from combustion-engine vehicles to electric-powered ones.

But in Strasskirchen, some residents fear the factory will transform their leafy village on the edge of the Bavarian forest into an industrial zone with roaring trucks. "More than 100 hectares of prime arable land would be destroyed forever," a mistake "in view of climate change", said Thomas Spoetzl, 44, a spokesman for local residents who are opposed to the plans. Martin Goetz, a 45-year-old native of Strasskirchen and spokesman for the other side, disagrees.

The factory would be "a huge opportunity for the region to invest in sustainable technologies and jobs

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Schneider's purpose is to empower all to make the most of our energy and resources, bridging progress and sustainability for all. We call this life is on.

Our mission is to be your digital partner for Sustainability and Efficiency. We drive digital transformation by integrating world-leading process and energy technologies, end-point to cloud connecting products, controls, software and services, across the entire lifecycle, enabling integrated company management, for homes, buildings, data centers, infrastructure, and industries.

We are the most local of global companies. We are advocates of open standards and partnership ecosystems that are passionate about our shared Meaningful Purpose, inclusive and Empowered values.

Shifting gears to carbon neutrality

Toyota's multi-pathway approach to sustainable mobility



KUWAIT: As the world gears up for COP28 in Dubai, the UAE, the urgency to address carbon emissions intensifies across governments globally. With experts aiming to cap global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius, every major sector, including the automotive industry, is shifting gears to reassess the status quo and adapt to collectively meet the challenge of achieving carbon neutrality.

Toyota, in particular, has long recognized its role in this global endeavor. The company's pursuit of carbon neutrality began over two decades ago with the introduction of the iconic Prius, the world's first mass-produced Hybrid Electric Vehicle (HEV), in 1997. In 25 years, Toyota sold more than 20 million electrified vehicles, significantly cutting CO2 emissions globally by over 160 million tons. Toyota remains committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 through a multi-pathway approach to crafting sustainable mobility solutions that leave no one behind.

Toyota affirms that there are many paths to carbon neutrality and that just as mobility landscapes are different from country to country, so are the pathways to achieving it. This multi-pathway approach encompasses diverse eco-friendly vehicle technologies

to cater to different usage needs, economic circumstances, energy sources, and infrastructure readiness, allowing everyone to immediately start contributing to carbon neutrality. This has led to Toyota developing various powertrain options, including Hybrid Electric Vehicles (HEVs), Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs), Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs), Fuel Cell Electric Vehicles (FCEVs), Hydrogen Combustion Engines, while also enhancing the efficiency of internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles and expanding its carbon neutral fuels initiative. In addition to making all factories carbon neutral by 2035, Toyota's lineup of eco-friendly vehicles continues to grow. The company aims to develop and offer a full lineup of 30 BEV models by 2030, including passenger and commercial vehicles, with a target of 3.5 million annual global sales within the same timeframe. This includes plans for the shorter run where, in April 2023, the company announced its target to introduce 10 Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV) models by 2026 and 1.5 million electrified vehicle sales. While these seemingly only begin to scratch the surface, the company's efforts are anticipated to yield a 33 percent CO2 emissions reduction by 2030 and a 50

percent reduction by 2035 compared to 2019.

Koji Sato, President and CEO of Toyota Motor Corporation, emphasized Toyota's mission to 'produce happiness for all,' protect the Earth, and enrich people's lives worldwide. Toyota aims to change 'Minus(-)' to 'Zero' and create value beyond Zero. Sato highlighted the need to transform the future of the car to ensure its continued relevance and benefit to society. Toyota's electrification drive marked a significant milestone with its new BEV Factory. Established in May 2023, this specialized organization is envisioned as an "ALL in ONE TEAM" that will not only lead Toyota's development, production, and business operations, but will also spearhead the company's advancement in next-gen BEVs. One of the BEV Factory's primary directives includes the development of an energy and cost-efficient solid-state battery for a 2026 next-gen BEV launch with a 1,000 km range.

The newly established Hydrogen Factory aims to promote business across three key axes: localizing R&D and production in major markets, strengthening alliances with leading partners to provide affordable fuel cells, and competitiveness and technology.

The Hydrogen Factory is preparing

for the 2026 launch of a next-gen fuel cell (FC) system for commercial use that prioritizes longevity, cost-efficiency, and low fuel consumption, targeting a 20 percent range boost, and 37 percent cost cut through technological advancements, volume efficiency, and localization. While Toyota recognizes the need for vehicle electrification, it also believes in the importance of diversified strategies, suggesting an optimal mix of PHEVs and HEVs to efficiently utilize limited resources. For instance, the lithium resources of a single BEV equivalent to 100 kWh could be spread among six PHEVs for their smaller batteries, leading to better emission reductions overall. Similarly, the same lithium resource could be spread across a much more affordable option of 90 HEVs, effectively replacing the greatest number of conventional combustion engine vehicles on the road. On a larger scale, this has a much higher overall impact on reducing emissions while optimizing the use of limited lithium resources. Hence, while the company aims to produce more BEVs in the long term, it recommends adopting a mix of HEVs and PHEVs, particularly in regions with limited electrification infrastructure. Toyota also focuses on lower

carbon and carbon-neutral fuel technologies in its multi-pathway approach.

It is important to not only promote the widespread adoption of electrified vehicles through new car sales, but also to reduce the CO2 emitted by vehicles that are already being used by people on the road today. Therefore, Toyota is working with various partners beyond the boundaries of the industry. In Japan, seven private companies, including Toyota, established an association to promote research of production technology for second-generation bioethanol fuel. In the US, Toyota collaborated with ExxonMobil to test fuels with a lower carbon footprint and worked with Chevron on the road trip demonstration using a renewable gasoline blend.

Toyota's multi-pathway approach to sustainable mobility positions the company as a leader in pursuing carbon neutrality. From investing in battery labs to expanding the lineup of eco-friendly vehicles and exploring efficient fuel technologies, Toyota continues to push boundaries and drive positive change in the automotive industry. With a vision for a more promising future, Toyota is determined to create sustainable solutions that benefit the Earth and enrich people's lives worldwide.

One year on, Nord Stream sabotage remains a mystery

FRANKFURT: The September 26, 2022 explosions that damaged the Nord Stream pipelines cut off a major route for Russian gas exports to Europe and fuelled geopolitical tensions already running high over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

But one year on, and despite investigations in three countries, the question of who was responsible for the brazen act of sabotage remains unanswered. In the absence of hard evidence, different theories have emerged pointing the finger at Ukraine, Russia or the United States. All have denied involvement.

Late last September, a series of underwater blasts ruptured three of the four pipelines that make up Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2, spewing gas into the Baltic Sea. Russian energy giant Gazprom had in August already halted flows through Nord Stream 1, the main conduit for Russian natural gas to Germany, amid disputes over the war in Ukraine. The newly completed Nord Stream 2 twin pipelines never opened as Berlin pulled the plug on the project days before Russian troops entered Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

The 10-billion-euro (\$10.6 billion) Nord Stream 2 had long been opposed by Ukraine, the US and eastern European countries who feared it would give Russia too much influence over Germany's energy security. Because the leaks occurred in their exclusive economic zones, Denmark and Sweden opened probes into the attack, as did Germany. All three countries have kept a tight lid on their investigations, which analysts say is unsurprising given the potential diplomatic fallout of what they might uncover. — AFP

BPG's CX focus pays off with mandates for iconic brands

KUWAIT: Award-winning agency BPG (Bates PanGulf, part of WPP) is entering Q4 2023 with incredible growth numbers and several high-profile strategic wins for its specialist MarCom services in UAE, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Oman. BPG's 'digital first, integrated by intent' positioning has paid off handsomely – with over 50 percent revenue growth, amounting to annualized revenues of \$13m to \$15m.

AviBhojani, Group CEO, BPG said: "More than four decades in business have shown us that innovation, agility and customer-centricity determine the survival of the fittest. Today, the brands that are loved are the ones prioritizing customer experience (CX), through a blend of culture, processes and data. BPG 3.0 is here to support the shift in thinking around customer journeys and focusing on their needs. It is an exciting time at BPG as we bring together our incredibly talented and motivated integrated team to serve some of the region's most iconic brands."

This year, BPG has bagged some of the most coveted regional pitches, winning brands such as Trojena - The Mountains of NEOM, Wash, Darna Rewards by Aldar, Uber, Talabat Kuwait, and more.

Building on its exceptional experience in finance and banking, BPG won strategic branding projects for First Abu Dhabi Bank. Other new business wins include Bank Dhofar, RAKBANK and Sohar International Bank, who just acquired HSBC in Oman. The multi-practice mandates encompass integrated marketing, commu-

nications, influencer marketing, creative advertising, PR, branding, media services, digital and performance marketing, social media, and content management.

The exciting pipeline of new business wins has been supplemented by expanding mandates from long-time clients such as Ooredoo, Central Bank of Kuwait and Diraya with Kuwait Banking Association, Wooden Bakery, and Domino's Pizza. BPG's social media practice has steadily expanded, bagging new clients such as Porsche UAE (Al-Nabooda), Titan Watches, and DMCC.

The agency's CX practice, integral to BPG 3.0, has also been one of its fastest growing, having extended and delivered CX strategies and assets to clients across Dubai, Kuwait and Oman. BPG has secured over \$2m worth of annualized revenue, for CX projects varying in scope from designing and refreshing websites and building sales enablement apps to UX/UI optimization.

BPG 3.0 was born after a significant, game-changing creative win in Saudi Arabia. BPG is working on a unified customer experience through its full-service hubs in UAE and Kuwait, supported by BPG Cloudworks – a borderless remote team that stretches from North America and Europe to Egypt, Lebanon, India, Indonesia and the Philippines. This strategic transformation is inspired by culture, powered by insights, human by design and integrated by intent. In 1995, BPG 1.0 was born after winning an integrated mandate from the



(Left to right) Souheil Arabi, Darius LaBelle and AviBhojani of BPG.

Dubai Government. BPG 2.0 emerged in 2003 after winning mandates for public advocacy and creating centres of excellence and offices around the world.

Souheil Arabi, Group Chief Operating Officer, BPG and CEO, BPG Kuwait said: "BPG 3.0 is coming to life as our business is growing in every dimension: teams, services, revenues, and clients. This has been a year of tremendous activity and achievement with some notable wins for our team – which we look forward to celebrating next month at our 27th Annual Offsite, one of BPG's most cherished traditions. We are doubling down on embracing relevant and appropriate AI tools into our day to day lives and excited about the role of CX in brand building."

BPG has continued an expansion trajectory, with 35 percent growth in its talent pool across UX, content, creative, PR and media. The agency continues with its land-

mark BPG NXT graduate training program and has just hired four NXTers in Dubai and two in Kuwait from over 800 qualified applicants. Running since 2006, BPG NXT identifies and nurtures young talent, giving them opportunities to shine. With this program, BPG has given the regional MarCom industry over 100 outstanding professionals.

Darius LaBelle, President, BPG UAE said: "Our ambition is not to be the biggest agency, but the smartest and most valuable one built around our clients' needs. The BPG CX Multiplier, through which we use data and human insights to deliver targeted personal messages across digital and physical channels, has been one of our most successful solutions. We look forward to driving impactful results for our clients, with integrated teams in content, comms, media, data, experience, and brand on every brief."

ABK and Behbehani Motors offer discounts on Volkswagen cars

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is delighted to announce a new collaboration with Behbehani Motors Company, a leading automotive dealership in Kuwait, to provide customers with exclusive discounts on select Volkswagen car models.

As part of this partnership, customers can enjoy significant savings of up to KD 1,600 on the Golf GTI, Tiguan, and T-Roc 2023 models, in addition to 5 years of free maintenance, road assistance, and warranty (terms and conditions apply). This exciting joint venture combines ABK's commitment to offering exceptional value and Volkswagen's expertise in the automotive industry. Volkswagen vehicles offer a multitude of advantages that make them a popular choice. Renowned for their commitment to quality and craftsmanship, they are built with meticulous attention to detail complemented by cutting-edge technology, ensuring durability, reliability, and long-term satisfaction. Additionally, Volkswagen cars are known for their advanced safety features, providing drivers and passengers with a secure driving experience.

ABK understands the importance of providing its

customers with access to high-quality products and services that enhance their lifestyle and meet their evolving needs. By teaming up with Volkswagen Kuwait, ABK aims to deliver excellent value and an unparalleled car buying experience.

Johair Marafi, Acting General Manager of Retail Banking at ABK, expressed her enthusiasm about the partnership, saying, "At ABK, we strive to constantly enhance our offerings and add value for our customers. Our collaboration with Volkswagen Kuwait allows us to go above and beyond by extending exclusive discounts on these popular models. We are thrilled to bring significant savings and exceptional benefits to our valued customers."

Alongside the discounted prices, customers who take advantage of this limited-time offer will enjoy a range of additional benefits that provide peace of mind and ensure they receive comprehensive support throughout their experience. Marafi added, "I would like to thank Volkswagen Kuwait for their collaboration with ABK. Their commitment to quality, innovation, and customer satisfaction correspond with our values and we look forward to a successful campaign together."

ABK remains steadfast in its vision and determination to remain a leading financial institution that consistently surpasses customer expectations. Through the establishment of strategic alliances and the provision of unique benefits, ABK continuously delivers remarkable value and a tailored banking journey for its clients. To avail this exclusive offer, customers

are encouraged to visit to the Volkswagen Kuwait showroom where a dedicated ABK staff member will be ready provide assistance with their inquiries to ensure a seamless experience.

Marafi concluded with an invitation to follow the Bank's social media accounts to remain up to date with the latest marketing initiatives and to benefit from the current promotional campaigns and offers throughout the year. Since its establishment in 1967, ABK has progressed to become one of the leading Kuwaiti banks in the region that offers a wide array of personal, corporate, and private banking products and services. ABK also provides a broad range of local, regional, and global investment solutions and services through its subsidiary, ABK Capital.

Across the region, the Bank offers individuals and corporates the convenience of comprehensive banking and financial services in the Egyptian market through ABK-Egypt's network of 44 branches.

This is in addition to ABK's three branches located in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) in the United Arab Emirates, servicing both Kuwaiti and Emirati individual and corpo-



Johair Marafi



rate clients. ABK is a strong supporter of Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association's 'Let's Be Aware' awareness campaign. Through its various initiatives, the Bank aims to promote financial inclusion by educating Kuwaiti society about customer rights, responsibilities, and the different types of banking and special needs services. Additionally, ABK consistently provides strategic information on how to avoid banking and financial fraud, loan application requirements, digital services, and more.

World central banks pause as soft-landing appears imminent

US business activity remains flat amid mild contraction

KUWAIT: The US Federal Reserve left its benchmark interest rate unchanged at the target range of 5.25 percent to 5.50 percent, as widely expected by the market. The central bank signaled borrowing costs will likely stay higher for longer after one more hike this year. Twelve out of nineteen Fed officials said that they still expect to raise rates once more this year. Markets are now pricing in two rate cuts next year instead of the previously projected four rate cuts. Projections also showed that they expect inflation to fall below 3 percent next year and then return to their initial target of 2 percent by 2026. As inflation remains elevated, the overall sentiment given by the Fed was deemed hawkish as they repeated language on 'extend of additional policy firming. All in all, the so called "soft landing" was a bit far-fetched three months ago, but now seems within reach.

There was no significant change in US business activity as shown in the latest data to come out on Friday. Flash Manufacturing PMI rose from 47.9 previously to 48.9, remaining in contraction territory. Meanwhile, Flash Services PMI dropped slightly to 50.2, allowing the index to remain in expansion territory.

Inflation in Canada

Inflation in Canada accelerated more than expected in August on the back of rising energy prices, with annual CPI coming in at 4 percent versus 3.3 percent in July. On a monthly basis, this represents a 0.4 percent increase versus estimates of a 0.2 percent rise. In their press release, governmental organization Statistics Canada stated, "In addition to facing higher energy prices, Canadians paid more for rent and mortgage interest in August." Following the release of inflation data, markets are pricing in a 56 percent chance of no hike for the upcoming Bank of Canada monetary policy meeting.

The Swiss National Bank kept its policy rate unchanged at 1.75 percent. The latest data in August showed that inflation had in fact declined in recent months and stood at 1.6 percent, thus downplaying the need for an interest rate hike by the SNB. The monetary policy tightening deployed by the SNB seems to have properly fought back against

inflationary pressures so far, however, the SNB reiterated that further tightening can still come into play if deemed necessary.

Eurozone PMIs

As the latest PMI data comes out from the eurozone, both services and manufacturing remain in contraction territory, and there seems to be no sign of growth anytime soon. The eurozone's Composite PMI came in at 47.1 after it had reached 46.7 in August. The European Central Bank's vicious rate hike cycles seems to have taken its toll on the economy with the impact now being clearly felt. The ECB seems to have taken the approach of prioritizing inflation rather than the wellbeing of the economy, and they seem that they will continue that way until they reach their desired inflation target.

and accommodation services, where prices can be volatile and fell in August 2023." Core CPI which excludes food and energy also fell drastically more than anticipated coming in at 6.2 percent from 6.9 percent previously. The Office for National Statistics explained the difference between headline and core figures citing "Rising prices for motor fuel led to the largest upward contribution to the change in the annual rates."

Bank rate

The Bank of England kept its bank rate unchanged at 5.25 percent, after expectations had long been predicting a 25bps hike. The latest flash PMI data to come out on Friday, which the BOE had a sight of prior to its decision, showed a significant drop to 47.2 from 49.5 in August, showing clear signs of recession. The services sector dropped further into contraction and showed the

China loan prime rate

The People's Bank of China's one-year loan prime rate has been kept unchanged at 3.45 percent, while the five year loan prime rate was held at 4.2 percent, both in line with expectations. As recent economic data showed that the world's second largest economy is coming back from a sharp slowdown, policy makers believe that the need for immediate monetary easing can be neglected at this time.

Expectedly, the Bank of Japan kept interest rates unchanged in its last meeting, as it fights to bring inflation to its 2 percent target. Speaking about the decision, Governor Kazuo Ueda said "We have yet to foresee inflation stably and sustainably achieve our price target. That's why we must patiently maintain ultra-loose monetary policy." The BOJ believe that external factors, such as global oil prices, are adding onto inflation and thus believe that there should be no rush to exert stimulus into the economy. However, the BOJ reiterated that should they need to, they will "take additional easing measures without hesitation." Markets have seen the latest remarks by the BOJ as dovish, and that has allowed the Japanese Yen to depreciate further.

The Japanese yen continues to weaken against the US dollar, with the pair closing at 148.37.

Crude oil

In commodities, global benchmark Brent crude rose towards \$95 a barrel as investors digest the prospect of a widening supply deficit after OPEC+ extended supply cuts. Saudi Arabia and Russia extended a combined 1.3 million barrels per day of supply cuts to the end of the year. Brent and WTI have gained ground for three consecutive weeks, and are on track for their biggest quarterly increases since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in Q1 of 2022. Despite the supply cuts, demand concerns remain with China as the key risk due to its sluggish economic recovery.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar
USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30880.

Rates - 21st May, 2023

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.0661	1.0613	1.0736	1.0652	1.0500	1.0800	1.0700
GBP	1.2381	1.2229	1.2424	1.2238	1.2100	1.2500	1.2247
JPY	147.72	147.31	148.45	148.37	146.00	149.00	146.20
CHF	0.8959	0.8930	0.9078	0.9069	0.8900	0.9100	0.8977

UK inflation

Inflation in the United Kingdom fell more than expected coming in at 6.7 percent annually versus 6.8 percent previously. This represents an increase of 0.3 percent on a monthly basis. Expectations were that figures would come in at 7 percent annually and 0.7 percent monthly amid a rise in energy prices globally. The Office for National Statistics stated, "The largest downward contributions to the monthly change in both CPIH and CPI annual rates came from food, where prices rose by less in August 2023 than a year ago,

lowest score since Global Financial Crisis when not taking COVID times into account. As for employment, wages had been a major concern for inflation as they had been surging to high levels, however the latest data shows that employment has dropped to its lowest levels since 2009, and thus canceling out the concern of high wages. That, along with cooling inflationary pressures, must have been key behind the BOE's decision to pause rate hikes. The GBP staggeringly dropped against the USD, with the currency pair closing the week at 1.2238.



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2023

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

Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	32,575	7,582.36	-1.6%	-1.5%	-6.6%	392,334,505	129,916,425	28,727	17.4	1.2	77.4%
Main Market	9,534	5,738.44	-0.3%	0.8%	2.5%	433,626,452	64,985,685	22,785	13.0	0.7	22.6%
All Share	42,109	6,936.46	-1.3%	-1.0%	-4.9%	825,960,957	194,902,110	51,512	14.0	0.8	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Banking	25,267	1,689.82	-1.1%	-0.5%	-5.8%	172,642,287	68,234,981	13,254	17.3	1.1	60.00%
Basic Materials	472	835.85	-2.8%	-5.1%	-3.4%	3,683,666	2,568,916	1,508	9.2	2.1	1.12%
Consumer Discretionary	1,044	1,554.68	0.8%	-2.8%	4.6%	34,193,267	9,871,479	3,376	13.0	0.9	2.48%
Consumer Staples	186	611.06	-1.4%	0.4%	27.3%	3,290,987	1,667,371	263	77.0	1.1	0.44%
Energy	204	976.99	-0.8%	-1.9%	-14.2%	3,670,309	297,105	343	9.4	0.6	0.48%
Financial Services	4,486	1,252.39	-2.0%	-1.4%	-0.4%	365,062,016	60,746,094	14,535	27.0	0.8	10.65%
Health Care	236	475.41	-1.5%	-1.5%	2.9%	55,426	25,042.98	33	12.2	0.9	0.56%
Industrials	3,204	923.76	-1.7%	-1.8%	-14.4%	47,931,472	23,460,453	6,647	14.0	0.9	7.61%
Insurance	914	2,235.24	1.1%	-0.7%	44.1%	1,104,193	1,124,406	212	10.5	0.9	2.17%
Real Estate	2,569	1,198.08	-1.9%	-1.4%	-0.9%	179,347,619	19,786,310	7,918	14.6	0.6	6.10%
Technology	7	534.71	-4.5%	-8.1%	-23.2%	51,864	3,935.07	9	NM	0.7	0.02%
Telecommunications	3,308	1,082.46	-2.5%	-2.0%	-8.4%	12,883,282	6,722,897	3,024	10.2	1.4	7.86%
Utilities	211	505.26	-1.5%	-1.0%	2.1%	2,044,569	393,119	390	15.5	1.7	0.50%

Top Gainers

Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
WARBACAP	136	42.13%	19,541,465	2,629,401	2,039
IFAHR	263	24.64%	22,834,480	5,256,327	1,434
SANAM	165	17.15%	2,600,296	414,355	529
SHIP	741	8.49%	3,541,143	2,638,299	787
ALAQARIA	34.6	8.13%	383,059	12,311	26

Top Losers

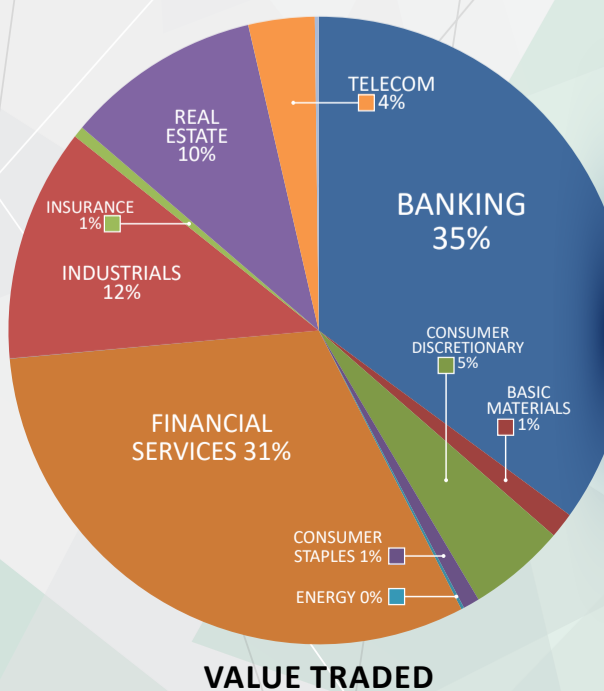
Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
FTI	51	-21.54%	56,228	3,259	49
MADAR	83.1	-17.72%	2,283	192	4
EKTITAB	21.7	-13.20%	6,864,052	156,295	279
ATC	440	-8.14%	55,146	24,821	31
ALOLA	46	-6.50%	3,084,790	147,978	208

Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
IFA	206	4.04%	55,865,082	11,269,588	1,169
ARZAN	162	-3.57%	42,838,308	7,152,768	716
GBK	259	2.37%	38,553,861	10,037,027	1,416
WARBABANK	187	-4.10%	35,276,345	6,771,702	1,691
MAZAYA	55.3	8.01%	33,727,197	1,843,469	871

Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
NBK	914	-1.19%	21,669,269	19,878,735	2,117
KFH	738	-1.20%	24,912,278	18,480,693	4,189
AGHC	529	6.01%	22,467,305	12,020,913	2,410
IFA	206	4.04%	55,865,082	11,269,588	1,169
GBK	259	2.37%	38,553,861	10,037,027	1,416



Market Summary:

- Premier market volume and value increased 18% and 7%, respectively. Main market volume decreased 11% while value increased 20% and 2%
- The Premier index failed to overcome the resistance and it's on a downtrend. The Main index is retreating after failing to maintain the support level.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 6936, with support levels at 6933, 6918, and 6862, while resistance at 6959. The Premier index closed at 7582, with support levels at 7555, 7454, and 7342, while resistance at 7591. The Main index closed at 5738, with support levels at 5723, 5696, and 5675, with resistance at 5750.

Lifestyle



US rapper Lauryn Hill performs onstage during the Global Citizen Festival at Central Park in New York City on September 23, 2023. - AFP photos



Changbin of 3RACHA performs onstage during the Global Citizen Festival.



Red Hot Chili Peppers' singer Anthony Kiedis performs during the Global Citizen Festival.

Lauryn Hill, Red Hot Chili Peppers draw fans to rainy Central Park aid fest

Lauryn Hill, the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Jungkook drew tens of thousands of fans to Central Park on Saturday despite torrential rains, as part of a marathon concert urging global development aid. Majestic rap icon Lauryn Hill graced the stage as her seminal album "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill" turns 25, performing her smash single "Doo Wop (That Thing)" and reuniting The Fugees during the Global Citizen festival in New York. The legendary hip-hop trio performed tracks including "Killing Me Softly" and "Ready Or Not."

"Africa needs to control their own natural resources. Haiti needs to control their own natural resources. The world, we need to stop famine," said member Wyclef Jean to cheers, as fans waved their lit phones. The message was in line with the aims of the day, which marries musical performance with calls to increase funding against global ills including poverty and climate change.

The Red Hot Chili Peppers closed out the night with a set throwing back to their classics including "Can't Stop," "Scar Tissue," "Dani California," "Snow (Hey Oh)" and "California." And Jungkook had the poncho-clad crowd screaming and swaying along as he serenaded them with hits including "Still With You."

Wearing acid-wash jeans and a brown shirt, the megastar told fans it was necessary to "make an impact together to make sure everyone,



Fans record with their phones as South Korean singer Jungkook performs onstage during the Global Citizen Festival.

everywhere has access to their basic rights like food and education." He wasn't billed as a headliner but Jungkook was a major draw of the night: many drenched concertgoers streamed out of the park just after his set ended, even though the evening at that point was scheduled to continue for another three hours.

Earlier, Anitta brought her impressive twerks and dance party of a show to the stage, performing hits including her recent "Funk Rave." Brazil's biggest pop star called attention to the importance of protecting the Amazon rainforest, reminding fans it's "the lungs of our planet."

Just prior to kicking off her boo-

ty-shaking set, she said that governments must do more to "protect the people there, the indigenous people, the communities there... whose only reality is the Amazon." Rappers including Busta Rhymes and Common put on a tribute to the 50th anniversary of hip-hop, one of many the city has hosted in recent months.

Fight against hunger

Taking place since 2012 as world leaders gather in New York for the UN General Assembly, Global Citizen distributes free tickets to supporters who pledge to take actions such as sending letters to their governments in support of development aid.

Pledges came from leaders including French President Emmanuel Macron, who announced via video message a \$150 million commitment to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). "We have to fight together against poverty, climate change and for biodiversity," Macron said. "This is why we want to take our part as well."

The Rome-headquartered IFAD is an arm of the United Nations aimed at addressing poverty and hunger in rural areas of developing countries. Global Citizen welcomed Macron's commitment in a statement, adding that "much more needs to be done to provide crucial support to millions of smallholder farmers around the world, who produce 70 percent of food in low and middle-income countries."

The institution urged governments to double their climate adaptation funding, and make sure IFAD reaches its funding target of \$2 billion by the end of 2023. Along with Macron, the organization said Norway had pledged \$90 million to IFAD. - AFP

French rapper MHD gets 12 years in prison for youth's murder

French rapper MHD was sentenced Saturday to 12 years in prison for the 2018 murder of a young man in Paris who was rammed with a car before being set upon by a mob and stabbed. Five of his fellow defendants were also jailed over the killing, receiving jail terms of between 10 and 18 years, over what prosecutors said was a fight between rival gangs. Three other men were acquitted.

The pioneer of afro-trap - a mix of hip-hop and African traditions - MHD rose to fame after becoming a viral sensation in 2015. The 29-year-old, whose real name is Mohamed Sylla, was charged with homicide in January 2019 and imprisoned. He was released after a year and a half in custody as investigations continued, and released a new album.

As Saturday's verdict was handed down, several women in the public gallery burst into tears. MHD hugged one of them, maintaining his composure. Those convicted - who all pleaded not guilty - have 10 days to appeal.

During his final statement to the court before it retired to render the verdict after three weeks of proceedings, he had again proclaimed his innocence. "From the beginning, I have maintained my innocence in this case and I will continue to maintain my innocence," he told the packed court.

The prosecutor had asked for an 18-year prison sentence for the rapper, acquittals for two of the accused, and jail sentences of 13-20 years for the others. On the night of July 5, 2018, 23-year-old Loic K was rammed by a black Mercedes and then beaten up and stabbed by around a dozen people



French rapper MHD arrives for the opening of his and eight other men's trial over a murder committed during a brawl between two rival gangs in Paris in 2018, at the Palais de Justice courthouse in Paris, on September 4, 2023. - AFP

in a gritty part of the capital's 10th arrondissement.

Although the rapper denied having been at the scene, a local resident filmed the incident from his window, and the Mercedes was quickly identified as belonging to MHD. Other witnesses identified him by his haircut or a sweatshirt by Puma - for which he was a brand ambassador - according to investigative reports seen by AFP.

The car was found abandoned and burned out in a car park a day after the killing. "A judicial truth emerged despite the law of silence," said Juliette Chapelle, lawyer for the victim's family. The killing happened in the Cite des Chaufourniers, a low-income estate in the area that the former pizza delivery driver continued to frequent despite his fame.

The football-mad performer, who was born in France to Guinean and Senegalese parents, is best known for "Afro Trap Part 3 (Champions League)", a song in praise of the Paris Saint-Germain football club. He had made waves abroad, drawing admiration from global stars such as Drake and Madonna. - AFP

In the shadow of Hollywood's strikes, beauty professionals suffer

Professional hairdressers and makeup artists work in the shadows of celebrities to make them sparkle on sets, red carpets and magazine covers. But from New York to Los Angeles, the historic strike of American screenwriters and actors is leaving the workers responsible for making up the stars with blank appointment books and empty savings accounts.

Matthew Monzon, 52, has been a celebrity hairdresser in New York since 1997, coiffing the likes of Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Brooke Shields, Keri Russell and Anna Kendrick. But since the screenwriters, and even more notably the actors, have stopped work - part of collective bargaining efforts to obtain fair pay from studios as well as curbs on the use of AI - Monzon says "finances are dwindling."

So far he told AFP he's been able to cover his rent and health insurance payments, but that "there are very small amounts in my bank account at this point." But he supports the movement: "I want the actors and the writers to get what they deserve."

For costume designers to makeup artists, manicurists to stylists to hairdressers - the impact of the strikes has rippled across the entire entertainment ecosystem that depends on a packed Hollywood calendar. Negotiations between studio bosses and screenwriters resumed this week, but talks are slow.

For Rebecca Restrepo, that's left daily life at a standstill. She used to lug 60-pound suitcases of makeup and lighting, dashing between TV studios and hotels. But she says since July, things have dried up: "Zero work."

"Right now, I have a personal client, she's a billionaire. But they only need make up once in a blue moon," said the resident of Queens. Restrepo said her

industry is feeling the hit even more intensely because the pandemic meant "a year-and-a-half without work."

"And now with this strike, you know we were all just trying to make day to day and now, it's killing all of us."

'The Wild West'

Most beauty professionals work independently with the help of an agency, which maintains their client list and portfolio along with organizing their schedule. Many of these artists worked in fashion before moving into the world of Hollywood and celebrities into the 2000s.

profession's future. "Because of Instagram, everyone has a filter, everyone's a toucher, everyone thinks they're a makeup artist," said Restrepo.

"It's like the Wild West."

Matin Maulawizada has been a makeup artist established in New York for 26 years, and has worked on stars including Angelina Jolie and Claire Danes. He said pay rates have been cut to a tenth of what productions used to give prior to the advent of streaming platforms.

At 59, Maulawizada is hoping to join the Make-Up Artists & Hair Stylists Guild for New York's audiovisual and theater



Striking WGA (Writers Guild of America) members picket with striking SAG-AFTRA members outside Netflix studios on September 22, 2023 in Los Angeles, California. - AFP

They describe their work as an art that adapts to circumstance: "A premiere, it's super glamorous; an evening talk show, it's a little more chic, more cocktail; a morning talk show, you want to keep it fresh and natural," Restrepo explained.

But today, they describe an increasingly competitive field, arduous working conditions and uncertainty about the pro-

industries of New York, in order to benefit from standards negotiated with production studios or Broadway theaters. He also launched an Instagram initiative called the "beauty4beautyproject" to support professionals like him, who are impacted by the strikes. - AFP



A cosplayer poses for a portrait at Comic Con Africa in Johannesburg on September 23, 2023. - AFP photos



Visitors at Comic Con Africa play on vintage pinball machines.



A collector (right) looks at old copies of a spiderman comic book at Comic Con Africa.



A cosplayer walks in front of the main stage at Comic Con Africa.



A man and his daughter play on a vintage video game at Comic Con Africa.



A gamer tries out a virtual reality game at Comic Con Africa.

Africa's top pop culture festival showcases homegrown superheroes

Africa's largest pop culture festival opened this week with a spotlight on home-grown superheroes including a black knight battling South Africa's rolling power cuts and a warrior inspired by the legendary Zulu king Shaka.

Clad in superhero capes and sci-fi costumes, thousands of people flocked to a vast expo center south of Johan-

nesburg, South Africa, on Friday for the first day of Comic Con Africa, which runs until Monday. The festival, in its fourth edition, has a dedicated 'Afro Geek' pavilion, showcasing comics reflecting African heritage and society.

"The cartoons we used to watch, particularly Tarzan, had this colonial mentality around Africans... it would be a character in Africa but the Africans

would be invisible," Trevor Ngwenya, an artist, told AFP. "It didn't sit well with me".

Ngwenya's latest project is a superhero inspired by King Shaka, the 19th-century leader still revered for having united a large swathe of the country as the Zulu nation. Other 'Afro Geek' offerings include a paladin fighting the relentless power outages that have battered South Africa in recent years and

a comic series inspired by African mythology.

"Seeing superheroes that I look like brings more of a relatability to me. It makes me want to read the comics a little more," said Ethan Msithini, 26, an animator promoting the Kidwiz Inc series featuring the blackout busting hero.

The festival has been praised for opening doors for cosplayers in a coun-

try and continent where the industry is not as established as in more developed parts of the world. "I just really love that people of color are taking back ownership of certain things like fantasy and sci-fi," said Abigail Backman-Daniels, a festivalgoer dressed as a Valkyrie from the Thor movie franchise. - AFP

A cappella singing warms Durban's Zulu soul

Every little detail counts in an isicathamiya competition: the harmony, the choreography, the costumes, the entrance on stage, the exit and, of course, the singing. On Saturday night at a Durban theatre in eastern South Africa, Philani Ntuli and his group of 15 singers have just aced their performance, drawing loud cheers from the public.

The precise five-minute routine brought out their powerful bass voices enhanced by two pairs of altos and sopranos. Group members hopped rhythmically from one foot to the other, before leaving the stage in single file, the jackets of their salmon-colored suits folded on their forearms.

While many South Africans were glued to their TVs as the Springboks took on Ireland in the Rugby World Cup, the theatre was buzzing with several hundred music lovers. Developed in South Africa after the First World War, this a cappella singing style is anchored in Zulu culture. Competitions - often lasting all night - are a mainstay of the genre.

In Durban, performers from at least 130 all-male groups battled to the tune of catchy rhymes, singing about everyday contemporary themes, from road safety to COVID-19 measures. Mostly dressed in matching suits inspired by 1940s and 50s fashion, the ensembles, comprising an average of more than 10 members, quickly followed one another on stage to the delight of concertgoers.

"It's more based into the reality than other music," Nomtobeko Mtobela, 35, who came to the theatre with two friends, said of the genre. "It has

that - I don't know how to call it - that African thing into it".

Furtive steps

Isicathamiya has its roots in a mix of local music, religious choirs and the so-called 'minstrel' shows popular in the United States in the 19th century. It became popular thanks to contests organized by Zulu miners working in big South African cities, who used to meet on Saturday evenings and sing until dawn.

To this day, competitions are organized throughout the year, particularly in Johannesburg and the Zulu heartland of KwaZulu-Natal, of which Durban is the largest city. The Saturday night contest, however, was advertised as one of the most important of the year and carried special significance.

Ending well past midnight, it fell on Heritage Day, a public holiday aiming to promote the diversity in what is known as the "Rainbow Nation". Isicathamiya takes its name from the Zulu word "cathama" which evokes the action of walking softly and furtively like a cat.

It gained international recognition with American singer Paul Simon's 1986 album "Graceland", which featured leading isicathamiya group Ladysmith Black Mambazo. Almost four decades later, it is still going strong, as testified by the large number of young singers taking part in the Durban contest.

20-year-old Ntuli, who is the frontman of his group, thinks it is a good thing for young people. "It keeps us away from criminality because we spend most of our time rehearsing," he said. Winners took home prestige as well as a monetary prize. The festival included awards for elegance and a separate beauty contest for women called "onobuhle". - AFP



Chunyiswa poses backstage wearing the dress she will present at the Natal Playhouse Theatre during an onobuhle (a traditional women's beauty contest) event.



A worker sifts through the soil as excavations continue at the site discovered in 2022, of a cemetery dating from the Roman era, in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip on September 21, 2023. - AFP photos

Four tombs discovered in Roman necropolis in Gaza

Four Roman tombs dating back 2,000 years have been discovered in the Gaza Strip, a Palestinian archaeologist said Saturday, bemoaning a lack of resources that has delayed excavations in the besieged territory.

"With the discovery of these four tombs, the total number of tombs in this Roman cemetery, dating from the period between the first century BC and the second century AD, now stands at 134 tombs," said archaeologist Fadel Al-Otol. The discovery marks the first complete Roman necropolis, or cemetery, fully unearthed in Gaza, he told AFP. "Fragments of pottery and metal pieces used in funeral rituals" have been found in the resting places, added Otol.

The cemetery is notable for its pyramid-shaped tombs. Inside them, a team of technicians, working under the direction of Otol, undertake restoration work using rudimentary tools. "Two lead coffins, one adorned with clusters of grapes and the other with dolphins

swimming in water, were recently discovered on the site," noted the Palestinian archaeologist, who lamented a lack of financial resources.

The funding for the excavation and restoration work comes from the British Council's Fund for the Protection of

Culture. Impoverished Gaza, home to around 2.3 million Palestinians, is under a tight land, air and sea blockade imposed by the Zionist entity, whose defense ministry controls all crossings except Rafah, which is controlled by Egypt. - AFP



An archaeologist excavates a human skeleton on September 23, 2023, at the site of a cemetery dating from the Roman era in Gaza.



Workers brush blocks of stone as excavations continue at the site of a cemetery dating from the Roman era in Gaza.

Sports

Assefa smashes women's marathon world record in Berlin, Kipchoge wins men's race

Kipchoge's fifth Berlin win takes him past Ethiopian Haile Gebrselassie's four victories

BERLIN: Ethiopian Tigist Assefa smashed the women's marathon world record by more than two minutes in Berlin on Sunday as Kenyan Eliud Kipchoge won the men's race for a record fifth time. Assefa clocked 2hr 11min 53sec, more than two minutes ahead of the previous world mark of 2:14:04 set by Kenyan Brigid Kosgei in Chicago in 2019.

"I wanted to break the marathon world record, but I couldn't imagine that it would result in a time under 2:12," said the 29-year-old. "I am very happy." Assefa said she held back in the first half of the race "so that I wouldn't be tired in the second half... in the second part, I could bring a lot more power into it."

She said she hoped her win would "motivate many talented women, not only those on a high level but those who may be lower down to rise up." Assefa finished almost six minutes ahead of Kenyan Sheila Chepkirui. Tanzanian Magdalena Shauri finished third, nearly seven minutes behind Assefa.

Chepkirui told reporters she "had to suffer in the second half", but said "I'm happy, I'm on the podium." Assefa broke away early in perfect conditions in the German capital and maintained her pace to become the fourth woman to set the world record in Berlin but the first since Japan's Naoko Takahashi in 2001.

Assefa crossed the line just after men's world record holder Kipchoge won his race in 2hr 02min 42sec. Kipchoge finished 31sec ahead of countryman Vincent Kipkemoi with Ethiopian Tadese Takele third at 42sec. Kipchoge's fifth Berlin win takes him past Ethiopian Haile Gebrselassie's four victories but

the Kenyan finished outside his previous world record, set last year in Berlin, of 2:01:09.

"Sure, I expected myself to be able to set a world record again, but I can live with the fact that it didn't work out," Kipchoge told the post-race press conference. "The beauty of sport is to accept the outcome and move on" Kipchoge said "sport is really beautiful".

Asked what had changed from his first win in Berlin to his last, he said "running is no longer an individual event, running is a team event." Kipchoge, who has won the last two Olympic golds, looked forward to the 2024 Games in Paris, saying he "hoped to repeat his victory" but said he would be "happy (to be on) the podium".

'Coming home'

Despite doubts after a surprise sixth-place at the Boston Marathon in April, 38-year-old Kipchoge said he felt he was "coming home" at where he has set the world record at twice. Kipchoge and Ethiopian Derseh Kindie pulled away from the pack early, the two crossing the halfway point with a split of 60:21, slower than the Kenyan's 2022 world-record time of 59:51.

Kindie, whose personal best stands seven minutes outside the world mark, kept pace with Kipchoge until 31 kilometres, where he suddenly fell back and appeared to drop out of the race, walking gingerly on the footpath as other runners overtook him.

Kipchoge kept up his pace and crossed the line well clear of other runners for a record fifth win. Two



BERLIN: Winner of the women's race Ethiopia's Tigist Assefa (L) and winner of the men's race Kenya's Eliud Kipchoge celebrate on the podium with their trophies after the Berlin Marathon on September 24, 2023 in Berlin. — AFP

minutes before the marathon began, police dragged climate protesters carrying buckets of orange paint off the course within sight of the runners standing on the starting blocks. Only traces of paint remained

as the race began on time. Berlin mayor Kai Wegner started the race pressing a red buzzer, the organizers feeling the traditional starting pistol was inappropriate in light of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. — AFP

Bowling Club gears up for international event

KUWAIT: Deputy Chairman of Kuwait Bowling Club, Director of the World Championship which Kuwait will host in October said all committees preparing for this international event has completed its preparations in a way that will bring out the championship in what is fitting for Kuwait's name and its ability to organize such important events.



Mohammad Al-Farisi

Mohammad Al-Farisi said 400 players representing 24 men's teams and 12 women's teams will participate in the tournament competitions which succeeded in attracting the world's champions, as the prizes were increased in addition to Kuwait's possession of all aspects of success, besides having the bowling complex being among the best in the Middle East, and capable to host such a number of players.

Al-Farisi said the Board of Directors and Chairman Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah worked on removing all obstacles in the way of hosting this international event and exerted much efforts, as they presented to the international federation all guarantees that confirm Kuwait's ability to host the event, which will see an opening ceremony that will reflect all cultures of the world. He concluded by wishing Kuwait players all success.

Maria Sakkari downs Dolehide for WTA Guadalajara title

GUADALAJARA: Second-seeded Maria Sakkari ended her four-year wait for a second WTA title on Saturday, beating Caroline Dolehide 7-5, 6-3 to win the 1000 level Guadalajara Open. Greece's Sakkari, ranked ninth in the world, had come up empty in six finals since her breakthrough victory in Rabat in 2019.

That included the Guadalajara final last year, when she lost to American Jessica Pegula, and a loss to Coco Gauff in the final at Washington this year. An emotional Sakkari thanked her coach of five years, noting they'd waited "more than four years for a second title. "We've heard so many bad things - that I will never win a title, that I'm a top-five player with only winning one title, that was very hard for me to overcome," she said. "I'm so happy that I did it here this week."

The victory came less than a month after Sakkari was unceremoniously dumped from the first round of the US Open, her third straight first-round exit at a Grand Slam. Sakkari had said at Flushing Meadows she was "suffering on the court" and was "uncertain" about what to do about it.

This week, however, Sakkari has looked in total command, becoming the first player this year to reach the final of a WTA 1000 event without dropping a set. Sakkari ended a fairytale week for Dolehide, ranked 111th in the world and playing in her first career final.

Dolehide, who will rise to inside the top 50, came from a set down to beat Peyton Stearns in three tiebreaks in the first round, she beat



ZAPOPAN: Greece's Maria Sakkari (C) and USA's Caroline Dolehide (R), wearing Mexican hats and holding their trophies, pose on the podium with Argentine tennis player Gabriela Sabatini during the awards ceremony at the end of the WTA Guadalajara Open women's singles final. — AFP

eighth-seeded Ekaterina Alexandrova in the third round and saved four match points in her quarter-final win over Martina Trevisan.

In her first career semi-final Dolehide defeated 2020 Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin. Dolehide demonstrated the same grit she'd shown all week when she clawed back an early break in the opening set to take a 5-4 lead.

But Sakkari won the next two games, taking advantage of one of Dolehide's six double faults to break for 6-5. Down 0-30 in the next game,

Sakkari battled back to take the set, and finally gained the upper hand in the second with a break for a 3-2 lead. That proved to be enough, although there was a tense moment in the seventh game, when Sakkari's 40-0 lead evaporated before she steadied herself to take the game with her third ace of the contest.

She closed it out with one more break, converting her second match point. When Dolehide's volley sailed long, Sakkari fell to the court and covered her face with her hands as the tears came. — AFP

Verstappen closes in on title after Japanese Grand Prix romp

SUZUKA: Max Verstappen hailed his "predictable" Red Bull after taking a giant step towards a third straight title and helping his team clinch the constructors' championship by winning the Japanese Grand Prix on Sunday. The flying Dutchman finished ahead of McLaren pair Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri in Suzuka to extend his runaway lead in the overall standings to 177 points over nearest challenger and teammate Sergio Perez.

Verstappen can win the championship at the Qatar Grand Prix next month and he may not even have to wait until the Sunday race if he seals the deal in the Saturday sprint. Verstappen's champagne is still on ice but he celebrated Red Bull's second straight constructors' championship in Japan, even though Perez retired from the race.

Verstappen has won 13 of 16 races so far this season and he said his car "is just better this year". "The people are pretty much in the same spot and we know that they're good," he said. "It's about working with an even better car this year. A bit more predictable this year as well." Verstappen was back to his breathtaking best after a disappointing fifth-place finish at last week's Singapore Grand Prix. He held off a double challenge from McLaren to take the lead ahead of Norris at the first turn.

First the Dutchman veered right to squeeze out Piastri, who was starting from second on the grid, then moved left to stop Norris from darting through the gap. "I saw in the right mirror that Oscar had a little bit of a jump on me but at the same time I saw in my left mirror that Lando had a real jump on me," said Verstappen.

"Luckily nothing happened, it all got quite close - that's racing, that's how it goes at the start." Verstappen said it was "quite a straightforward race" from then on, with the Dutchman finishing an impressive 19.387sec ahead of Norris. "No real issues throughout the race, and I think that just sums up the weekend," said Verstappen, who finished fastest in



SUZUKA: Winner Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen celebrates on the podium at the end of the Formula One Japanese Grand Prix at the Suzuka circuit, Mie prefecture on September 24, 2023. — AFP

qualifying and all three practices in Japan. "It's just been an incredible weekend to drive the car."

Norris and Piastri finished on the podium ahead of Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, who was fourth ahead of Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton and Ferrari's Carlos Sainz. Norris also finished second behind Sainz in Singapore, and he said McLaren were "getting there".

"We're there on pure pace - nothing had to go away, we're just we deserve to be," said the British driver. "An incredible day for everyone but also for myself - things went maybe not always to plan, but the pace was extremely strong."

Australian rookie Piastri took his first podium finish after coming fourth at the British Grand Prix. Piastri, who signed a new deal with McLaren earlier this week, said he expects to build on the achievement. "There's definitely a few things that if I had this race again I would have done a bit different, but

that's all part of the learning," said the 22-year-old. "It's exciting to know that we can finish on the podium, even if I feel like there's more to come." — AFP

Perez got into trouble when he picked up two penalties early in the race. The Mexican retired a few laps later, telling his team "the car doesn't feel right". He later came back out, ensuring that he would not have to serve his penalty at the next race.

"It was just a disastrous weekend," said Perez. "It all started into turn one with a really bad start. I was squeezed and just a passenger there, in a sandwich." Perez's woes did not cost Red Bull the constructors' championship, with nearest challengers Mercedes unable to stay in contention. "We did manage to get ahead of Sainz which was great teamwork and good work from the guys in the pit stop and the strategy group," said Hamilton. "That was the maximum we could have achieved today." — AFP

Sri Lanka beat Pakistan to set up India cricket final

HANGZHOU: In-form Sri Lanka, fresh from a stunning Twenty20 series victory in England, beat Pakistan by six wickets on Sunday to reach the women's cricket final at the Asian Games and set up a clash with India. Pakistan never got going on a difficult batting surface affected by days of rain at the Zhejiang University of Technology ground in Hangzhou, and could only muster a below-par 75-9 in their 20 overs.

Left-arm medium pace bowler Udeshika Prabodhani led the Sri Lankan attack with three wickets and Kavisha Dilhari took two with her offspin. Sri Lanka sauntered to their target with 21 balls to spare to spark wild celebrations as their players ran on to the field to high-five and hug each other. Earlier, the Indians routed Bangladesh for 51 on the same ground with all-rounder Pooja Vastrakar, only drafted into the squad as a last-minute replacement, taking four wickets.

They wasted no time in racing to an eight-wicket victory with more than 11 overs remaining as Jemimah Rodrigues top-scored with an unbeaten 20. Rodrigues is yet to be dismissed in the Asian Games, scoring 47 not out in the quarter-final against Malaysia, which was later abandoned because of rain.

It was the second time in just over a week that Sri Lankan cricketers had proven party-poopers by preventing a Pakistan-India major cricket final. The country's men's team beat Pakistan in the semi-final of the 50-over Asia Cup in Colombo to prevent a final showdown against their fierce rivals India.

Earlier this month, Sri Lanka's women secured a historic first-ever white-ball series triumph over England, winning 2-1. Pakistan and Bangladesh will face off for bronze on Monday before India take on Sri Lanka in the gold-medal match. — AFP

Sports

Son double holds Arsenal, Liverpool cut Man City's Premier League lead

Liverpool cut Manchester City's lead at the top to two points

LONDON: Son Heung-min's double earned Tottenham a point from a pulsating 2-2 draw against Arsenal, as Liverpool moved into second in the Premier League with a 3-1 win over West Ham on Sunday.

Brighton climb up to third after beating Bournemouth 3-1, but Chelsea still cannot buy a goal as Mauricio Pochettino's men lost 1-0 at home to Aston Villa. Spurs have still won just once in their last 31 away league meetings with Arsenal, but the optimism garnered under Ange Postecoglou's early weeks in charge was not punctured at the Emirates despite twice falling behind in the north London derby. Arsenal's bright start was rewarded when Bukayo Saka's strike was deflected into his own net by Cristian Romero. But for the fifth time in seven games under Postecoglou, Tottenham fought back from a goal down.

David Raya has displaced Aaron Ramsdale as Arsenal's number one goalkeeper as he was selected for the third consecutive game by Mikel Arteta. The Spaniard justified that decision with a stunning save to deny Brennan Johnson his first Tottenham goal.

However, the visitors were not denied for long as James Maddison's cross was

swept home by Son at the near post three minutes before half-time. Romero's afternoon went from bad to worse when he was harshly penalized for handball and Saka stroked home the resulting penalty to restore Arsenal's lead.

But the Gunners lost record signing Declan Rice at half-time to injury and that proved costly as an error from his replacement Jorginho gifted Tottenham an equalizer just a minute later. Maddison was again the creator as he robbed the Italian midfielder and teed up Son for a cool finish into the far corner.

Liverpool's fearsome firepower

Liverpool cut Manchester City's lead at the top to two points as Jurgen Klopp's men showed more promising signs of getting back to their best. The Reds sank to fifth last season, but have the firepower that could make them the biggest threat to City's throne as champions.

Mohamed Salah opened the scoring from the penalty spot after he was upended in the box by Nayef Aguerd. West Ham's only previous defeat this season came at home to City last weekend and they bounced back to fully merit their equalizer before half-time when Jarrod Bowen's diving header found the far corner.

However, the Hammers were undone by a moment of magic when Alexis Mac Allister's inch-perfect chip picked out Darwin Nunez, who volleyed into the far corner. Diogo Jota then came off the bench to make it 3-1 five minutes from time.

Mitoma's instant impact

Brighton took advantage of dropped points for both north London sides to move up to third after coming from behind to beat Bournemouth 3-1. Roberto De Zerbi made nine changes from the side that started the Seagulls' first ever European game in a 3-2 defeat by AEK Athens and paid the price in a slow start.

Dominic Solanke fired Bournemouth in front after a glaring error from Brighton 'keeper Bart Verbruggen. Milos Kerkez's own goal brought Brighton level in first-half stoppage time, but that did not stop De Zerbi sending on Kaoru Mitoma at the break.

The Japanese winger took just 16 seconds to put Brighton in front with a precise finish and Mitoma made sure of the points when he headed home Pervis Estupinan's cross 14 minutes from time. Chelsea's disastrous start to Pochettino's reign goes on as the



LIVERPOOL: West Ham United's Czech defender #05 Vladimir Coufal crosses the ball past Liverpool's Scottish defender #26 Andrew Robertson (L) during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and West Ham United at Anfield in Liverpool. — AFP

toothless Blues failed to score for a third consecutive game.

Malo Gusto's straight red card for a lunge on Lucas Digne on the hour mark gave the home side a mountain to climb at Stamford Bridge. Villa made their man advantage count when Ollie Watkins'

powerful strike beat Robert Sanchez from a narrow angle.

Despite spending more than any other Premier League club in the summer transfer window, Chelsea have taken just five points from Pochettino's first six league games in charge. — AFP



CASARES: King Felipe VI of Spain (L) claps as team Europe's captain Suzann Pettersen (R) lifts the trophy to celebrate retaining the Solheim Cup, on the last day of the 2023 Solheim Cup biennial team golf competition at Finca Cortesin golf club in Casares. — AFP

Europe retains Solheim Cup

CASARES: Spanish star Carlota Ciganda was the home heroine on Sunday as she birdied the 16th and 17th holes to beat Nelly Korda of the United States and secure the point that ensured Europe retained the Solheim Cup.

Europe, who trailed 4-0 after Friday's opening session, needed to split the last-day singles at Finca Cortesin in Spain to gain a tie and retain the team trophy. American Lexi Thompson beat Europe's Emily Pedersen in the final match to end a thrilling competition 14-14.

It was the first time that the matches have ended in a draw and the first time Europe has held the Cup three times in row. Ciganda, all square with three to play, holed from four feet at the 16th and from two feet at the short 17th.

"I'm so happy," said Ciganda, who was congratulated by Spain's King Felipe VI, and in turn thanked European captain Suzann Pettersen. "I love Suzann, I love Spain and I

love the Solheim Cup," said Ciganda, who won all four of her matches.

Pettersen, who famously holed the winning putt at Gleneagles in Scotland four years ago, shed tears of joy. "It was meant to be for Carlota in Spain," she said. "I said to her going down 16 is this what you would have wanted, and she said she was up for it."

Another home star was Caroline Hedwall who turned a three-hole deficit into a two hole win over Ally Ewing. With the pair all square with two to play, Hedwall sank a 30 foot birdie putt at the 17th.

It was an amazing turnaround for a home side that suffered a 4-0 drubbing on the opening morning foursomes. "There is no such thing as giving up," said Pettersen. "We got off to a rough start, but turned it round and there will be a big party tonight."

The final day started in a tie. Leona Maguire got the first point on the board with a decisive 4 and 3 victory over Rose Zhang. A star of Europe's win in Ohio as a rookie two years ago, the Irish woman helped clinch the point by holing a 35-foot eagle at the par four 14th. "It feels just incredible," said the 28-year-old after nudging Europe into the lead for the first time. "Suzann gave me a job to do and the fans were just fantastic."

Momentum

The first point for the USA came in the top match with Megan Khang beating Linn Grant by one hole in a high-quality contest. The American was six under par in the tricky, windy conditions. "I'm super proud," said Khang. "I knew that Linn would bring it and be a tough opponent."

Danielle Kang put America 10-9 ahead with a 4 and 2 win over Charley Hull, but Anna Nordqvist, Europe's most experienced player, tied the score again with a 2 and 1 victory over Jennifer Kupcho.

As the tension mounted the tide seemed to turn in America's favour. Europe's Georgia Hall, who had been two up early in the back nine, three-putted the 17th from 12 feet to allow Andrea Lee to level the match.

At the same time, Europe's Gemma Dryburgh, who had been three up, missed a short par putt at the 16th and also fell back to a tie with Cheyenne Knight. Lilia Yu, who won 4 and 3 over Madelene Sagstrom, and Angel Yin, 2 and 1 over Celine Boutier, added two points for the Americans.

Hedwall and Ciganda switched the momentum and Thompson's 2 and 1 win over Pedersen in the final match was only good enough to make it 14-14. Europe had kept the Cup. — AFP

Springboks hit reset after loss to Ireland in Rugby World Cup

PARIS: Springbok wing Cheslin Kolbe believes the defending champions 'can learn' from their 13-8 defeat by Ireland in Paris on Saturday as they start planning to reboot their Rugby World Cup campaign. The Springboks were edged in a titanic contest at a packed and rocking Stade de France which saw wings Mack Hansen and Cheslin Kolbe touch down for their respective teams.

The Boks, however, were let down by some indifferent goalkicking and stalled by some heroic and furious Irish defence, even as the clock ticked down at the end of the game, which left them just short of the team ranked number one in the world.

For now, though, the focus is to head down to Marseille and prepare for their final pool match against Tonga next Sunday. "The quicker you get over it the better it is for the group," captain Siya Kolisi said after the game, a sentiment that was echoed by Kolbe. "I am super proud of each and every player," said the winger after the match.

"We wanted the victory but we gave everything. We left some opportunities out on the field so we have to

make sure we come back next week and we capitalise on them. "It's disappointing but we can learn from this. As a team we now have to focus on the next match."

South Africa lie second in Pool B and need to beat Tonga to ensure they reach the quarter-finals which, if Ireland beat Scotland to win the group, is likely to be against the hosts France. In both cases the spotlight will be focusing intensely on their goal-kickers.

Fly-half Manie Libbok converted a first half penalty but then missed a conversion and a penalty, which may yet lead to Handre Pollard, who was called up as cover for injured hooker Malcolm Marx, moving into contention for the Tonga game. "I am gutted for him (Libbok) but he is professional. He doesn't go out there to miss kicks. He can only learn and grow from this," said Kolbe.

When Faf de Klerk stepped up he failed with two penalties, although one of them tantalisingly rebounded off a post and very nearly produced a try for the Boks. "We back them," said centre Jesse Kriel. "It speaks volumes for how confident we are as a team. We want guys who are bold and brave and make big decisions. If they feel they can get points they go for it."

The likely spectre of playing France—whether with or without the injured Antoine Dupont - in the last eight is looming large on the horizon but for the moment the Boks are keeping their eyes firmly on next weekend.

"We would have loved to win to keep the confidence going," said Kolbe. "Now we have the opportunity against Tonga to go out and perform. We have to make sure we are ready for that." — AFP



SAINT-DENIS: Ireland's scrum-half Conor Murray (up) celebrates the victory at the end of the France 2023 Rugby World Cup Pool B match between South Africa and Ireland at the Stade de France in Saint-Denis. — 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

Change of Name

I, Abubakar Mohammed Yusuf, holder of passport No. L8617774, do hereby change my name to Abubakar Mohd Yusuf (as given name), Ansari (surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Abubakar Mohd Yusuf Ansari and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (#4235) 25/9/2023

I, Habibulla Khader Abdul Khader (old name), residing at, 1188/A, Laxman Tirtha road, Honavar, Uttara Kannada, Karnataka, Pin: 581334 India (address) have changed my name as Habibulla Abdul Khader Saheb (new name) for all purposes, vide affidavit dated: 01-07-2023 before notary S.G. Hegde. (#4234) 25/9/2023

I, Manukumar Sinh holder of Indian passport No. V7432529 having permanent address Ghurapali, Banpura, Saran, Bihar 841212 resident in Kuwait at pres-

ent hereby declare that henceforth my name will read as Manu Kumar Singh. (#4233) 25/9/2023

I, Ahamd Khan Nausheen Shakil, holder of Passport No. S0582766 (full name as per present passport) do hereby, change my name to Nausheen Shakeel (as given name) Khan (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Nausheen Shakeel Khan (full name as changed now) and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (#4232) 22/9/2023

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

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China dominate Asiad swimming

China make golden start on first day of Asian Games



HANGZHOU: Gold medallist team China (top L), silver medallist team Japan (bottom L) and bronze medallist team Hong Kong (R) celebrate during the medals ceremony in the women's 4x100m freestyle relay final during the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou. — AFP

HANGZHOU: Olympic champions Zhang Yufei and Wang Shun powered to gold on Sunday as hosts China won all seven races on the opening night of swimming at the Asian Games, smashing a slew of Asian records. Zhang successfully defended her 200m butterfly crown, cruising to victory in Hangzhou ahead of Chinese teammate Yu Liyan in a new Games-record time of 2min 05.57sec.

That time has been bettered this year only by Canadian star Summer McIntosh and Australia's Lizzie Dekkers, as Zhang builds towards defending her Olympic title in Paris next summer. "I felt I could have gone even faster," she warned.

"My first mission was to take the gold for China. Next was to beat Jiao Liuyang's Games record, and I also did that. I actually felt the pool was a little slow for me and I told my coach that I wasn't feeling in good form."

Fresh from beating a stacked field to win the 100m world title in Fukuoka in July, the dominant 25-year-old was a body-length clear after the first 50m and never threatened. Yu (2:08.31) bagged silver and Japan's Hiroko Makino (2:09.22) took bronze.

Triple breaststroke world champion Qin Hai-

yang had upstaged Wang in the morning heats of the 200m medley, but his Chinese teammate saved his best for last, blitzing to a new Asian record of 1:54.62, the fastest in the world this year. Wang powered through the opening butterfly and backstroke legs to give himself a handy buffer heading into the breaststroke and Qin couldn't catch up.

Confidence-booster

It was a welcome return to form for Wang, who had faltered since stunning Britain's Duncan Scott to take Olympic gold, missing out on the final at the last two world championships. "I gave it my all today. I'm very happy and emotional to have won the event. It exceeded my expectations," he said.

"I didn't do very well at the world championships, so to be able to recover here is something I'm very pleased with. This is a confidence-booster for me."

Qin, who burst onto the scene at the July world championships, becoming the first man in history to sweep all three breaststroke titles, settled for silver in 1:57.41 with Japan's 2019 world champion Daiya Seto third.

Both China and Japan claimed 19 golds at the

Asian Games in 2018, but the hosts are favourites to top the medals table on home turf after winning all seven races on Sunday. Japan are in disarray after an awful world championships, finishing 17th with just two bronze and long-time head coach Norimasa Hirai bowing out.

In contrast, China came third behind big guns Australia and the United States after claiming five gold, three silver and eight bronze. In other races, China's Pan Zhanle got the better of South Korean star Hwang Sun-woo to win the 100m freestyle gold.

Pan powered to the wall in a new Asian best 46.97sec to beat teammate Wang Haoyu (48.02) with Hwang having to settle for bronze in 48.04. Tang Qianting, who set a new Asian best in the heats, clocked 29.96 to win the women's 50m breaststroke while two-time world champion Xu Jiayu defended his 100m backstroke title in a new Asiad record 52.23.

Li Bingjie added another gold to the Chinese haul by winning the women's 1500m freestyle, outlasting teammate Gao Weizhong in a grueling 15min 51.18sec, another Games record. The hosts, led by Zhang Yufei, rounded off a dominant night by winning the women's 4x100m freestyle in a new Games record 3:33.96. — AFP

ESports makes debut at Asian Games event but women left behind

HANGZHOU: ESports' inclusion as a medal event at the Hangzhou Asian Games was hailed as a landmark, but out of nearly 500 gamers for what is supposed to be a mixed-gender competition, just eight are women.

Excited video-game fans thronged a shiny new arena in the Chinese city on Sunday as eSports made its debut at the Games as a medal event, seen as a major step toward Olympic status. But while the fledgling sport has made great strides in official recognition, fans say it has a long way to go when it comes to women.

Large numbers of young women turned out for the first day of matches at the specially constructed China Hangzhou Esports Center, picking out souvenir pins from the stadium shop and posing with staff dressed as characters from the wildly popular Arena of Valor game. Their enthusiasm made the gender imbalance on stage all the more striking.

Only two women, Sabina Ibragimova of

Uzbekistan and Nguyen Thi Phuong Yen of Vietnam, were scheduled to play during the dozens of officially mixed-gender games on Sunday. "Lots of competitions are pioneered by men, and then only after slowly expanding do they let women participate," Pan Yuxuan, a 25-year-old gaming enthusiast who was among the spectators, told AFP. She said women frequently face discrimination from male players.

Role models

The global video-game industry, along with the player community, has for years had a reputation of being a "boys' club". The 2014 "GamerGate" saga involving online harassment evolved into a fierce debate about sexism and racism in video games and the male-dominated industry that makes them.

Even when they make it to eSports' top ranks, women face assumptions of lower skill levels compared to male players, as in the case of star Overwatch player Kim "Geguri" Se-yeon. She was accused of cheating in 2016 by opponents who thought her movements were too precise to have been unassisted - all because she was a woman. It's a mindset so pervasive that it is internalized by some women gamers despite lack of scientific evidence, with 18-year-old Zhu Lijing telling AFP that she thought "biolog-

ically men might be better than women in terms of their reflexes".

Women make up 37 percent of gamers in Asia, according to video game market research firm Niko Partners, with the proportion as high as 48 percent in China. But at the Asian Games that ratio is dramatically lower.

'Give them a chance'

Chen Shuhong, a 22-year-old longtime video-game fan who attended Sunday's matches, said she believed that greater representation at professional events could encourage more women fans to make the leap from casual gaming to competitive playing.

"When there are more and more women on stage, girls see that their eSports skills are actually quite good... and more and more will become athletes," Chen told AFP. Fellow spectator Tong, a 30-year-old Arena of Valor player, said she thought there could be "more eSports competitions specifically for women", similar to many other sports.

Tournament organizers have increasingly answered the call for women-only events in recent years, including the International Esports Federation Female Asian Championship in Saudi Arabia this year. Aside from competitions, gaming enthusiast Pan said she was encouraged by a boom in women livestream gamers, especially in China. — AFP

Kuwait football team exit Asian Games after draw

HANGZHOU: Kuwait U23's final Group E match in the 19th Asian Games against Thailand ended in a 1-1 draw on Monday, ending the national team's hopes of qualifying for the knockout stage. Kuwait finished their campaign with two points from draws against Thailand and Bahrain, and a loss against South Korea.

The men's football event at the Asian Games has been an under-23 affair since 2002. However, each team is allowed a maximum of three players above 23 years of age in the squad. At Hangzhou 2023, the men's football tournament is being contested by 21 teams, who have been divided into four groups of four teams each, one group of three and one group of two for the preliminary round or group stage.



HANGZHOU: Kuwait's U23 team players compete against Thailand during the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, China on Sunday. — KUNA



HANGZHOU: China's Xu Jie (L) competes against Kuwait's Ali Abbas in the men's foil individual round of pools fencing during the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou in China's eastern Zhejiang province on September 24, 2023. — AFP photos



HANGZHOU: China's Xu Jiayu reacts after winning in the men's 100m backstroke final during the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou, in China's eastern Zhejiang province on September 24, 2023.



HANGZHOU: Hayato Kondo of Japan and Meshal Al-Ali of Kuwait (blue) compete during men's -60kg elimination round of 16 judo event during the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou in China's eastern Zhejiang province on September 24, 2023.