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Lebanese president calls for unity to address challenges

Arab FMs meet to discuss food security, war in Ukraine



BEIRUT: Lebanese President Michel Aoun meets Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah on July 2, 2022. — KUNA (See Page 2)

BEIRUT: Lebanese President Michel Aoun on Saturday called on Arab leaders to unite in order to tackle the various challenges now facing the Arab world. "We must work together to address different challenges, including defending the Palestinian cause and rights of Palestinian people, putting an end to wars in our countries, and not sparing efforts to fight against terrorism in addition to dealing with the biggest waves of displacement in modern history," reported a statement by Lebanon's Presidency quoted Aoun as saying.

Aoun made the remarks during his meeting at Baabda Palace with Arab foreign ministers, including Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, who had arrived in Beirut for the consultative ministerial meeting of the Arab League. During the meeting, which was chaired by Lebanon, Aoun called on Arab countries to help his country secure a safe return of Syrian refugees to their homeland as Lebanon is suffering from a number of crises and can no longer support a big number of displaced refugees on its territory.

Lebanon is determined to resolve its multiple crises, said Aoun, adding the country has successfully held parliamentary elections and is now forming a government and seeking to reach an agree-

ment with the International Monetary Fund to prevent the country from collapse. Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul-Gheit said the league would support Lebanon, the Lebanese government and its people. The AL's Council of Foreign Ministers meets twice a year, in July and September, to discuss issues that concern the Arab nations.

The Arab foreign ministers discussed during their consultative meeting a range of regional crises, with emphasis on food security and the impact of the war in Ukraine on Arab countries. Praising the tone and atmosphere of the meeting, Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdullah Bou-Habib said the meeting was a complete success and drew broad participation.

"The transparent, highly responsible and substantive discussions led to consensus on a host of regional and international issues," he said at a joint press conference with Aboul-Gheit. "We felt amity and solidarity from all participants towards Lebanon, which is undergoing challenging economic conditions. All of them hope to see the Lebanese economy recovering as early as possible; their participation in the meeting at this time sent a message of support to Lebanon," Bou-Habib noted.

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News in brief

US, Taliban talk in Doha

DOHA: Talks between the United States and the Taliban continued in Doha earlier this week to discuss earthquake aid, the State Department said, months after the two parties last meet in the Qatari capital in March. During the meetings, the US reiterated an earlier pledge of \$55 million in new assistance for earthquake relief, the State Department said in a statement. According to the State Department, US representatives also pushed the Taliban authorities on women's rights. — AFP (See Page 6)

New offside system at World Cup

DOHA: FIFA confirmed that a semi-automated offside system will be used at this year's World Cup in Qatar. The data-driven, limb-tracking technology uses both dedicated and broadcast cameras around the stadium to give the exact position of players on the pitch, offering referees precise information within seconds. The term "semi-automated" is used because FIFA insist match officials will still make the final call. — AFP

India court slams spokeswoman

NEW DELHI: A ruling party spokeswoman whose remarks on Islam embroiled India in a diplomatic row and sparked huge protests should apologize, India's top court said. "She and her loose tongue have set the country on fire," the Supreme Court said during a procedural hearing on several criminal complaints filed against Nupur Sharma. "This lady is single-handedly responsible for what is happening in the country," it added. "She should apologize to the whole nation." — AFP (See Page 7)

Iran man kills teenage daughter

TEHRAN: A teenage girl in Iran was killed by her father who blasted her with a shotgun in the heart, local media said. The death, an apparent so-called "honor killing" in the ultraconservative country, came after the father confronted his 16-year-old daughter after she met a young man in the southern city of Nurabad, women's activists said. — AFP

Kuwait monitors COVID cases via Immune app

KUWAIT: Kuwait's ministry of health announced on Saturday it has started monitoring positive COVID-19 cases through the Immune app instead of the Shlonik app. A person who tests positive for COVID-19 must isolate for five days, after which they are required to wear a facemask for an addi-

tional five days, the health ministry said in a press statement on Saturday. A user's Immune app automatically turns red once the person tests positive for COVID-19, the ministry explained.

Meanwhile, the world is still not using one of its most effective weapons against COVID - properly ventilating public spaces - more than two years into the pandemic, experts warn. At the moment there is a "fragile, armed peace" with COVID-19, said Antoine Flahault, director of the Institute of Global Health at the University of Geneva. "In the hopes of stemming the tide of the pandemic and reducing mortality, we need to reduce the level of contamination, which the vaccine cannot do alone," he told

Libya anger boils over

TRIPOLI: Libya's rival leaders were under growing street pressure Saturday after protesters stormed parliament as anger exploded over deteriorating living conditions and political deadlock. Libyans, many impoverished after a decade of turmoil and sweltering in the soaring summer heat, have been enduring fuel shortages and power cuts of up to 18 hours a day even as their country sits atop Africa's largest proven oil reserves.

Libya has been mired in chaos and repeated rounds of conflict since a NATO-backed uprising toppled and killed dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. Protesters stormed the seat of

the House of Representatives in the eastern city of Tobruk on Friday night, ransacking its offices and torching part of the building.

In both the main eastern city of Benghazi - the cradle of the 2011 uprising - and the capital Tripoli, thousands took to the streets to chants of "We want the lights to work". Some brandished the green flags of the former Gaddafi regime. Calm appeared to have returned to Tobruk on Saturday, though there were calls on social media for more protests in the evening.

The UN's top Libya envoy Stephanie Williams said that "riots and acts of vandalism" were "totally unacceptable". "It is absolutely vital that calm is maintained, responsible Libyan leadership demonstrated and restraint

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Strong quakes kill five in Iran

TEHRAN: A series of strong earthquakes rocked southern Iran on Saturday, killing at least five people, injuring over 90 others and reducing an entire village to rubble. The quakes, including two of magnitude 6.0, struck west of the major port city of Bandar Abbas in Hormozgan province, the US Geological Survey said. The first rattled an area north of the town of Dezhgan shortly after 2:00 am (2:30 GMT), before a 5.7 tremor hit two hours later followed quickly by the second 6.0 magnitude quake, the USGS said.

Five people were killed, Hormozgan governor Mehdi Dousti said, quoted by official news agency IRNA. Dousti told state television that the village of Sayeh Khosh, close to the epicenter, had been "completely destroyed". "Ninety-three people were injured, of whom only seven are still in hospital for treatment," national emergency services spokesman Mojtaba Khaledi told state television.

The broadcaster showed footage of residential buildings reduced to rubble in Sayeh Khosh, which was plunged into darkness in a power outage. In another video, a family was seen sifting through debris and trying to recover their belongings, as a woman was heard screaming in the background. Ambulances and other vehicles tried to navigate roads covered in rubble as shocked residents wandered through the streets.

AFP. "We need a new phase - improving the quality of indoor air."

COVID-19 is primarily transmitted through the air. It is carried in large droplets or fine aerosols when an infected person breathes - and even more so when they talk, sing or shout. In a closed off or poorly ventilated room, these aerosols can remain in the air for some time, moving around the space and greatly increasing the risk of infection.

While it is generally accepted that COVID can be transmitted within two meters via both droplets and aerosols, there is still no consensus on the importance of long-distance airborne transmission indoors.

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TOBRUK, Libya: This picture taken early on July 2, 2022 shows a fire inside the building used by Libya's Tobruk-based parliament building in the country's east. — AFP

People spent the night outdoors in the provincial capital Bandar Abbas - with a population of more than 500,000, located about 100 km east of the epicenter - as long queues formed at gas stations there, state media reported. Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi visited Hormozgan province and told state television that restoring water and electricity were among the government's top priorities.

Iran's Red Crescent Society said in the morning that search and rescue operations were nearly over. "We are concentrating on housing the victims of the earthquake," Hormozgan governor Dousti told state television. A provincial heritage official told IRNA the quake damaged 50 historical windmills on Qeshm island, located just off the coast. Iran sits astride the boundaries of several major tectonic

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