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Ghanem insists the world needs neutral third voice

Speaker says unresolved Palestinian issue a disgrace to world order

OPEC+ stays the course on output boost

VIENNA: Major oil producers led by Saudi Arabia and Russia stuck to a previously decided output boost on Thursday, despite calls for bigger increases to tame crude prices. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has exacerbated concerns about oil supplies, sending prices to record highs this year. But a respite is not in sight. In their monthly video conference, which lasted about an hour, the 23 members of OPEC+ agreed to add another 648,000 barrels per day in August, the same as for July. Analysts had widely expected

the move, calling the gathering of the Vienna-based Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and their partners a "rubber stamp" meeting. Jeffrey Halley, analyst at OANDA trading platform, said before the meeting that he did not expect surprises as "OPEC+ can't even meet its present targets, and hasn't for a long time".

The 13 members of OPEC, chaired by Saudi Arabia, and their 10 partners, led by Russia, drastically slashed output in 2020 as the coronavirus pandemic and the resulting lockdowns sent demand plummeting. Since last year, they have been gradually increasing output again. In recent months, the United States and other top oil consumers urged OPEC+ to open the tabs more widely.

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BAKU: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said on Thursday the world is in dire need of a principled neutral third voice that calls for applying law and justice amid lingering risks worldwide. Addressing the Parliamentary Network of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Conference held in Baku, Ghanem said the fact that the Palestinian issue remains unresolved is proof of the continuing perils in different world regions.

Ghanem regretted that although NAM was created 67 years back, the risks that led to its inception are still looming large, pointing out hypotheses pertinent to a potential third world war, not to mention civil wars and regional tensions. The speaker cited the old but unresolved dossier of Palestine and the Zionist occupation of Palestinian territories as a clear-cut paradigm in this regard, saying its continuation is a disgrace to the past and present world order. He stressed the major challenge for the movement now is how to promote its main idea of being



BAKU: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem addresses the Parliamentary Network of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Conference on June 30, 2022. — KUNA

moderate and fair.

Ghanem thanked Azerbaijan for its proper management of the Non-Aligned Movement since it took over its rotating presidency three years ago, in addition to all efforts it has exerted during its term. Focusing on the role of national parlia-

ments in promoting global peace and sustainable development, the conference, which kicked off in Baku earlier Thursday, brings together parliamentary delegations from more than 40 countries, and representatives of nine international parliamentary organizations. — KUNA

Russia quits Snake Island in major blow

KYIV: Russian troops have abandoned their positions on a captured Ukrainian island, a major setback to their invasion effort that weakens their blockade of Ukraine's ports, defense officials said on Thursday. The news from the Black Sea came as NATO leaders wrapped up their summit in Madrid, intent on demonstrating their unity and determination to back up Kyiv with advanced weapons in the face of Moscow's assault.

Snake Island became a symbol of Ukrainian resistance in the first days of the war, when the rocky outcrop's defenders told a Russian warship that called on them to surrender to "go f*** yourself," an incident that spurred a defiant meme. It was also a strategic target, sitting aside shipping lanes near Ukraine's port of Odessa. Russia had attempted to install missile and air defense batteries while under fire from drones.

Now, however, Ukraine has begun to receive longer range missiles and military gear from its Western backers, and the Russian position on Snake Island seems to have become untenable. "In the end, it will prove impossible for (President Vladimir) Putin to hold down a country that will not accept his rule," British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said, stressing that any eventual peace deal would be on Ukraine's terms. "We've seen what Ukraine can do to drive the Russians back. We've seen what they did around Kyiv and Kharkiv, now on Snake Island."

The Russian defense ministry statement described the retreat as "a gesture of goodwill" meant to demonstrate that Moscow will not interfere with UN efforts to organize protected grain exports from Ukraine. But Kyiv claimed it as a win. "They always downplay their defeats this way," Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said on Twitter. "I thank the defenders of Odessa region who took maximum measures to liberate a strategically important part of our territory," Valeriy Zaluzhny, the Ukraine military's commander-in-chief, said on Telegram.

In peacetime, Ukraine is a major agricultural exporter, but Russia's invasion has damaged

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Marcos Jr praises rule of father

MANILA: Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr on Thursday praised his dictator father's rule after being sworn in as the country's new leader, completing a decades-long effort to restore the clan to the country's highest office. Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr, 64, won last month's elections by a landslide, securing the biggest victory since his father and namesake was ousted by a popular revolt in 1986.

He succeeds the hugely popular Rodrigo Duterte, who gained interna-

tional infamy for his deadly drug war and has threatened to kill suspected dealers after he leaves office. In the last act of reviving the family brand, Marcos Jr took the oath in a public ceremony at the National Museum in Manila in front of hundreds of diplomats, dignitaries and supporters.

With his 92-year-old mother Imelda sitting meters away, Marcos Jr praised the late patriarch's regime, which critics describe as a dark period of human rights abuses and corruption that left the country impoverished. "I once knew a man who saw what little had been achieved since independence... but he got it done," Marcos Jr said after being sworn into office, claiming his father built more roads and produced more rice than his predecessors.

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MANILA: New Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr takes the oath as president of the Philippines as his wife Louise looks on during the inauguration ceremony at the National Museum on June 30, 2022. — AFP

Salmonella hits biggest choc plant

BRUSSELS: Production has been halted in the world's biggest chocolate plant, run by Swiss giant Barry Callebaut in the Belgian town of Wieze, after salmonella contaminations was found, the firm said Thursday. A company spokesman told AFP that production had been protectively halted at the factory, which produces liquid chocolate in wholesale batches for 73 clients making confectionaries.

There have been no reports so far

of any chocolate consumers infected by the salmonella, which causes salmonellosis, a disease that causes diarrhea and fever but is only dangerous in the most extreme cases. "All products manufactured since the test have been blocked," spokesman Korneel Warlop said. "Barry Callebaut is currently contacting all customers who may have received contaminated products. Chocolate production in Wieze remains suspended until further notice."

Most of the products discovered to be contaminated are still on the site, he said. But the firm has contacted all its clients and asked them not to ship any products they have made with chocolate made since June 25 at these Wieze

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BRUSSELS: The Barry Callebaut production site is seen in Wieze on June 30, 2022. — AFP

Houseboats on Nile being towed away

CAIRO: Dozens of vibrantly colored floating homes have for decades dotted the banks of the River Nile, rare havens of leafy seclusion in the Egyptian capital's hustle and bustle - but maybe not for much longer. Residents of the 30 or so houseboats that

remain moored on the banks of the Nile last week received eviction orders, giving them less than two weeks before their homes are taken away to be demolished.

The boats have long occupied a special place in the Egyptian collective consciousness, having been the centerpiece of conversations in Nobel Prize laureate Naguib Mahfouz's "Chitchat on the Nile", as well as various classics from the golden age of Egyptian cinema. But while many have campaigned to protect the houseboats for their historic value,

the authorities have argued they are an eyesore standing in the way of the state's grand development plans.

Residents have been offered no alternative accommodation or compensation, unlike others who previously faced evictions, and many have nowhere else to go. Barely a week after the eviction order, some boats have already been towed off and impounded in a state marina, despite petitions and campaigning, even by pro-government television pundits. — AFP (See Page 12)