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WHO warns of 'toxic mix' of low vaccine coverage

World grappling with 'highly transmissible, dangerous' variant



DRESDEN: Medics wearing PPE suits transfer patients infected with the coronavirus into the Airbus A310-900 MRTT MedEvac Hermann Koehl of the German armed forces Bundeswehr before they are airlifted and transported to other intensive care units (ICU) yesterday.

GENEVA: The World Health Organization yesterday warned a "toxic mix" of low vaccination coverage and low testing rates was creating fertile breeding ground for new COVID-19 variants. The WHO said measures to stop the globally-dominant Delta variant would also hinder Omicron, first discovered in November in southern Africa and which has since rattled countries around the world.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus called on countries to optimize their public health and social measures to control the spread of COVID-19. He also said nations needed to ensure that high-risk and vulnerable individuals are fully vaccinated "immediately". Tedros sounded a reminder that while global attention turns to Omicron, the world was already grappling with the "highly transmissible, dangerous" Delta variant, which currently "accounts for almost all cases" globally.

"We need to use the tools we already have to prevent transmission

and save lives from Delta. And if we do that, we will also prevent transmission and save lives from Omicron." Tedros told a press conference. "But if countries and individuals don't do what they need to do to stop transmission of Delta, they won't stop Omicron either. "Globally, we have a toxic mix of low vaccine coverage, and very low testing—a recipe for breeding and amplifying variants. "That's why we continue to urge countries to... ensure equitable access to vaccines, tests and therapeutics all over the world."

The WHO said that those not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 who are also vulnerable to the disease, including over-60s, should put off travel to areas with community transmission. The World Health Organization also said blanket travel bans would not stop the spread of the Omicron variant. The new COVID-19 variant of concern, which the WHO says poses a "very high" risk globally, has prompted many countries to shut their borders.

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Kuwait's inflation rises 3.17 percent



KUWAIT: The consumer prices on an annual basis grew by 3.17 percent in July, according to Kuwait Central Statistical Bureau. In a statement to KUNA yesterday, the bureau indicated that inflation rate in Kuwait increased by 0.25 percent on a monthly basis due to rise of prices of some main groups that influence movement of the key indices.

It added that the consumer price index (CPI) for the food and beverage group rose by 10 percent last July in comparison to the same period last year, whereas the cigarette and tobacco group remained the same at 135 point on an annual basis. The clothing group rose by 6.52 percent and housing services increased slightly by 0.17 percent, while furnishings climbed to 3.7 percent.

As for medical group, it rose by 2.27 percent and transportation surged by 5.4 percent. The communications group increased by 4.6 percent, and recreation and culture surged by 8.25 percent, whereas education group declined by 15.46 percent. Restaurants and hotels increased on yearly basis by 0.9 percent. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measure of the average change overtime in the prices paid by urban consumers for a market basket of consumer goods and services, and is used for identifying periods of inflation and deflation. — KUNA

UAE 'remarkable' 50-year rise

DUBAI: Ehab Fouad was a teenager when he marched in the parade marking the birth of the United Arab Emirates, that has gone from desert outpost to regional powerhouse in 50 years. The retired civil engineer, now 64, vividly recalls December 2, 1971, when he proudly held aloft the photo of the oil-rich Gulf state's founding father, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, and saw its new flag for the first time.

Fouad, who strode directly behind the flag-bearer, tears up when he remembers the Abu Dhabi parade and reflects on the decades that followed. "Fifty years later, I feel special," said the Egyptian father of one. "It was a remarkable journey for me, and a

remarkable journey for this country," said Fouad, who lives with his family in Dubai, one of the country's seven emirates.

Foreigners make up 90 percent of the UAE's population, which has grown to 10 million from around 300,000 when its emirates came together to form a federation, even if its tough laws make most of them ineligible for citizenship. Driven by major oil wealth, the former British protectorate has left behind its humble beginnings of tents and simple, mud-brick houses to become one of the biggest players in the Middle East, both economically and politically.

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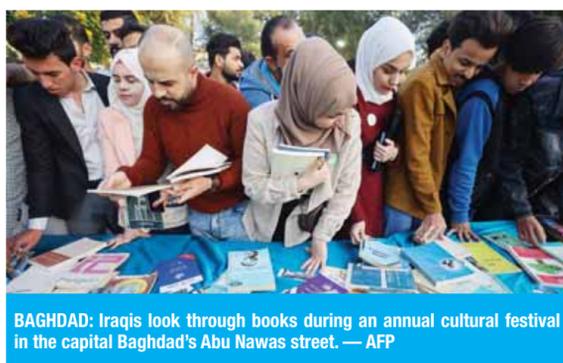


DUBAI: A banner bearing the portraits of Emirati President Khalifa Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan (top) and Dubai's ruler Mohammed Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum hangs on the side of a building in the Gulf emirate ahead of the upcoming United Arab Emirates' 50th anniversary today. — AFP

Iraq 'Wasta' favors few

BAGHDAD: Abu Zeinab says only one of his five adult children has a job, and he only got it through "wasta", the system of "who you know" that is Iraq's pervasive scourge. The practice has fuelled frustration, mass anti-government protests and waves of emigration from the oil-rich, war-scarred and poverty-stricken country, say analysts.

"All my children, including my three daughters, have finished their university studies, but only one has been able to find a job," said Abu Zeinab, a 60-year-old retiree living in Baghdad. "The others are trying, without success." For his 28-year-old son, wasta turned out to be the "joker" that made all the difference, when a relative helped him land a coveted contract job, renewed annually, with a government ministry.



BAGHDAD: Iraqis look through books during an annual cultural festival in the capital Baghdad's Abu Nawas street. — AFP

"Poverty pushes people towards wasta," said the patriarch, with resignation in his voice. Wasta refers to using one's family, communal or party connections to obtain jobs and benefits—something that is universal but seen as especially widespread

and corrosive in Iraq. While the lucky few get well-paying and secure jobs with generous pensions, nearly 40 percent of young people are unemployed, with few prospects for their future.

Anger at the patronage, nepotism and cronyism that underpin the system was amid the key

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Saudi reports first Omicron case in Gulf

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia has recorded the Gulf's first confirmed case of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus in a citizen returning from North Africa, a Health Ministry official said yesterday. The strain, which was first announced by South Africa but has since been discovered to have been present earlier in Europe, has prompted governments around the globe to reimpose travel restrictions, despite warnings from the World Health Organization this could do more harm than good.

"One case of the Omicron variant has been detected in the kingdom—it was a citizen coming from a North African country," the ministry official told the state SPA news agency. "He has been put in isolation, as have his contacts, and the necessary health measures have been taken." Saudi Arabia last week halted flights from seven southern African countries, mirroring similar moves by other government, but travel links with North Africa have remained unaffected.

The kingdom had been lifting some of the remaining restrictions it imposed early in the pandemic, allowing worshippers at the Muslim holy places to resume praying shoulder to shoulder from October. Since the pandemic started, Saudi Arabia has recorded 549,000 cases of COVID-19, 8,836 of them fatal. — AFP

Local

Kuwait Amir receives Crown Prince, Speaker, Premier

Sheikh Nawaf congratulates UAE on national day



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Dar Al-Yamama yesterday. His Highness the Amir also met, in the presence of His Highness the Crown Prince, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Dar Al-Yamama yesterday. His Highness the Amir also met, in the presence of His Highness the Crown Prince, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf

Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah addressed a congratulatory cable to UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan on his country's 50th national day. In his cable, His Highness praised the brotherly and historical bonds between both countries. Moreover, His Highness also exalted all the great achievements done by UAE in all fields. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad

Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the President of UAE Sheikh Khalifa. National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meanwhile sent a cable of congratulations to UAE's Federal National Council Speaker Saqr Ghobash Saeed Al-Marri on UAE's 50th national day.

Furthermore, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali al-Sabah has cabled the UAE Minister of State for Defense Affairs Mohammad bin Ahmad Al-Bawardi

on his country's national day 50th anniversary. The Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense said in a statement on Wednesday that Sheikh Hamad expressed in the cable his wishes for the UAE so it may witness ever-lasting progress and prosperity. He also wished the UAE Armed Forces promotion in the shadow of the sagacious leadership of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, hoping that the UAE may witness the occasion anew with all goodness and blessings. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets Ethiopian Minister of Finance Ahmed Shide. — KUNA

Prime Minister receives Ethiopian Finance Minister

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received yesterday the Ethiopian Minister of Finance Ahmed Shide and his accompanying delegation at Bayan Palace. Minister of Oil and Higher

Education Dr Mohammad Al-Fares, Minister of Finance and State Minister for Economic and Investments Affairs Khalifa Hamada and His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan Chief Abdulaziz Al-Dakheel were in attendance. — KUNA

Defense Minister discusses cementing ties with UK envoy

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah held talks yesterday with the United Kingdom's Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis, addressing issues of joint interest and means of cementing bilateral relations as well as a host of regional and international issues. The Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense said in a statement that Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali received at his office ambassador Lewis and held with her talks on topics of common concern and means of boosting cooperation. Moreover, the two sides explored latest developments on the regional and international arenas. The meeting was attend-



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah meets the United Kingdom's Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis. — KUNA

ed by the Kuwaiti Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant-General Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah, the UK Chief of Defense Staff's Senior Advisor to Middle East and North Africa Air Marshal Martin Sampson, the

Defense Attache at the British Embassy in Kuwait, Captain Paul Mulvaney, and the Second Secretary at the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry's Europe Department, Omar Al-Dwaisan. — KUNA

WHO warns of 'toxic mix'...

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"Blanket travel bans will not prevent the international spread, and they place a heavy burden on lives and livelihoods," the WHO said in a travel advice statement on Omicron. "In addition, they can adversely impact global health efforts during a pandemic by disincentivizing countries to report and share epidemiological and sequencing data."

First reported to the WHO less than a week ago after being detected in southern Africa earlier this month, Omicron has already appeared in several countries. The WHO noted the increasing number of governments introducing travel measures, including temporarily banning arrivals from countries where the variant has been found. The WHO said that as of Sunday, 56 countries were reportedly implementing travel measures aimed at potentially delaying the importation of the new variant.

"It is expected that the Omicron variant will be detected in an increasing number of countries as national authorities step up their surveillance and sequencing activities," it said. The WHO later issued a correction to the final part of that travel advice, relating who should be advised to postpone travel, and to where.

"Persons who have not been fully vaccinated or do not have proof of previous SARS-CoV-2 infection and are at increased risk of developing severe disease and dying, including people 60 years of age or older or those with comorbidities that present increased risk of severe COVID-19 (e.g. heart disease, cancer and

diabetes) should be advised to postpone travel to areas with community transmission," the WHO's corrected line said.

Elsewhere, the WHO advised countries to apply an "evidence-informed and risk-based approach" when implementing travel measures. The UN health agency said national authorities in countries of departure, transit and arrival could apply mitigation measures that might delay or reduce the exportation and importation of the variant. They could include screening passengers, testing and quarantine.

"All measures should be commensurate with the risk, time-limited and applied with respect to travelers' dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms." The WHO said that "essential international travel", including for humanitarian missions, repatriations and transport of vital supplies, should always be prioritized during the pandemic. Earlier Tuesday, WHO chief told member states to keep calm and take "rational" steps in response to Omicron. "We call on all member states to take rational, proportional risk-reduction measures," he said. "The global response must be calm, coordinated and coherent."

Tedros stressed that it remains unclear how dangerous the variant is. "We still have more questions than answers about the effect of Omicron on transmission, severity of disease, and the effectiveness of tests, therapeutics and vaccines," he said. The WHO chief said it was understandable that countries wanted to protect their citizens "against a variant that we don't yet fully understand." "But I am equally concerned that several member states are introducing blunt, blanket measures that are not evidence-based or effective on their own, and which will only worsen inequities." — AFP

Iraq 'Wasta' favors few...

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grievance expressed by protesters in a wave of mass rallies in late 2019. It is the hopelessness felt by those who miss out that has fuelled the widespread wish to leave Iraq, say analysts. The latest waves of emigration have seen thousands of Iraqis freeze on the Belarus-Polish border, and some perish when their boat capsized in the icy waters of the Channel.

'Weakness of the law'

Some 95 percent of Iraqis say wasta is needed "often or sometimes" to find a job, according to the World Bank's so-called Arab Barometer Report of 2019. "All of society agrees that without wasta you cannot achieve anything," said political scientist Thamer Al-Haimes. The problem results

UAE 'remarkable' 50-year rise...

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Dubai, a former pearling town and now a brash trade and financial centre, boasts a forest of skyscrapers including the world's tallest building, the 830-metre Burj Khalifa. "Some people here used to build their houses from date tree branches, then mud bricks, and today it is all villas and towers," Fouad said.

The late Sheikh Zayed "believed deeply in Arab nationalism, and worked to unite the seven emirates into a single federation", said Elham Fakhro, senior Gulf analyst at the International Crisis Group think tank. "It remains the only functional system of federalism in the Arab world." Among the world's top producers of crude, the UAE's rapid growth since the 1970s is linked closely to its oil and gas wealth.

However, Dubai, with scant oil resources compared to the capital Abu Dhabi, has blossomed as a financial, trans-

port, tourist and media hub. The Arab world's second-biggest economy behind Saudi Arabia also wields growing political influence, filling a space ceded by traditional powers such as Egypt, Iraq and Syria. Since the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011, the UAE's increasingly assertive foreign policy has included taking part in wars, such as Yemen, and mediating in several conflicts in the Middle East and Africa.

It is also a beacon for many Arab youth fleeing conflict-ridden countries. "The UAE has long been concerned about its relative vulnerability, in a region where it is surrounded by larger, more powerful states," Fakhro said. "Its policy following independence was relatively neutral, but since the Arab Spring it has adopted a more activist foreign policy that aims to shape events in the region to its favor." The UAE, a staunch opponent of political Islam, has become something of a steward in the turbulent region. Last year, it took the surprise step of recognizing Zionist entity, breaking with decades of Arab consensus that eschewed ties with the Jewish state. "As a committed regional and international actor, we know we need to take on even more responsibility for the

future direction of our region," presidential adviser Anwar Gargash said. "We have had numerous vacuums over the last decade... We cannot stand by and watch these vacuums filled by malign actors."

Accusations by human rights groups of violations during its intervention in Yemen's conflict, and in prosecutions of dissidents, have not stopped the Emirates becoming a magnet for investment. The UAE has in recent years relaxed its laws to attract more investments, branding itself a "zero tax" haven. It lifted a cap on non-local ownership, allowed full foreign control of business ventures, and offered long-term "golden" visas to investors and "exceptional talents" such as artists, doctors, engineers and scientists.

Known in the 19th century as the Trucial States, named after a maritime truce, the seven emirates had been a British protectorate since 1892. But Sheikh Zayed, who ran oil-rich Abu Dhabi, the biggest and wealthiest of the emirates, saw an opportunity to slowly build a powerful state by joining its family-run neighbors under one flag. Today, golden jubilee celebrations will include an airshow, a floating theatrical performance on a mountain lake, parades, concerts and fireworks. — AFP

Local

Kuwait plans to switch to smart meters fully in 'shortest possible timeframe'

Around 200,000 smart meters imported for preliminary phase

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy is a significant contributor to the government's vision of digitalization and energy conservation, and the installation of smart electricity meters is considered a considerable leap in that regard. Stemming from the ministry's aim of providing continuous high-quality energy and straying away from an ordinary mechanism to a smart one comes the utilization of state-of-the-art technology and information systems. Mulaweh Al-Ajmi, Director of the ministry's maintenance and contract management department, said yesterday that the ministry is keen on translating Kuwait's vision of digitalization into reality as it has prepared a plan to switch all ordinary meters into smart ones in the shortest possible timeframe. Ajmi added that the ministry imported around 200,000 smart meters as part of its preliminary phase.



Mulaweh Al-Ajmi



KUWAIT: The smart meters imported by Kuwait's Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy.

The smart meters can improve and ensure energy efficiency and find a mechanism to monitor and rapidly repair faults. They could also raise consumer awareness regarding consumption rates, which in turn would contribute to saving energy and expenses. The new pre-paid meters will provide greater flexibility in terms of issuing bills and facilitating payments either via the ministry's website, smartphone application, or consumers' affairs centers.

Around 30,000 smart meters installed in Salmiya



Minister of Electricity and Minister of Social Affairs and Societal Development Dr Mashaan Al-Otaibi had previously stated that it was expected that around 800,000 meters would be installed within two to three years.

Additionally, the smart electricity meters could provide the ministry with necessary information in regards to what areas are in need of current strengthening, or even building new power stations.



A Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy technician installs the smart meters. —KUNA photos

Due to the importance of the project, the ministry began giving notices to investment and trade sectors in the governorates of Farwaniya and Hawali in order to pay dues prior to installation of new meters. Around 30,000 smart meters have already been installed in Salmiya. There are three types of

smart meters: direct meters meant for stores and large apartments, single meters meant for small spaces, and LVCT meters designed for residential plots and villas. The ministry also plans on installing smart water meters for residential units in upcoming stages. —KUNA

Kuwait notifies UNSC of POWs update

NEW YORK: The State of Kuwait has informed the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Secretary-General and UNSC President about

the latest developments of the file of Kuwaiti prisoners of war (POWs), missing persons and third country nationals. This came in a letter addressed by Kuwait's Representative at the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi, based on UNSC Resolution 2017/2013 and UNSC Statement dated November 24, 2020. The letter said that on November 18, 2021, the remains of 19 Kuwaiti martyrs and missing persons were identified according to DNA tests conducted by Kuwait's General Administration

of Criminal Evidence. The POWs were arrested during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and their remains were then included in the previous batches received in November 2020 as well as January, March and July of 2021, according to the letter. Intensive efforts were exerted to identify the remains in Iraq and the tripartite committee's technical subcommittee decided to allow an Iraqi technical team to check the sites of the remains under the International

Committee of the Red Cross. Kuwait thanked the Iraqi government, the members of the tripartite and technical subcommittee, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) for their efforts in this regard, according to the letter. It is hoped that this human tragedy would come to an end at an early date, it said, adding that Kuwait would pursue efforts to identify the destiny of Kuwaiti POWs and other countries' nationals. —KUNA



Used tires on fire in Amghara.

Three hurt in Sixth Ring Road crash

KUWAIT: Three people were injured in a two-vehicle accident reported on Sixth Ring Road yesterday. Firemen were called to help a person out of his wrecked vehicle where he was trapped due to the impact. Emergency medical technicians transported the injured people to hospital for treatment, Kuwait Fire Force said. Meanwhile, firemen battled a blaze in a pile of used tires left in an open area in Amghara. An investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the fire.



KUWAIT: One of the vehicles involved in the crash.

National Guard offers assistance to special education school



KUWAIT: Assistant for Financial Affairs and resources management at Kuwait National Guard Major General Riyadh Twari visited the special education school's administration in Hawally to discuss offering support to people with special needs. He said the visit was made at the instruc-

tions of the higher command of KNG, represented by its Chief HH Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah and Deputy Chief Lt Gen Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, as part of KNG's social responsibility to help and support various sectors of Kuwait's society.

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News in brief

Kuwait oil drops to \$72.14 pb

KUWAIT: Kuwait's crude oil price dropped \$2.72 during Tuesday's trading sessions to reach \$72.14 per barrel (pb), compared with \$74.86 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. Benchmark Brent crude also lost \$2.78 to \$70.57 pb and West Texas Intermediate declined \$3.77 to \$66.18 pb. The OPEC daily basket price dropped by \$3.19 yesterday to settle at \$71.01 per barrel, compared to \$74.20 pb last Tuesday, as per the organization's daily bulletin. The organization's bulletin also mentioned that the average annual price of the OPEC basket in 2020 was at \$41.47 pb. The OPEC+ alliance decided during a ministerial meeting, on November 4, to maintain the current oil production plan, designed to increase the output gradually. The alliance's officials are scheduled to re-examine market status at another meeting due today.

Military cooperation

TUNIS: Kuwait's Ambassador to Tunisia Ali Al-Dhafiri discussed yesterday with Tunisian Minister of Defense Imad Mameesh activating the military cooperation agreement. In a statement to the press, Ambassador Dhafiri said the meeting was mainly about activating the defense cooperation agreement, signed in 2016. Both sides agreed on intensifying military-level visits between the two countries, besides arranging for Tunisian Head of Government Najla Bouden's official visit to Kuwait.

'Parliamentarians for Al-Quds'

ANKARA: Kuwaiti MP Osama Al-Shaheen on Tuesday urged all parliamentarians around the world to use their powers to support and defend the Palestinian cause. Speaking at the fourth conference of 'The League of Parliamentarians for Al-Quds,' held in Istanbul, MP Shaheen stated that the Kuwaiti parliament has held several special sessions to show backing to the Palestinian cause and people, the latest of which was on May 27, 2021. In this regard, the Kuwaiti parliament has recently amended the law on boycotting the Zionist entity to bar any economic or sports dealings with it, he said.

Medical center in Yemen

ADEN: The Kuwait-based Alnajat Charity has inaugurated a medical center in the southwestern Yemeni city of Taiz. The new center will offer healthcare services to 10,000 people in the conflict-ravaged city. During the opening ceremony, head of Taiz Health Office Dr Rajeh Al-Milaki expressed appreciation to the Kuwaiti government and people for their support to Yemeni people in times of peace and war.

Drug dealers caught

KUWAIT: Drugs control officer arrested two persons for pushing drugs in a residential area. Detectives investigated several video clips they obtained which allegedly showed a person offering to sell a suspicious substance. They were able to confirm that the man was selling drugs with another person, so they obtained a warrant for their arrest. The prime suspect was detained in a Kabd farm, while his accomplice was caught in Wafra. Police found a total of 2,000 Lyrica tablets, five grams of hashish, five grams of shabu and KD 1,215 in cash with the suspects, who confessed of possessing the drugs for sale and personal use. Both were sent to concerned authorities.

ABK sponsors medical students' honoring ceremony

KUWAIT: Continuing its efforts to support and engage with exceptional young talent within the country, Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), partnered with Kuwait University's Medical Students Association in a ceremony to honor its students, which was held at the Millennium Hotel. Present at the event was Fawzy Al-Thunayan - ABK's General Manager of Board Affairs, who delivered a speech through which he encouraged students to persevere in their pursuit of excellence. He reiterated the need to support Kuwaiti students in shaping the skills that will help them take on pivotal roles in the country. As part of its social responsibility agenda, ABK regularly supports career fairs and educational programs targeted at Kuwaitis confirming its commitment to the nation's development and young talent.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A picture taken yesterday showing a fountain in the Rumaithiya Park.—Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

KCST organizes first graduation ceremony



A group photo taken during the ceremony.



A graduate is honored during the ceremony.



Dr Khalid Al-Begain speaks during the ceremony.



Graduates are seen during the ceremony.

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: For the first time since opening in 2016, Kuwait College of Science and Technology (KCST) organized its first ever graduation ceremony for the classes of two academic years: 2019/2020 and 2020/2021. The ceremony was attended by parents, some government and school officials at a jam-packed venue set-up at its school campus in Doha, west of Kuwait City. KCST is an accredited private university in Kuwait offering internationally recognized undergraduate education in engineering and other courses in science and technology. Its operations are regulated by the Private Universities Council of Kuwait and the Ministry of Education.

In his opening remarks, Dr Khalid Al-Begain, first founding president of KCST, welcomed the guests and thanked the parents who supported them until the very end to the first graduation ceremony. "We have several gigantic achievements for the last five years," started Begain. "We are proud that in June 2021, we received our first institutional accreditation from the Private Universities Council with the maximum five-year accreditation," he said. "We have already completed the evaluation for the accreditation for our engineering programs with the American Accreditation Board, for engineering and technology," he added. He went on to say that he was proud of KCST students as they have won "almost all the competition in the technology and innovation since 2018 in Kuwait."

Begain also took pride as the KCST recently hosted



KUWAIT: A group photo taken during the ceremony.—Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

and organized the 35th international conference of modeling assimilation in collaboration with the European Council for Modeling and Simulation. "In addition, we organized events for talented Kuwaiti young people such as the cyber accelerated program, jointly with the British Embassy as well as the Steven's Initiative for Next Generation Program, jointly with the US Embassy." He also mentioned a cube satellite project built by KCST students with plans to launch it into space before the end of the year.

KCST was established with the purpose of providing undergraduate degree courses in science and tech-

nology. The degree programs being offered include undergraduate degrees in computer science, computer engineering, and electronics and communications engineering. The computer science degree program takes four years whereas the engineering degree programs take four and a half years to complete. The university campus has a large central library, a 500-seat main auditorium, and two 250-seat lecture theatres, as well as several lecture rooms, faculty and staff offices, and laboratories. The on-campus sports facilities include a football ground and tennis courts with plans underway for a swimming pool and additional sports facilities.



KUWAIT: Fawzy Al-Thunayan in a group photo with the Kuwait University's Medical Students Association's students.



UK and Belgium
pledge to step up
efforts on migrants

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Bangladesh mayor arrested for refusing mural of PM's father



LAKE ORION, United States: Students stand holding candles during a vigil after a shooting at Oxford High School at Lake Pointe Community Church in Lake Orion, Michigan. — AFP

Three killed in US high school shooting

Second-year student taken into custody, handgun seized

WASHINGTON: A 15-year-old student allegedly opened fire at a high school in rural Michigan on Tuesday, killing three other students before being taken into custody, police said.

Six others, including one teacher, were wounded in the attack, which took place shortly after noon at Oxford High School, the Oakland County Sheriff's Office said in a statement.

A second-year student was taken into custody and a handgun was seized, but there was no immediate explanation for what prompted the attack in Oxford, a small town about 40 miles (65 kilometers) north of Detroit.

"There was no resistance during the arrest and the suspect has asked for a lawyer and has not

made any statements as to a motive," the sheriff's office said. "It's a very tragic situation," Undersheriff Michael McCabe told reporters.

"We have three deceased victims right now, who are all believed to be students," he said. "We have lots of upset parents," he said.

Police said they received more than 100 911 emergency calls shortly after noon, and that the shooter unleashed 15-20 shots over about five minutes from a semi-automatic handgun with more than one magazine. The suspect was taken into custody within five minutes of the first 911 call, they said. President Joe Biden was informed of the shooting during a visit to Minnesota. "My heart goes out to the families enduring the unimaginable

grief," he said. "You know, that whole community has to be just in a state of shock right now." Elissa Slotkin, who represents the district north of Detroit in the US House of Representatives, said she was "horrified" by the shooting. "I've been talking with Oxford leaders, parents and students and we are all praying for the health of those injured, and the well-being of all our young people, many of whom are in shock," she said in a statement.

Deadliest school shooting in 2021

It was the deadliest school shooting so far this year, according to Everytown For Gun Safety, a group which keeps statistics of mass shootings and lobbies for gun control. Before Tuesday's incident,

there had been 138 shootings in schools across the United States in 2021, according to figures provided by Everytown. In those incidents, 26 resulted in fatalities, though no more than two each time.

The deadliest school shootings in US history were the April 2007 attack at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia, which saw 33 killed, including the shooter, followed by the December 2012 attack on the Sandy Hook elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut, which left 28 dead, including 20 children and the shooter.

In February 2018, a former student with an AR-15 assault rifle opened fire in his former high school in Parkland, Florida, killing 17, in the deadliest-ever high school shooting. — AFP

Countries agree to negotiate WHO pandemic accord

GENEVA: World Health Organization member states agreed yesterday to start building a new international accord on how to handle future pandemics and ensure there can be no repeat of COVID-19. The economic turmoil and millions of lives lost during the coronavirus crisis triggered calls for new international defences strong enough to prevent a future such disaster.

At a special meeting in Geneva, the 194 WHO member states unanimously adopted a resolution launching the negotiating and drafting process for a new international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response.

The process will present its final outcome to WHO member states in 2024. "The adoption of this decision is cause for celebration and cause for hope that we all need," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in closing the three-day gathering.

"Of course, there is still a long road ahead. There are still differences of opinion about what a new accord could or should contain. But you have proven to each other and the world that differences can be overcome and common ground can be found."

The three-day meeting of the World Health Assembly—the WHO's decision-making body comprising all 194 member states—was an unprecedented special session on considering a new accord on pandemics. It came with the world nearly two years into the COVID-19 pandemic and shaken by the emergence of the new-

ly-discovered Omicron variant of concern, deemed by the WHO to pose a "very high" global risk.

"I have one simple request for all member states, and that is: end this pandemic," Tedros said in his closing speech. "Just in the past week, this virus has demonstrated that it will not simply disappear. How many more lives and livelihoods it takes is up to us."

"Ending the pandemic is not a matter of chance; it is a matter of choice." Countries agreed to establish an intergovernmental negotiating body "to draft and negotiate a WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response".

The body's first meeting must be no later than March 1 next year to elect two co-chairs and four vice-chairs. A progress report will be presented at the regular World Health Assembly annual gathering in 2023, with the final outcome presented for consideration at the 2024 WHA.

As Tedros hinted, despite yesterday's agreement, differences remain between countries on how far they are prepared to go in terms of legally-binding commitments on issues like equitable vaccine distribution, knowledge-sharing, financing, oversight structures and powers to investigate outbreaks.

The United States, notably, is lukewarm on locking into a treaty, China—where the first COVID-19 cases were detected—voiced willingness to negotiate an agreement, without specifying whether it should be binding, adding that the process should avoid "stigmatisation".

In a statement, Washington said it wanted to "strengthen the international legal framework" to "make the global health system stronger and more responsive". The European Union, much warmer on a treaty, said yesterday's decision would make history. — AFP

EU mulls mandatory vaccination

BRUSSELS: Europe's top official said yesterday it was time to "think about mandatory vaccination" as the fast-spreading Omicron variant darkened forecasts and deepened fears of another difficult winter. Ignoring a WHO warning against blanket travel bans, Japan suspended new flight bookings into the country as the OECD warned that Omicron threatens economic recovery and lowered the growth forecast for 2021.

Rising infection rates have already seen European governments reintroduce mandatory mask-wearing, social-distancing measures, curfews or lockdowns in a desperate attempt to limit hospitalizations, but leaving businesses fearing another grim Christmas. In Brussels, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said it was "understandable and appropriate" to discuss how to "encourage and potentially think about mandatory vaccination" in the bloc - although only individual member states can impose vaccine mandates. Austria has already said it will make COVID-19 jabs compulsory next February, Germany is mulling following suit and Greece on Tuesday said it will mandate vaccines for over-60s.

While it could take weeks to prove how infectious and resistant to current vaccines Omicron is, many countries have rushed to ramp up existing programs, seeing them as the best line of defense. From yesterday, every adult in Italy became eligible for a COVID booster shot, previously only open to those aged over 40. Non-EU members Britain and Norway had already promised booster shots to all adults before the end of January and Easter respectively.

So far, more than a dozen countries and territories have detected Omicron cases, including Australia, Brazil, Britain, Canada, Israel, Italy, Nigeria and Portugal. Dozens of countries have imposed travel restrictions mostly targeting southern African nations. Global economic body the OECD warned Omicron threatens the

world's recovery and lowered growth estimates for 2021 from 5.7 percent to 5.6 percent. The Paris-based organization said the recovery had "lost momentum and is becoming increasingly imbalanced" and would remain "precarious" until vaccines were deployed worldwide.

Japanese authorities, which had already tightened its tough border measures yesterday said they had detected a second infection of the new strain - this time in a person arriving from Peru. Other governments in Asia also expanded curbs, with Indonesia adding Hong Kong and Malaysia listing Malawi on their travel ban lists. "A lot of my neighbors and friends died of COVID-19," said Jakarta resident Jan Pieter Tobing. "Coronavirus is the real deal. So the emergence of Omicron is very terrifying. Honestly, it's scary."

France bucked the trend by announcing flights from southern Africa could land on its territory from Saturday, but only allowing French and EU residents, diplomats and flight crews to disembark. Even as governments acted unilaterally in imposing travel restrictions, WHO member states came together in Geneva to work on an international accord on handling the next pandemic. An intergovernmental negotiating body will be established to reach an agreement on responding to future pandemics with a first meeting due before March 1, 2022.

Latin America reported its first two cases of the variant Tuesday - in people who travelled from South Africa to Brazil. Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, also reported its first Omicron cases yesterday. US travel bans on eight southern African nations came into effect on Monday. US President Joe Biden said it "kind of depends" how long the measure would stay in place. "We're going to learn a lot more in the next couple weeks about the lethality of this virus, about how much it spreads, what we have to control it, etcetera," he told reporters.

The WHO believes Omicron's high number of mutations may make it more transmissible or resistant to vaccines, but it could take weeks to determine whether and to what extent the variant is vaccine-resistant. Its detection and spread, however, have highlighted that the global fight against COVID-19 is far from over. Even nations with high vaccination rates are struggling to contain rising infection numbers and prevent health services from being overwhelmed. — AFP

International

As Italy eyes a new president, can Silvio Berlusconi bewitch?

Italy's president has a firefighting rather than a ceremonial role

ROME: Billionaire media mogul, Italian prime minister, cruise ship crooner and convicted criminal—after a colourful career, could Silvio Berlusconi, 85, be soon adding head of state to his CV? Just weeks before secret parliamentary elections next month to choose Italy's new president, no clear candidate has emerged for a role crucial to keeping the country's fractious parties in line.

There is intense speculation Prime Minister Mario Draghi might take the job, but in the meantime Berlusconi—despite recent poor health, including a bad bout of coronavirus last year—is on manoeuvres. “Berlusconi will try (to get elected), and could succeed,” Gianfranco Pasquino, political science lecturer at Bologna's Johns Hopkins University, told AFP.

Italy's president has a firefighting rather than a ceremonial role. The incumbent, Sergio Mattarella—who is bowing out after a seven-year term—was instrumental in bringing in Draghi at the head of a national unity government last February after the previous coalition collapsed. Draghi, a former European Central Bank chief, has refused to say publicly if he is interested in the presidency. He currently has his hands full managing a vast 200 billion euro (\$225 billion) post-pandemic recovery fund from the European Union and implementing reforms Brussels expects in exchange.

President Draghi?

Many—including Berlusconi—have

argued the 74-year-old should stay until the next general election in 2023 to push through changes considered vital to debt-laden Italy's economic recovery. Others believe he could do this as president. Lorenzo Codogno, former head economist at the Italian treasury, says Draghi would “exert considerable influence... as a guarantor versus the rest of the EU on Italy's reforms and investments”.



No clear candidate has emerged for the crucial role

In that case, a senior minister would serve as prime minister temporarily before a new one could be approved by parliament. That could spark party squabbling and risk early elections, however, in which the far-right Brothers of Italy and League parties are expected to do well.

Berlusconi, who first burst onto the political scene in 1994, winning over millions of Italians with the help of his vast television empire, has neither confirmed nor denied he will run. Several other names circulating include Justice Minister Marta Cartabia, who if suc-

cessful would be Italy's first woman head of state, former lower house speaker Pierferdinando Casini, and European Economy Commissioner and ex-PM Paolo Gentiloni.

There are no official candidates. Lawmakers and representatives from each of Italy's 20 regions can vote for anyone in the secret ballot, provided their choice is over 50 years old. A two-thirds majority is needed to secure victory at any of the first three rounds, after which a simple majority is enough.

“The centre-right will likely vote united for Berlusconi in the first ballot. It will be a sort of lifetime achievement award,” Codogno said. However, he believes there is “no chance” he could drum up enough votes to secure a majority.

Skilled statesman, sex fests

Pasquino said the media magnate could “get the votes by promising places in the next legislature”, pointing out that Berlusconi was convicted in 2015 of buying the vote of a senator, although he appealed and the case expired before a final resolution. He “still has a lot of supporters in Italy”, Pasquino said.

But it would be a “gigantic conflict of interest... to have the owner of three television channels and two newspapers as president”. The tycoon, who did a year of community service for tax fraud in 2014, also has “a very complicated past” which would work against



MILAN, Lombardy: File photo shows former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi addressing the media, as he leaves the San Raffaele Hospital in Milan, after he tested positive for coronavirus and was hospitalised since September 3. —AFP

him, Pasquino said.

Berlusconi is currently embroiled in two trials over allegations he paid witnesses to lie about his “Bunga Bunga” parties, which were described by girls present as sex fests. Yet the leader of the centre-right Forza Italia party has been reinventing himself as a sensible moderate, a skilled statesman who can rein in an unruly far right.

He is even making overtures to the once anti-establishment Five Stars

Movement, the biggest party in parliament, which he had described in 2018 as being a group so unskilled he wouldn't even hire them to clean his lavatories.

Franco Pavoncello, political science professor at the John Cabot University in Rome, told AFP that the likelihood Berlusconi be elected was “remote”. “Given his age, and given his history, I think that people internationally would be doing some head scratching,” he said. —AFP

UK and Belgium pledge to step up efforts on migrants

LONDON: Britain and Belgium have promised to cooperate more closely to tackle irregular migration, after 27 people died when their dinghy capsized as they tried to cross the Channel. The pledge is part of a wider bilateral deal signed by prime ministers Boris Johnson and Alexander De Croo after a virtual meeting on Tuesday, the government in London said.

It came after Britain was prevented from joining a meeting of European interior ministers last weekend to try to crack down on people-smuggling gangs behind the crossings. Frozen out of the talks, London has embarked on its own efforts to tackle the issue, with Home Secretary Priti Patel reported to be planning a tour of European capitals.

London and Brussels promised improvements in detecting and stopping irregular migration at the Belgian port of Zeebrugge, and along the Belgian coast. They also pledged to “improve joint working on illegal flows, including to disrupt human trafficking and human smuggling networks and prevent loss of life”. The two countries also said they would work with others to secure closer cooperation on “small boats in order to prevent illegal sea crossing towards the UK”.

That included trying to stop “secondary movements” of migrants with the Schengen free-movement area of the European Union, they added. The British government is under pressure at home because of the record numbers of migrants crossing



PAS-DE-CALAIS, France: French minister delegate to the Minister of the Interior Marlene Schiappa (C) speaks with migrants during her visit at their camp one week after the disaster in the Channel that left 27 migrants dead, in Calais yesterday. —AFP

the Channel from northern France this year. Johnson's pitch to leave the EU in 2016 was based on “taking back control” of Britain's borders, but doing so now Britain is out of the bloc has proved more problematic.

Patel's invitation to the talks was withdrawn after French outrage at a British suggestion that migrants are sent back to the EU and that France forces boats back to its coast. The Times newspaper yesterday reported that the interior minister was planning to visit her counterparts in Italy, Belgium, and Berlin to try to solve the crisis. Patel's department declined to comment on her travel plans when contacted by AFP. But a spokesperson said: “The government will continue to push for greater cooperation with all European partners.” —AFP

French media to sue far-right Zemmour for using images

PARIS: Celebrities and film companies are among those furious at the use of their images by far-right pundit Eric Zemmour in the short film that announced his run for the presidency. Zemmour, a 63-year-old writer and TV pundit who declared his candidacy on Tuesday via a YouTube video, is the most stridently anti-Islam and anti-migrant of the challengers seeking to unseat President Emmanuel Macron in April 2022.

Director Luc Besson (“The Fifth Element”) was among those reacting angrily after a clip from his 1999 film “Joan of Arc” starring Milla Jovovich appeared in Zemmour's 10-minute video. Besson told AFP that the images were used “in a fraudulent manner” and that he “shares none of Eric Zemmour's ideas.”

Movie production house Gaumont also took a strong stance, saying they had received no requests from Zemmour's team to use clips from “Joan of Arc” or 1960s classic “A Monkey in Winter” starring Jean-Luc Belmondo, to which it owns the rights.

Both were used by Zemmour as part of his warnings that the traditional France “of Joan of Arc and Louis XIV” and “of Notre Dame and village churches” is disappearing under the weight of migration and foreign cultures. Gaumont said it “would study all the options open to us” against Zemmour.

‘Opposed on principle’

The video also featured multiple news clips of Muslims praying in the street, or street violence and the aftermath of terrorist attacks, triggering responses from media groups. Rolling news channel France 24 said it was “opposed on principle to the use of its images and its logo in all political campaigns” and



BOULOGNE-BILLANCOURT, France: French far-right media pundit and 2022 presidential candidate Eric Zemmour (C) arrives to take part in the evening news broadcast of French TV channel TF1 in Boulogne-Billancourt, outside Paris, yesterday. —AFP

would demand their immediate removal.

France Televisions, the National Audiovisual Institute and Radio France put out a joint statement saying Zemmour must respect the copyright of images “just like everyone else”. And daily newspaper Le Parisien said it had raised the use of its images directly with YouTube. In response, Zemmour's team told AFP that they had respected the right to use “short quotes” freely.

However, a lawyer for SCAM, which oversees copyright law in France, told AFP that this was incorrect: brief extracts can be used only for reviews, opinion pieces, and scientific or informational articles—not for promotional content. The original authors can also take action if they feel their work has been distorted in its use—a charge which several writers and historians have laid against Zemmour. Zemmour's clip also happened to use a shot owned by Macron's party, Republic on the Move, and said it would sue to have its logo removed. —AFP

Ugandan troops deployed in eastern DR Congo

BENI: Ugandan troops stepped up their deployment in eastern DR Congo yesterday, witnesses said, on the second day of an operation against the notorious ADF rebel group launched in cooperation with Kinshasa. “Right now, at noon, they are arriving aboard armor-plated cars, with escorts from members of the local security services,” Tony Kitambala, a freelance journalist based in North Kivu province, said at Nobili on the border.

Ugandan soldiers were seen crossing there into the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on Tuesday after their armed forces launched air and artillery strikes from within Ugandan territory. The target is the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) — a group blamed for massacres in eastern DRC and attacks in the Ugandan capital, and which the so-called Islamic State describes as an affiliate. The DRC last week gave its approval to a Ugandan offer to pursue the ADF on its soil, where it has holed up since the mid-1990s.

An aid worker in Nobili said “air strikes on ADF positions continued last evening” but the situation was calm yesterday. “This morning, the UPDF (Ugandan armed forces) has been reinforcing its

troops with men, ammunition and military trucks,” he said. A senior DRC military officer said Congolese troops were heading towards Beni, the capital of North Kivu province, from neighboring South Kivu. There has been no official indication of the number of troops being deployed, or how long the operation will last.

On Tuesday, the Ugandan armed forces spokesman said the bombardments had successfully hit their targets, and that ground operations would hunt down “terrorists.” The DRC's military spokesman said late Tuesday that “search and control” operations were under way at the bombarded ADF locations, and that a situation report on the operation would soon be made public. The DR Congo's Catholic Church says the ADF has killed around 6,000 civilians since 2013 while a respected monitor, the Kivu Security Tracker, blames it for more than 1,200 deaths in the area alone since 2017.

The Ugandan authorities have accused the ADF or a local group affiliated with it of carrying out or planning a string of attacks this year. On November 16, four people were killed and 33 wounded in twin suicide bombings in Kampala. Police blamed the blast on a “domestic terror group” that it said was linked to the ADF. Since April 2019, some ADF attacks in eastern DR Congo have been claimed by IS, which describes the group as its Islamic State Central Africa Province offshoot. In March, the United States placed the ADF on its list of “terrorist” organizations linked to IS. —AFP

border this year.

Kiev's Western allies have since last month warned of a fresh Russian troop buildup around Ukraine's borders and a possible winter invasion. The alleged surge follows a similar buildup in the spring, when Russia gathered around 100,000 troops on Ukraine's borders but later announced a drawdown. At the peak of those tensions Zelensky invited the Russian leader to meet for talks in eastern Ukraine, but the Kremlin declined the invitation.

Moscow accusations

Russian officials in turn have accused Kiev of massing tens of thousands of troops near separatist-controlled territory. “The Armed Forces of Ukraine are building up their military strength, massing heavy equipment and personnel,” Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said yesterday.

“According to some reports, the number of Ukrainian troops in the conflict zone has already reached 125,000 personnel,” she claimed, saying this represented half of Kiev's troops. Those comments followed the Ukrainian foreign ministry saying Tuesday that Russia has massed 115,000 troops around Ukraine, on the Crimean peninsula and in two eastern regions occupied by the breakaway fighters.

Putin on Tuesday declined to say whether Moscow planned to move troops across Ukraine's border. “Look, they spoke about a possible Russian military intervention in Ukraine at the beginning of the year. But as you see this did not happen,” Putin said. The Russian leader added that the security interests of all parties should be taken into account and called for improved ties. Blinken was in Latvia yesterday where a meeting of NATO foreign ministers focused largely on tensions over Russia's military build-up.

During the gathering, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba called for a “deterrence package” to stop Russia. Blinken is scheduled to hold talks with Lavrov on the sidelines of a meeting of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) after meeting Kuleba. The Kremlin has blamed the escalation in tensions on the West supplying Ukraine with modern weaponry, conducting drills in the Black Sea and flying bombers near Russia's borders. —AFP

Ukraine leader calls for talks with Russia amid invasion fears

KIEV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday called for direct talks with Moscow as tensions mounted over claims that Russia is laying the groundwork for an invasion. Zelensky's call came as NATO looks to counter what it says is a build-up of Russian troops on the border with Ukraine, with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken set to meet Russia's top diplomat Sergei Lavrov in Stockholm today.

“We must tell the truth that we will not be able to end the war without direct talks with Russia,” Zelensky said during an annual address to lawmakers in Kiev. “Let's be honest, the war in Donbas has been going on for eight years,” Zelensky said, referring to eastern Ukraine. “We must talk, knowing that we have a strong and powerful army,” Zelensky added, saying he was “not afraid” to speak directly with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In Moscow, Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov appeared to pour cold water on the idea, reiterating that the war was Ukraine's domestic issue. “We know of attempts to present Russia as a party to this conflict. This is not the case,” Peskov told reporters. “The war in Donbas can only be stopped through negotiations of Ukrainians with Ukrainians.” More than 13,000 people have been killed in a war between Kiev troops and Russian-backed separatists who have carved out two “People's Republics” in eastern Ukraine.

Kiev and its Western allies have accused Russia of stirring up the separatist conflict to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO and the EU and sending troops and arms to support the breakaway regions. Moscow has denied those claims. The war broke out after a popular uprising in Kiev ousted a Kremlin-backed president and Moscow moved to annex Crimea in 2014. Even though active fighting has decreased, the West has been concerned by Russia's troop movements on Ukraine's

International

Bangladesh mayor arrested for refusing mural of PM's father

Human rights situation in Bangladesh has deteriorated sharply

DHAKA: A Bangladesh mayor who refused to permit a mural depicting Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's father on religious grounds was arrested yesterday, police said. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was independent Bangladesh's first leader and since his daughter took power in 2009, authorities have erected more than 1,000 murals and monuments to venerate him.

Scores of people have also been charged for defaming him under the country's notorious internet laws, which rights groups say have been used by Hasina to silence dissent. Abbas Ali, the mayor of western Rajshahi city, found himself in the spotlight last month after an audio clip of his comments against a proposed Mujib mural went viral.

"This is not correct according to Islamic sharia," he had said. "That's why I won't keep it. I will build everything as it's planned, except for this last part." Islamic traditions forbid depictions of people in murals or statues as part of the religion's restrictions against idolatry. His comments triggered protests in his home town. The mayor initially claimed the clip was fake, but later apologised on Facebook and fled town.

Police arrested Ali from a hotel in the capital Dhaka yesterday, spokesman Khandaker Al Moin told AFP. "He admitted he made the comment. He was absconding in different hotels in Dhaka since November 23. We had information that he's planning to flee the country," he added.

The case follows last month's sacking by Hasina of Zahagir Alam, the mayor of the industrial city of Gazipur, after he allegedly defamed Rahman. Both Alam and Ali were members of Hasina's ruling Awami League party.

Mujib led his country to independence from Pakistan in 1971 after a horrific nine-month war that Bangladesh says killed as many as three million and displaced many more. He was assassinated four years later along with most of his family.

Under his daughter Hasina, 74, activists say the human rights situation

in Bangladesh has deteriorated sharply, with clampdowns on free expression that have seen hundreds of journalists and activists arrested. Hasina's main political opposition has been crippled with its chief and her arch-rival Khaleda Zia jailed for corruption. —AFP



Hundreds of journalists and activists arrested



DHAKA: A rickshaw puller pedals past a mural of Bangladesh's founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Dhaka yesterday. — AFP

Taliban urge US to release frozen funds in Doha talks

DOHA: The Taliban renewed its call for the United States to release billions of dollars in frozen funds after two days of talks in Doha as aid-dependent Afghanistan grapples with economic crisis. The Afghans also called for an end to blacklists and sanctions in meetings led by Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi and Tom West, the US special representative for Afghanistan.

It was the second round of talks between the two sides in Qatar since the US ended its 20-year occupation of Afghanistan and the headline Islamists rapidly returned to power. "The two delegations discussed political, economic, human, health, education and security issues as well as providing neces-

sary banking and cash facilities," tweeted Afghan foreign ministry spokesman Abdul Qahar Balkhi.

"The Afghan delegation assured the US side of security and urged that Afghanistan's frozen money should be released unconditionally, blacklists and sanctions must end and human issues be separated from political ones." Washington seized nearly \$9.5 billion in assets belonging to the Afghan central bank. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank also suspended activities in Afghanistan, withholding aid as well as \$340 million in new reserves issued by the IMF in August.

The Afghan economy has effectively collapsed, with civil servants unpaid for months and the treasury unable to pay for imports. The United Nations has warned that around 22 million people, more than half the population, will face an "acute" food shortage in the winter months.

Taliban government leader Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund is among those targeted by the US sanctions. The US side stood firm on the measures and said it was taking steps to get support to ordinary Afghans. "The United States remains commit-

ted to ensuring that US sanctions do not limit the ability of Afghan civilians to receive humanitarian support from the US government and international community while denying assets to sanctioned entities and individuals," State Department spokesman Ned Price said in a statement.

"The Department of the Treasury has issued general licences to support the continued flow of humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan and other activities that support basic human needs." The US also urged the Taliban to provide access to education for women and girls across the country and "expressed deep concern regarding allegations of human rights abuses".

It reminded the Taliban of its commitment not to allow terrorist organisations to operate on its soil and to guarantee safe passage for US citizens from Afghanistan. The Americans also called for the release of US citizen Mark Frerichs, who was kidnapped in Afghanistan in February last year. The Taliban called the talks "positive" and said Muttaqi also met with the Japanese and German ambassadors to Afghanistan in Doha. — AFP

Taiwan to 'deepen' Honduras ties under pro-Beijing Castro

TAIPEI: Taiwan's president congratulated Honduras opposition candidate Xiomara Castro yesterday for an election win that looks set to usher in a government that could switch diplomatic recognition to China. This week's election in the Central American nation has been closely watched in Taipei because Honduras is one of just 15 countries that still diplomatically recognise Taiwan over Beijing.

Castro, the leftist wife of ousted former president Manuel Zelaya, has said she will "immediately open diplomatic and commercial relations with mainland China" if she wins. Yesterday, Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen said she hoped Castro would instead "deepen traditional bonds" between Taiwan and Honduras.

"On behalf of our government and people, President Tsai extends her sincere congratulations to Ms Castro

for being elected as the new president of Honduras," her office said in a statement. Tsai hopes that under Castro's leadership "official relations between the two countries continue to be friendly and deepen".

In a separate message on Twitter, Tsai said she looks forward to working together for "the deepening of the traditional bond that has always united Taiwan and Honduras". China claims Taiwan as part of its territory awaiting reunification, by force if needed.

It has spent decades successfully encouraging Taiwan's diplomatic allies to switch sides, a campaign it ramped up after Tsai's 2016 election. Since then China has poached seven of Taiwan's diplomatic allies, including three in Latin America—Panama, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic.

Before the election, Taiwan warned Honduras against "flashy and false"



TAOYUAN, Taiwan: File photo shows Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen (C) inspects an algae reef zone at the coast of the Guanyin district in Taoyuan on November 25, 2021. — AFP

promises by China, after Castro of the main opposition Liberty and Refoundation Party said she planned to switch sides. Castro looks set to be

the first woman to rule a Central American nation after her rival from the ruling rightwing National Party conceded defeat. —AFP

Without women and aid, Afghan economy will collapse, UN warns

KABUL: When Maryam went shopping in Kabul this week after several weeks cooped up at home, the Afghan mother was shocked to discover food prices had doubled-or even tripled-at the market's well-stocked vegetable stalls. "It's very expensive, it's clearly visible," the 52-year-old, who lost her job after the Taliban returned to power in August, told AFP. Yesterday, a United Nations report said Afghanistan and its population of roughly 40 million people have suffered an "unprecedented fiscal shock" since the Taliban takeover and the decision by the international community to withdraw billions in humanitarian aid.

The report predicts an economic contraction of around 20 percent of GDP "within a year, a decline that could reach 30 percent in following years". "It took more than five years of war for the Syrian economy to experience a comparable contraction. This has happened in five months in Afghanistan," United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Asia Director Kannan Wignaraja told AFP. Another UN source said that such a situation was "never seen before. Even... Yemen, Syria, Venezuela don't come close." For decades now

Afghanistan's economy has been undermined by war and drought. But it was propped up by international aid, which represented 40 percent of Afghanistan's GDP and financed 80 percent of its budget.

That was frozen when US-led international forces left the country and the Taliban took control. "The sudden dramatic withdrawal of international aid is an unprecedented fiscal shock," Wignaraja said. For Maryam, trying to buy food in the Kabul market, it spells potential disaster. Her husband is ill, and cannot work. They have seven children. Under the previous government, she was a civil servant, supporting the family with her salary. But the Taliban sent women home, only allowing certain female civil servants—mainly those in education and health—to return. They have been vague about whether women will be allowed to work in the future. For now, Maryam no longer has an income. "I have eight mouths to feed, eight people to clothe at home, everything is expensive, and for the moment it seems impossible for me to find another job," she says, not counting herself.

'Palliative'

Added to this are the Western economic sanctions taken against the Taliban, including the freezing of \$9.5 billion in assets of the Afghan central bank, which can no longer intervene to support the economy. Afghan banks have been distributing money only in small amounts, with withdrawals limited to a maximum of \$400 per week. The economy is slowing down and unemployment is soaring. According to the UN, 23 million Afghans, more than half the population,

are threatened by famine this winter.

"Afghanistan is in a humanitarian and development crisis that is becoming graver and needs to be immediately addressed to save lives," says the UNDP report, which estimates that \$2 billion in emergency aid is needed just to bring the entire population back up to the poverty line. If nothing is done, hard-won progress made by international aid in key areas such as education, health, gender equality, access to drinking water, and employment could all be lost, it says.

The UN agency fears the possible collapse of two key sectors: the banking system and energy, which would plunge the country into darkness. In Doha, where the Taliban and the Americans are negotiating this week, the Taliban have again asked the Americans to release frozen funds to allow the economy to recover. Washington has not responded to these requests, and has urged the Taliban to respect human rights and to give women and girls access to employment and education.

Depriving women of paid employment could drive GDP down by up to five percent, UNDP said, calling their jobs "vital to mitigate the economic catastrophe". In addition, there is a loss in consumption—women who no longer work no longer have a salary and can no longer buy as much as before to feed or equip their homes - which could reach \$500 million per year, according to the UNDP. Afghanistan "cannot afford to forfeit this", Wignaraja said, adding that young Afghan women must be allowed a post-secondary education they can work and contribute to the economy later. — AFP

China 'hunting' Taiwanese abroad

BEIJING: Beijing has pressured foreign governments to deport hundreds of Taiwan nationals to China, a new report found, in what human rights activists describe as a "hunt for Taiwanese". More than 600 Taiwanese were extradited from various countries to China between 2016 and 2019 in an effort to "undermine Taiwanese sovereignty", rights group Safeguard Defenders said in a report Tuesday.

China claims self-ruled democratic Taiwan as its territory, to be retaken one day by force if necessary, and has stepped up efforts in recent years to diplomatically isolate it. China and Taiwan agreed in 2009 that police from both sides would return overseas suspects to their respective territories.

But Beijing began to increasingly ignore this agreement after the election of Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen in 2016, according to the NGO's report. As Tsai has tried to assert the island's distinct identity, China has more aggressively professed its claim over Taiwan.

Safeguard Defenders said Beijing had pressured governments—including the Philippines and Cambodia—to extradite hundreds of Taiwanese mostly accused of telecoms fraud to China, despite efforts by the Taiwan government and the UN Human Rights Council to prevent the forced transfers.

Those extradited to China faced "arbitrary detention, torture, enforced disappearances, and forced televised confessions", Safeguard Defenders said. Spain accounted for the greatest number of known forced transfer cases—more than 200 — despite being bound by the European Convention on Human Rights, according to the report.

A Spanish court ruled in 2017 that a group of 121 Chinese and Taiwanese fraud suspects could be extradited to China, pointing to Beijing's widely followed "One-China policy"—in which Taiwan is diplomatically considered a part of China.

The Spanish government has shown a "clear disregard" for its human rights commitments and a "lack of understanding of the severity of human rights abuses in China", Safeguard Defenders said. In a contrasting European ruling, last year the Czech Supreme Court rejected China's extradition request for eight Taiwan nationals, citing the risk of torture and Beijing's poor rights record.

In response to the report, Taiwan's government said yesterday that China "does not have jurisdiction" over Taiwanese citizens implicated in criminal cases abroad, who it said should be returned to Taiwan to face trial.

The Mainland Affairs Council, Taiwan's top China policy-making body, said Beijing aims to "show its sovereignty over Taiwan" by pushing for the deportations. "We again urge the Chinese side that crime-fighting should not involve politics and we hope law enforcement units on both sides can continue to cooperate on existing basis to effectively fight crimes and protect public welfare," it said in a statement.

Meanwhile, China's foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin yesterday dismissed the report as "pure nonsense." Madrid-based Safeguard Defenders is an organisation that monitors and supports human rights activists in Asia. Co-founder Peter Dahlin was deported from China in 2016 after being detained for 23 days and forced to make a televised confession. — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2021

OECD warns Omicron variant threatens world economy

Global growth outlook lowered to 5.6% this year

PARIS: The OECD warned yesterday that the Omicron coronavirus variant threatens the global economic recovery as it lowered the growth forecast for 2021 and appealed for a swifter rollout of COVID vaccines.

The Paris-based Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development the recovery has "lost momentum" as it cut the outlook of top economies including the United States, China and the eurozone. The economy is now expected to expand by 5.6 percent this year, down from an earlier forecast of 5.7 percent, the OECD said in its updated economic outlook which warns that low vaccination areas could create "breeding grounds" for deadlier virus mutations.

Its forecast for 2022 remains unchanged at 4.5 percent, but the report was released only days after Omicron was detected. "We are concerned that the new variant of the virus, the Omicron strain, is further adding to the already high levels of uncertainty and risks, and that could be a threat to the recovery," OECD chief economist Laurence Boone said at a press conference.

While the OECD said it was "cautiously optimistic" about the recovery, it warned that health, high inflation, supply chain bottlenecks and potential policy missteps are "all key concerns". "The top

policy priority remains the need to ensure that vaccines are produced and deployed as quickly as possible throughout the world, including booster doses," the OECD said. "The recovery will remain precarious and uncertain in all countries until this is achieved."

Fears of 'deadlier strains'

In the "more benign scenarios", outbreaks could continue to prompt restrictions on people's movements, which could have long-lasting consequences on labor markets, production capacity and prices. "The harshest scenario is that pockets of low vaccination end up as breeding grounds for deadlier strains of the virus, which go on to damage lives and livelihoods," Boone warned in an editorial in the report.

Developed countries of the Group of 20 wealthy and emerging nations have spent \$10 trillion to prop up their economies during the pandemic, while vaccinating the planet would cost only \$50 billion, Boone told reporters. "It would be a big mistake to believe the job has been or is almost done," she said. "The news about the Omicron variant may actually be a reminder how shortsighted that failure has been. We are spending to support our economies when we are failing to vaccinate the whole world."

Analysts at Oxford Economics say Omicron could shave 0.25 percentage points off global growth next year if it causes mild effects, but it would cost two percentage points if it is more dangerous and a large part of the global population was forced into lockdowns. The strain has been spotted around the world since South African experts discovered its existence, prompting new travel restrictions.

The World Health Organization believes the variant's high number of mutations might make it more transmissible or resistant to vaccines.

Left behind

Addressing other key concerns for the world economy, the OECD said it expected inflation to peak at the turn of the year before receding gradually in the 38-nation OECD, which includes leading developed and emerging countries. Soaring inflation has roiled markets as investors fear that central banks will raise interest rates sooner than expected to tame runaway prices. The OECD urged monetary policymakers to "communicate clearly" about how far they will tolerate inflation exceeding their targets.

US Federal Reserve chief Jerome Powell, who has previously insisted that high inflation was only "transitory", said Tuesday that price increases could last



PARIS: The global economy is now expected to expand by 5.6 percent this year down from an earlier forecast of 5.7 percent, the OECD said in its updated economic outlook.

longer than anticipated—suggesting the central bank could lift rates sooner than expected.

The OECD said supply-side constraints and shortages, meanwhile, "should wane gradually through 2022-23" as demand normalizes, production capacity grows and more people return to the labor force. The organization also high-

lighted "marked differences" in the recovery of countries around the world.

"Parts of the global economy are rebounding quickly," it said. "But others are at risk of being left behind, particularly lower-income countries where vaccination rates are low, and firms and employees in contact-intensive sectors where demand has yet to recover fully." — AFP

Parag Agrawal: New CEO sheds low profile to take Twitter helm

SAN FRANCISCO: Parag Agrawal, who took over Monday as the new head of Twitter, shot from relative obscurity as the platform's technology expert to becoming the latest India-born talent to lead a US tech giant.

Unlike his predecessor, co-founder Jack Dorsey, Agrawal enjoyed until Monday a much more low-profile role at the company, with only about 24,000 followers on the platform, compared to Dorsey's almost six million. But with a tweeted statement that began, "Thank you, Jack, I'm honored and humbled," Agrawal took the reins of a company aiming to steer away from free speech battles and toward growth.

Agrawal is also the latest India-born star tapped to head a major US-based tech company, following the likes of Google-parent Alphabet's CEO Sundar Pichai and Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella.

"He's been behind every critical decision that helped turn this company around," Dorsey wrote of Agrawal in a message to Twitter staff. "He leads with heart and soul, and is someone I learn from



LONDON: This combination of pictures shows new Twitter CEO Parag Agrawal (left) and outgoing CEO Jack Dorsey (right). — AFP

daily. My trust in him as our CEO is bone deep."

Educated in computer science and engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay and holding a PhD from Stanford University in California, Agrawal joined Twitter in 2011 and rose to become its CTO by 2017. As the head of technology at the firm, he oversaw machine learning and artificial intelligence, as well as the company's broad technical strategy.

These specialties make him a natural choice to replace Dorsey, Creative Strategies analyst Carolina Milanese told AFP. "Going forward AI (artificial

intelligence) and ML (machine learning) will be more and more critical in making the platform healthier and more engaging for users and more profitable for the company," she said. "We might also see some more rigor and rational in the decision making process." Milanese added.

Agrawal was also head of the company's "Bluesky" push to create a more open and decentralized standard for social media. "I recognize that some of you know me well, some just a little, and some not at all," Agrawal said in an email to the some 5,500 employees at San Francisco-based Twitter.

The platform has grown far less exponentially than its Silicon Valley neighbors and has very meager net profits compared to the two giants of digital advertising, Google and Facebook's parent Meta.

Profitable for the first time in 2017, Twitter has slipped back into the red several times since.

Dorsey is perhaps best known to the public as the man who kicked Donald Trump off Twitter, the former president's preferred megaphone to rally his fans and assail his critics. But Agrawal has given indications that he does not view the platform as a venue for working out boundaries of free speech. In an interview with MIT Technology Review in 2020, Agrawal said the company, which became a focus of conservative rage in the US after banning Trump, should "focus less" on free speech. "Our role is to serve a healthy public conversation and our moves are reflective of things that we believe lead to a healthier public conversation," he said. — AFP (See Page 11)



China unveils new rules on ride-hailing drivers' rights

BEIJING: Beijing has unveiled fresh rules on workers' rights in the ride-hailing industry—including better pay and breaks—as officials tighten oversight of China's embattled tech sector and gig economy. The announcement comes on the heels of a wide-ranging regulatory clampdown on homegrown tech behemoths—including e-commerce titan Alibaba and ride-hailing giant Didi Chuxing—over issues including consumer rights, data security and monopolistic behavior. Under new guidelines released by the transport ministry, drivers at ride-hailing firms must not earn less than the local minimum wage and should be given access to social insurance.

They should also not be "induced to work overtime" by chalking up orders to meet targets, the statement said, and companies must monitor employees' working hours and labor intensity. It did not give specifics on what counted as overtime or adequate break times. The rules could hit earnings for companies in the billion-dollar industry, which is a go-to service for many commuters in China's densely populated cities.

"This is a precursor to stricter enforcement, but that enforcement was always coming," Kendra Schaefer, head of tech policy research at consultancy Trivium China, said. The new guidelines also stress that drivers must have the requisite permits for ride-hailing work—something which Schaefer estimates as many as 40 percent currently do not have. With fresh pressure for "strict enforcement" of these rules, companies will have to whittle out private-hire drivers who do not meet licensing requirements.

Recruiting drivers who have the right permits would likely be the "biggest pitfall," added Schaefer, because there are "simply are not enough drivers." "I actually think where they are going to be hit the hardest in their bottomline is in a driver war," she said. China's gig economy accounts for almost a quarter of its workforce: 200 million people are in "flexible employment", according to government figures.

New York-listed Didi's app dominates China's ride-hailing market and claims to have over 15 million drivers with nearly 500 million users. Didi has come under fire on multiple fronts with Chinese regulators reportedly asking executives last week to draw up a plan to delist from the United States over data concerns. — AFP

Global markets rebound after Omicron turmoil

LONDON: Global stock markets rebounded yesterday and oil prices surged following Omicron-driven losses and on the eve of a key output meeting of OPEC and its allies. European equities advanced, mirroring most rebounding Asian bourses, as dealers temporarily set aside news of record-high eurozone inflation. Oil surged about five percent, while the dollar extended gains against major rivals as the Federal Reserve is seen removing its vast financial support measures at a quicker pace than first flagged.

Rollercoaster ride

Investors were facing a rollercoaster week as they track the mutant Omicron strain, whose emergence last Friday darkened the economic outlook, sparked fresh COVID restrictions and ravaged most markets. Traders remain uncertain over its impact on the world economy and the likelihood of fresh lockdowns, as scientists rush to investigate the variant and urge speedy vaccination drives. "An ugly combination of a COVID-related knock to growth, reduction in central bank support and sustained inflation is not a recipe for strong stock markets," said AJ Bell investment director Russ Mould.

"However, some traders appear to have decided the weakness has gone far enough for now as they emerged to bid up stocks and oil." OPEC



NEW YORK: A trader works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) at the start of trading in New York. — AFP

and the oil cartel's allies hold a key output meeting today having resisted US-led pressure to step up production to bring down surging energy prices, while emergence of the new variant has complicated the equation.

The OECD grouping of major industrialized nations yesterday warned that Omicron threatens the global economic recovery, as it lowered the 2021 growth outlook and called for a swifter vaccines rollout. The global economy is now expected to expand by 5.6 percent this year, down from a forecast of 5.7 percent, the OECD said in its latest outlook. Top drug makers have offered differing opinions on their vaccines' efficacy against Omicron. Markets took a tumble on Tuesday after Moderna head Stephane Bancel told the Financial Times that existing vaccines might not be as effective against the new strain. — AFP

British gas firm to supply gas to Morocco

LONDON: A British gas company is to supply Morocco's state-owned power firm with gas from the country's east, it said Tuesday, as the kingdom looks to replace supplies hit by a crisis with Algeria. The deal between Sound Energy and Morocco's ONEE comes a month after Algeria said it would not renew an expiring 25-year deal for a pipeline that had exported Algerian gas via Morocco to Spain.

That decision cut the kingdom out of supplies it had long received as transit fees, and coincided with a global spike in gas prices. London-based Sound Energy said it has signed a "binding gas sale and purchase agreement" with ONEE "for the sale of natural gas from the (Sound-owned) Tendirra Concession in eastern Morocco over a 10-year period". Under the deal, the upstream gas firm "committed to producing, processing and delivering" up to 350 million cubic meters of gas per year, which will feed into and revive the Gas Maghreb-Europe (GME) pipeline formerly used for Spain-bound Algerian supplies. The 25-year contract for the previous GME arrangement expired on October 31 with tensions between the kingdom and its eastern rival at their worst in years following Morocco's renewal of ties with Israel and US recognition of the kingdom's sovereignty over the disputed Western Sahara. — AFP

Erdogan defends 'risky but correct' economic policy

Central bank intervenes in markets to prop up falling lira

ANKARA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan defended yesterday his "risky but correct" economic policy of low interest rates as the central bank intervened in markets to prop up the falling lira. Turkish households are under acute pressure with a currency crisis diminishing Turks' purchasing power as inflation remains high and the lira keeps hitting record lows.

Under pressure from Erdogan, who has sacked three governors since 2019, the central bank made a series of rate cuts since September despite double-digit inflation. The Turkish leader goes against conventional economic thinking to claim high interest rates cause high inflation, and vowed again to keep the main rate low.

"What we are doing is right. We have made and are making a politically risky but correct plan," Erdogan told ruling party lawmakers in parliament in Ankara. "The world knows how uncomfortable I am with high interest rates. I have never been pro-interest rates. I wasn't today and I won't be tomorrow," the president added.

He said Turkey had moved away from a policy based on high rates and instead switched to a growth strategy based on investments, employment, production and exports. The focus on growth is paying off as the economy recorded growth of 7.4 percent year-on-year in the third quarter of 2021, official data published on Tuesday showed.

Turkey's economy is expected to grow by nine percent this year and 3.5 percent in 2022, according to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Growing concerns

Shortly before Erdogan's address, the central bank intervened to support the embattled lira which has lost nearly 30 percent in value against the dollar in a month. The bank said in a statement it "started to conduct transactions at Borsa Istanbul Derivatives Market (VIOP) due to unhealthy price formations in exchange rates."

The lira rallied following the announcement, gaining nearly three percent in value to reach 13.02 lira for one dollar. It has lost over 43 percent in value against the dollar since the start of 2021. After the 2018 currency crisis, the central bank's foreign exchange reserves — worth \$128 billion according



ISTANBUL: The Turkish lira has lost over 43 percent in value against the dollar since the start of 2021. —AFP

to the opposition — were used to support the lira.

But the Turkish leader last month hailed the bank's strong reserves, which he said had grown to \$127 billion. Before the intervention, "there was a growing chorus of concern around the imposition of capital controls," emerging markets economist Timothy Ash said in a note to clients.

"If people think capital controls are coming then the next step is a risk of a run on bank deposits. We have not seen that yet, but any hint of capital controls and risks there would increase," Ash added.

Minimum wage debate

The net monthly Turkish minimum wage is 2,825.90 liras. That is worth \$214 today but was worth around \$380 in January this year. Official discussions on increasing the minimum wage began yesterday, led by the labor minister with expecta-

tions that it could rise by 30 percent. The issue matters since six million people in Turkey receive the minimum wage and Erdogan is keenly aware of the importance in making sure the economy is healthy and people feel comfortable ahead of elections in 2023.

Consumer prices data for November will be announced on Friday, the first set of data since the latest currency crisis. Annual inflation was 19.89 percent in October.

But Erdogan appeared to dismiss concerns over the exchange rate. "What you call the exchange rate rises today, falls tomorrow. Inflation increases today, falls tomorrow." But he said the government "understands sincere concerns" over uncertainty driven by soaring prices and fluctuations in the currency, he said, adding that they were "carefully monitoring" the situation. "This is our job," said Erdogan. — AFP

Lockdowns sink Australian economy in third quarter

SYDNEY: Pandemic-induced lockdowns caused Australia's economy to shrink 1.9 percent in the third quarter, a downturn that bucked the trend of a steady recovery in other wealthy nations. The Australian Bureau of Statistics yesterday reported the country's second quarterly contraction since the pandemic began and one of the largest contractions on record-sparked by long-running containment measures in populous states.

Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra were all closed for chunks of the quarter, causing households to spend dramatically less on services. There was a 21 percent drop in spending on hotels, cafes and restaurants and a 40 percent drop in spending on transport. The downturn was out of step with other major economies such as Canada, India, Japan, the United States and the eurozone, which all saw growth during the period as they reopened for business. Economists had forecast a 2.8 percent contraction, but increased exports appear to have come to the rescue-buoyed by high coal and gas prices. The economy is widely expected to bounce back in the final quarter of the year.

"These data show the significant disruption caused by lockdowns in the two largest states, they are now firmly in the rear-vision mirror," said NAB chief economist Alan Oster. He added that indicators of more recent activity suggest "a very solid rebound is already underway". The latest figures will further raise concern about the potential impact of the Omicron variant, with Moody's Investor Service yesterday warning the new strain "poses new risks to the global economic growth and inflation outlook". With 87 percent of over-16s now fully vaccinated, there are hopes that further lockdowns can be avoided. — AFP

Global economy rebounds, but for how long?

WASHINGTON: The world economy woke up from its pandemic-induced coma in 2021, but soaring inflation, global supply chain bottlenecks and a resurgent coronavirus have taken the shine off the comeback. Now growth is at risk of weakening next year.

Here is a look at the state of the global economy: Uneven recovery

Countries have posted impressive growth figures as they clawed their way out of the depths of the 2020 COVID-induced recession, but some are faring better than others as wealthier countries



MANILA: People cross a street to shop in the Divisoria district of Manila on Tuesday. —AFP

have had better access to vaccines. The United States has overcome its worst downturn since the Great Depression while the eurozone's economy could return to pre-pandemic levels by the end of the year. But a resurgence of the coronavirus could scupper the recovery, with the emergence of the

Omicron variant raising new concerns.

"COVID-19 will remain a public health threat, particularly in countries where vaccination rates remain low," said analysts at Moody's credit ratings agency. With a 2.5 percent vaccination rate, the economy of sub-Saharan Africa is growing at a slower clip, according to the International Monetary Fund. Most emerging and developing countries should remain far behind their pre-pandemic forecasts by 2024, the IMF says. Central banks in Brazil, Russia and South Korea have raised interest rates to combat rising inflation, a move that could rein in growth. China, the world's second biggest economy and a driver of global growth, is facing a slew of risks: New coronavirus cases, an energy crunch and fears over the debt crisis at real estate giant Evergrande.

Inflation soars

Inflation has accelerated to multi-year highs around the world, as consumers returned with a vengeance and industries faced shortages. Prices have soared across the board, with oil, natural gas and raw materials such as wood, copper and steel going through the roof. "The biggest surprise of 2021 has been the goods-led inflation surge," Goldman Sachs analysts wrote in a 2022 outlook. Central banks insist the inflationary pressure is a temporary consequence of economic activity returning to normal this year after it came to a halt when the pandemic erupted in 2020.

Stock markets have hit new record highs this year, but investors are concerned that central banks will withdraw their stimulus programs and raise interest rates earlier than expected to tame inflation. "The question is whether we really are in the end of the crisis," said Roel Beetsma professor of macroeconomics at the University of Amsterdam.

Industries have struggled to keep up with a surge in demand from consumers. Global trade has been disrupted by insufficient shipping containers, congestion at ports and labor shortages. One key component that is hard to come by these days is semiconductors, chips used in everything from phones to video game consoles to the electronic systems of cars. The shortage has been so bad that several automakers have had to temporarily halt production at some factories. — AFP

"I will say, yes, we're frustrated. We're frustrated because you've seen a decrease in oil prices. You've not seen a decrease in gas" prices, she said. "It doesn't take an economist—it doesn't take an oil market expert to recognize that. That doesn't sound, look or smell right." "We see oil company CEOs bragging about the profits they make when gas company prices go up," Psaki said. "This is a real impact on the American people. It is incredibly frustrating. That's why the president is so focused on it."

Last week, Biden took the unusual measure of tapping US strategic oil reserves to pump additional supplies into the market. This was done in coordination with other major consumer countries such as China and India.

Biden's attempt to calm the fuel markets has had little effect so far. However, news of the potentially dangerous new Omicron COVID-19 variant has sent crude oil prices sharply down. — AFP

Biden 'frustrated' by 'bragging' big oil CEOs: W House

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden is "frustrated" by big oil CEOs "bragging" about profits when fuel prices are soaring for ordinary Americans, the White House said Tuesday. A painful hike in the cost of gasoline is spearheading an overall inflation problem and hitting Biden's popularity ratings.

The White House says that oil companies may be illegally profiteering and has asked the Federal Trade Commission to investigate. In strong comments to reporters, Press Secretary Jen Psaki questioned why gasoline prices were so high in filling stations when crude oil is trading sharply lower.



Announcement

Regarding the results of subscription and allocation of the rights issue shares to increase the issued capital of Burgan Bank by KD 37.5 million distributed over 375 million shares with a nominal value of 100 fils in addition to an issuance premium of 90 fils

The rights offer subscription period in Burgan Bank K.P.S.C. ("Bank" or the "Issuer") capital increase process ended on Sunday, 28 November 2021. The offered rights of 375,000,000 shares was fully subscribed during this period.

The following is a summary of the subscription results for the rights offering:

- Total number of rights offered: 375,000,000 shares
- Total value of rights offered: KD 71,250,000
- Total number of subscribed shares: 845,256,431 shares
- Total value of subscribed shares: KD 160,598,722
- Number of rights subscribed: 349,088,024 shares (93.09% of total rights offered)
- Number of unsubscribed rights allotted to subscribers who applied for more than their entitlement: 25,911,976 (6.91% of total rights offered)
- The percentage of allocation to subscribers who have applied for more than their entitlement: 5.22%

The value of allocated shares (KD 71,250,000) shall be transferred to the bank's capital account and the excess amount shall be refunded to the respective shareholders within 5 business days.

For more information:

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KAMCO GCC Markets Monthly Report

GCC index declines 4.7% as new COVID variant spooks investors

Boursa Kuwait drops along with broad-based decline in global markets

KUWAIT: GCC markets declined for the first time in 13 months in November-2021 as the new COVID-19 variant, Omicron, sent shockwaves across financial markets globally. The MSCI GCC index dropped 4.7 percent during the month, in line with most major exchanges globally. In terms of market-cap, total value of listed stocks in the region declined by \$205 billion to reach \$3.5 trillion by the end of the month. The monthly decline during November-2021 dented the performance of GCC markets since the start of the year which now stands at 29.7 percent.

Within the GCC, Abu Dhabi and Dubai exchanges remained largely resilient to the global pressure, although even these markets were not spared on 28-November-2021, which saw steep global single day sell-off, with declines of 1.8 percent and 5.2 percent. Most GCC markets reported a decline during November-2021, barring ADX and DFM that reported a gain of 8.7 percent and 7.3 percent, respectively. Saudi Arabia's TASI reported the biggest decline of 8.1 percent losing almost \$240.3 billion in market-cap during the month.

The decline highlighted the impact of the slide in oil prices to below \$70/b mark, although briefly. The month also saw Abu Dhabi further strengthening its global lead in terms of market performance since the start of the year with a return of 69.4 percent, one of the highest globally. Dubai also scaled up to be the third best performing market in the GCC with a YTD-21 return of 23.3 percent. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia remained the second ranked market in the GCC, but with a smaller lead over Dubai with a gain of 23.8 percent.

The GCC sector performance chart showed declines across the board during November 2021 with the exception of Diversified Financials and Telecom indices that reported gains of 5.3 percent and 4.2 percent, respectively, while Real Estate was almost flat with a gain of 0.1 percent. Consumer Durable & Apparel was the biggest decliner with a monthly fall of 21.5 percent followed by Utilities and Pharma & Biotech indices with declines of 13.5 percent and 12.4 percent, respectively.

Boursa Kuwait

Kuwait benchmarks receded during November-2021 with the second-biggest drop during the month following a broad-based decline that affected most markets in the region as well as globally. In terms of market segments, the Main 50 Index witnessed the biggest monthly decline of 4.9 percent as performance of constituent stocks in the index were skewed downwards. The Premier Market Index and the All-Share Market Index reported a monthly decline of 4.5 percent followed by the Main Market index that receded 4.3 percent during November-2021. With the declines, Kuwait lost one spot in terms of YTD-2021 returns and now ranks at the fourth position with a return of 22.4 percent for the All Share Index. The Main 50 Index was up 26.5 percent vs. 21.4 percent gains for the Premier Market Index.



The sector performance chart also highlighted the broader decline in the market with merely two indices, Insurance and Health Care, showing gains of 7.6 percent and 1.8 percent, respectively, during the month. The Basic Materials Index was the biggest decliner with a double-digit decline of 10.4 percent followed by the Industrials and Financial Services indices with declines of 7.0 percent and 6.2 percent, respectively. Large-cap indices like Banking and Telecom witnessed mid-single digit declines. The Banking sector index was down by 3.8 percent during the month after shares of 9 out of ten Kuwaiti banks declined. The Telecom index declined by 4.3 percent reflecting decline in 4 out of 5 constituent stocks in the index. Shares of all the three telecom providers dropped during the month with Zain leading with a decline of 5.0 percent.

In terms of monthly stock performance, Credit Rating & Collection Co topped the chart with a gain of 96.4 percent followed by Umm Al-Qaiwain General Investments Co and Jiyad Holding Co with gains of 28.6 percent and 28.4 percent, respectively. On the decliners side, MIENA Real Estate Co topped with a fall of 47.0 percent followed by National Co for Consumer Industries and Salbookh Trading Co with the declines of 38.4 percent and 27.5 percent, respectively. Trading activity remained upbeat during the month with the total volume of shares traded during the month was the highest since January-2017 and increased by 14.8 percent m-o-m to 10.7 billion shares as compared to 9.3 billion shares traded during Oct-2021.

Monthly value traded witnessed an increase of 36.8 percent to reach KD 1.7 billion in November-2021 as compared to KD 1.25 billion in Oct-2021. GFH Financial Group topped the monthly value traded chart with KD 163.5 million worth of shares traded followed by KFH and NBK at KD 142.1 million and KD 122.7 million, respectively. On the monthly volume chart, GFH Financial Group.

Saudi Arabia (Tadawul)

After witnessing gains for ten consecutive months, the Saudi Stock Exchange reported a steep decline during November -2021 led by a global sell-off triggered by a new variant of COVID-19. The index closed the month below the 11,000 mark for the first time since July-2021 at 10,761.8 points, witnessing a monthly decline of 8.1 percent. The new COVID-19



variant further affected oil market sentiments that was already low owing to the release of SPR by the US government during the last week of the month.

Brent futures traded near the \$70/b mark after declining by more than 17 percent from its peak of over \$86/b seen during the last week of October-2021. The decline in TASI also affected the benchmark's YTD-21 performance which now stands at 23.8 percent, marginally above the third ranked exchange in the region.

Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange

Abu Dhabi Exchange reported the best monthly performance during November-2021 despite declines towards the close of the month. The index surged for the fourteenth consecutive month and registered a gain of 8.7 percent to close at 8,546.52 points. With consecutive positive performance since the start of the year, the ADX index showed one of the highest returns globally at 69.4 percent.

The monthly sector performance chart remained mixed but was skewed towards gainers with six out of the nine sectors recording gains during the month. The Telecom index led the way registering 24.1 percent gain during the month mainly led by gain in shares of Emirates Telecom Corp that was up 24.8 percent during the month followed by Sudan Telecommunication Company which saw a 10.6 percent increase in its share prices.

Dubai Financial Market

The DFM index rose significantly into positive territory during November-2021 and was second-best performing market during the month after ADX. The benchmark witnessed a gain of 7.3 percent during the month and closed at 3,072.9 points after a marginal 0.7 percent monthly decline in October-2021. Gains came mainly on the back of the news that Dubai government plans to list as much as ten state-owned firms in Dubai Stock Exchange. In terms of YTD-21 performance, the index showed returns of 23.3 percent at the end of November-2021, the third highest in the GCC after ADX and TASI. In terms of sector performance, five out of nine sectoral indices dipped into the red during the month, however, the Financial

and Investment Services index jumped 37.3 percent.

Qatar Exchange

After reaching multi-year high levels during October-2021, the QE 20 Index reported the third-biggest m-o-m decline during November-2021. The index closed the month at 11,386.31 points registering a decline of 3.2 percent. The Qatar All Share Index also reported a decline of 3.2 percent, indicating a broad-based weakness in the market. With the decline during Nov-2021, the YTD-2021 returns for the QE 20 index was slashed to 9.1 percent, one of the lowest performance in the GCC. Comparatively, the QE All Share index reported a relatively higher YTD-21 growth of 12.8 percent.

Bahrain Bourse

Bahrain All Share index dipped into the red, albeit marginally, during November-2021 led by a broad-based decline. The index fell 0.8 percent during the month to close at 1,729.6 points after gains at the start of the month was completely wiped off by the end of the month. The index was in the green until the last trading day, but a decline of 1.4 percent on 30-November-2021 pushed MTD gains in the red. In terms of YTD-21 performance, the index is up 16.1 percent for the first eleven months of the year, ranking fifth in the GCC.

Muscat Securities Market

The Omani stock market recorded 1.8 percent decline during November-2021 after witnessing 3.4 percent gain during October-2021. The MSX index closed slightly above the 4,000 mark at 4,000.35 points after consistent declines at the start of the month was only partially offset by gains during the second half. In terms of YTD-21 performance, the MSX index was up 9.3 percent this year making it the second-lowest gaining market in the GCC this year. In terms of sector performance, all the three main sectors of the exchange fell into negative territory during November-2021. The Services Sector index fell 3.6 percent during the month whereas the Industrial and Financial indices reported declines of 2.4 percent and 0.5 percent, respectively.



A group photo taken after the inaugural ceremony

Burgan Bank relocates its head office, main branch

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced the relocation of its headquarters and main branch to the new building in Abdallah al Ahmad Street in Kuwait City. The new headquarters was inaugurated under the patronage of the Governor of the Capital, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, in the presence of Majed Essa Al-Ajeel, Chairman of Burgan Bank Group, Masoud M J Hayat, Vice Chairman and Group CEO, and Raed Al-Haqhaq, Deputy Group CEO & CEO-Kuwait, in addition to senior managers and officials from Burgan Bank and the Capital Governorate.

Burgan's new head office has been optimized to provide a working environment that supports more effective teamwork, quality interaction and greater productivity. The modern and spacious main branch area was completely revamped to serve customers with the full range of Burgan's top-notch services in a

comfortable space that promotes greater human engagement, ensures a great banking experience, and leads to the highest level of customer satisfaction.

During the inauguration ceremony, the Capital Governor Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah declared "The banking sector is one of the main pillars of improving the national economy and advancing sustainable social and economic development, and Burgan Bank is a major banking institution and a recognized leading force in Kuwait's banking sector. It has greatly contributed to the development of fair competition and to the continuous improvement of banking products and services, thus supporting the banking sector's efforts aiming at achieving the strategic objective of transforming Kuwait to a financial and commercial center in the region."

Majed Essa Al-Ajeel, Chairman of Burgan Bank Group, said "Burgan is working steadily on confirming its leading position in the traditional and digital banking activities locally and regionally. The carefully planned strategic transformations reflect our strong commitment to provide our customers with the best banking experience through the highest quality of services, the most rewarding products, and the



KUWAIT: Governor of the Capital Governorate Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Majed Essa Al-Ajeel, Masoud M J Hayat and Raed Al-Haqhaq, during the inauguration of the new headquarters.

safest banking environment. We will continue to rely on the pillars of sustainability, digitization, and investment in employees' development in order to closely align the Bank's culture with its strategic objectives and to maximize value for all stakeholders."

Commenting on the relocation, Masoud M J Hayat, Vice Chairman and Group CEO of Burgan Bank Group said "Moving to our new headquarters is one of many important changes to come. We are endeavoring to support the implementation of our strategy by strengthening our assets, investing in the digital transformation, in addition

to enhancing a sustainable, innovative and effective corporate culture. We are confident that the new move will greatly support our growth and development objectives and facilitate the delivery of a mix of the best-in-class digital and traditional banking services and products to all our customers."

Backed by its strategic investment in developing its employees and expanding its digital services, Burgan Bank is set to keep its promise of excellence and strengthen its position as an active driver of positive change and trendsetter in the banking sector locally and regionally.

NBK officially launches SWIFT payment controls

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has officially launched SWIFT Payment Controls, which is the latest smart solution that helps in mitigating fraudulent attacks, stopping high-risk payments in addition to enhancing security level, thanks to its unique alert and reporting capabilities.

SWIFT Payment Controls which was implemented in NBK-Kuwait and overseas branches will provide controls including real-time alerting and blocking of sent payments to detect and prevent high-risk payments, as well as providing protection by blocking suspicious payments and daily reporting of transaction status and recovery.

On this occasion, Mohammad Al-Kharafi, General Manager, Head of Group Operations at National Bank of Kuwait said: "NBK always leads the way in adopting the latest innovations in financial technology with the aim of providing high quality service to its customers." "SWIFT Payment Controls is one of the most advanced solutions that will help enhance NBK's competitive edge in the payment systems domain, thanks to its capabilities in providing real-time monitoring of payments and taking instant action to stop fraudulent transactions," he noted.

Al-Kharafi highlighted that, in line with its digital transformation strategy, NBK has made large

investments over the past years to upgrade its payment and transfer systems. It is also the first bank to introduce the latest technologies in the area of instant payments and transfers in Kuwait, including tracking transfers on its digital channels: NBK Mobile Banking, NBK Online Banking and NBK Online Corporate Banking, enabling customers to check the

status of their transfers online in quick and secure way. "As part of the consistent strides to align with the key pivots of the bank's digital transformation strategy, we constantly explore new trends in the area of banking technology to improve the quality of our banking services. Now, we are reaping the fruits of these efforts as the bank has succeeded in changing landscape of the digital payment solutions in Kuwait by providing a wide range of advanced payment solutions," he elaborated.

Al-Kharafi concluded by praising the efforts of the bank's team who worked to ensure the successful implementation of this service in a smooth and highly efficient way, despite the challenging circumstances posed by the pandemic. It is worth mentioning that in 2021, National Bank of Kuwait received a number of Global Finance Magazine's annual awards for Kuwait in recognition of its excellence as a provider of innovative, advanced payment solutions.



Mohammad Al-Kharafi

Business

Gulf Bank employees access training program with Euromoney Learning

Euromoney Learning programs cover various banking and finance topics

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has partnered with Euromoney Learning to offer its employees access to industry-leading learning programs spanning various topics in the banking and finance sectors. Over the last five years, Euromoney has provided training programs for the world's top 10 largest banks, reaching over 25,000 professionals residing in over 80 countries. Access to Euromoney Learning's on-demand platform will encourage Gulf Bank employees to take ownership of their training with a simple-to-use, financial e-learning platform which encourages learning autonomy, and provides on-demand education that is accessible anytime, anywhere.

The new initiative falls under Gulf Bank's strategy for the year 2025, which aims to provide customers with an unprecedented banking experience based on a digital transformation that starts from within the Bank. Offering employees access to Euromoney Learning marks yet another proactive step by Gulf Bank to ensure its staff remains at the forefront of digitization, and to train its employees in the latest financial technology fields.

"An organization's ability to continuously learn and evolve rapidly is its ultimate competitive advantage," said Gulf Bank's General Manager of Human Resources, Salma Al-Hajjaj. "At Gulf Bank, we are proud to be among the first leading banks that are investing in human capital to enhance both technical and financial competencies. To achieve our strategic goals, it is essential to invest in our employees and provide them with access to next generation learning experiences that will equip our employees with the necessary skill sets to thrive in today's digital world."

"We are proud to be spearheading a new approach to learning in the corporate world, offer-



Salma Al-Hajjaj

ing our employees the chance to proactively seek out subject matters that will expand on their existing knowledge of the field, while ensuring they remain on top of new and emergent technologies," continued Al-Hajjaj. "Skill acquisition is a lifelong process for all Gulf Bank employees, and we are delighted to be building a learning culture in Gulf Bank that encourages knowledge transfer through simple, yet accessible, digital platforms."

Euromoney develops bespoke learning experiences that blend next generation learning technologies and techniques in a way that drives performance and inspires a culture of lifelong learning. As the world's first on-demand video learning platform, Euromoney Learning will provide Gulf Bank staff with a comprehensive, high quality and engaging video learning platform covering all areas of banking and finance from fundamental concepts to advanced theory. The platform covers eight categories: Banking, Innovation and Technology, Sustainability, Investment Management, Technical



Foundations, Compliance, Competence & Culture, and Macro-Markets.

With the banking sector heading toward a new era of digital transformation, Gulf Bank has demonstrated a proven dynamism in responding swiftly to today's demands. The Bank's latest digital-driven strategy aims to transform the Bank into a full-fledged digital bank that will exceed the aspirations of future generations. Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering

customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining a robust sustainability program at the community, economic, and environmental levels through sustainability initiatives that are strategically selected to benefit both the country and the Bank. The bank also supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various relevant parties to achieve it.

Lynk & Co brand launched in Kuwait by Al-Zayani

KUWAIT: Al-Zayani is pleased to announce the launch of its latest premium brand, Lynk & Co in the Kuwaiti market. Launched in 2016, Lynk & Co is created for the new generation of open urbanites. The design is inspired by the landscape, time change and lifestyle in Mega cities all across the globe. Its development is the comprehensive expression of advanced technologies begin with European to fulfil the needs of urbanites. Lynk & Co is a new brand in the car industry, but not just a new car brand. Born global, open and connected. With a global view, the brand wants to build an open platform connecting people, cars and the world.

As the first model of Lynk & Co, 01 adopts the unique design philosophy called "Mega-city Contrast" to lead the global aesthetics and urban fashion. It presents the brand mission of "Changing Mobility Forever", which shall bring Lynk & Co's exclusive sense of value to the end-user on product experience. Lynk & Co 01 creates an iconic family front face, which integrates urban skyline and urban matrix air-inlet grille to manifest urban youngster's eccentric lifestyle. The lighting combinations which involve "Aurora Borealis" LED daytime running lights, "Energy Cube" LED Crystal Taillight and separated LED headlights with lens illuminate the urban life with the exclusive light of Lynk & Co.

With the strong powertrain, 218/160 Horsepower & 2.0 T4 EVO-8AT engine, well-tuned chassis and 20 ADAS functions, Lynk & Co 01 provides the feelings on ultimate driving control and outstanding intelligent driving assistance to drivers. In addition, Lynk & Co 01 has already won the 5-star rating in



2021 E-NCAP test to guarantee the industry supreme safety on occupants. In addition, its leading infotainment system offers the highest convenience in order to achieve the real-time connectivity with the world. Lynk & Co 01 provides an ultimate luxury and comfort using experience on occupants.

Lynk & Co 01 owns equally excellent NVH performance with many luxury brands, and the Harman Infinity top Audio takes a splendid auditory enjoyment to the users. The sporty seats adopt top-layer genuine leather and Nubuck materials to provide premium feelings, and the enjoyable ambient lighting provides Lynk & Co 01 an incomparable sense of luxury. Lynk & Co 01 creates a green cockpit which involves AQS system, active cockpit purifying function and the eco-friendly interior materials brings a totally new comfort feeling to the users. Keyless entry and keyless start functions are also equipped on 01 to offer more convenience to the daily use.

Al-Zayani is one of the most highly regarded luxury automotive retailers in the Gulf region representing some of the world's finest automotive brands such as Ferrari, Bentley, Maserati and Jaguar. The mega reveal of Lynk & Co 01 took place at Grand



Avenues on 18th November. The 01 model is on display till 27th November 2021. The mega reveal was complimented by an Online launch from Lynk & Co, which was titled "01 More Idea, 01 More Way". Through the movie, Lynk & Co lead all audience to an adventurous journey with the 01 model. The Lynk & Co showroom will open in Kuwait from 5 December 2021 at Ghazali Street, Al-Rai.

Fed chair admits US inflation could prove 'persistent'

WASHINGTON: The wave of price increases that has complicated the US pandemic recovery could last longer than anticipated, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell acknowledged Tuesday, opening the door to raising interest rates sooner. It was a distinct shift by the central bank chief who for months tried to assuage fears by saying the inflation spike would be "transitory," and pledged to be patient before raising interest rates.

The uptick in inflation has put pressure on Powell and become a political liability for President Joe Biden, who is pushing a divided Congress to pass a massive bill improving social services and fighting climate change.

"Clearly the risk of more persistent inflation has risen," Powell said in testimony before the Senate Banking Committee. He pledged that policymakers "will use our tools to make sure that higher inflation does not become entrenched." Data released last week showed the central bank's preferred price gauge surged five percent for the 12 months ending in October, well above the Fed's two-percent goal and its biggest jump since 1990.

Powell, whom Biden last week nominated to a second term as central bank chief, has previously said policymakers could be patient before raising lending rates. However, he signaled in his testimony that it may be appropriate to speed up the pace of the recently begun pullback in monthly asset purchases. That would mean the Fed would be in a position to raise the benchmark interest rate sooner.

'Transitory' retired

At its policy meeting earlier this month, the Fed decided to begin reducing its monthly bond purchases, announcing a pace that would end them in the middle of 2022. But since then, data has shown "elevated inflation pressures, a rapid improvement in many labor market indicators" and "strong spending" that signals "significant growth in coming months," Powell said. Therefore it is "appropriate, in my view, to consider wrapping up the taper of our asset purchases... perhaps a few months sooner." The Fed slashed the benchmark lending rate to zero at the start of the pandemic, and Powell has said policymakers will not raise rates until the bond-buying program ends.

A growing number of Fed officials have publicly supported a faster taper and one or two rate increases next year, while some private economists are calling for three hikes. Powell has for months described the burst of inflation fueled by supply chain snarls and shortages of goods and workers as "transitory," but told lawmakers it is time to "retire" the term. The initial inflation spike showed up in auto prices, due to a shortage of critical computer chips resulting from the ongoing pandemic restrictions that disrupted semiconductor production in Asia. Americans, who went on a spending spree as the economy opened up, have also faced rising costs for gasoline, housing and other products, and in many cases cannot find the goods they want.

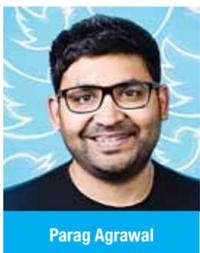
Hawkish signs

Powell acknowledged that central bankers in their predictions missed the "enormous amount" of supply chain problems and the impact they would have on prices, and the increases have been more widespread than anticipated. But the Fed continues to believe the pressures will subside in the second half of the year, he said.

Prior to the next meeting of the Fed's policy committee on December 14-15, central bankers will see data on employment and consumer prices in November. There may also then be more details about the Omicron variant of COVID-19, and whether it is likely to set back the recovery, as the Delta strain did. "Today will go down as the day Fed Chair Powell shed his dovish wings and showed signs of becoming a hawk," said Oanda analyst Edward Moya. He said the change of message was "conveniently timed," coming a week after Powell's renomination. —AFP



Sundar Pichai



Parag Agrawal



Satya Nadella



Arvind Krishna



Shantanu Narayen



Raghuram Raghuram

Indian origin CEOs who are running American Big Tech

SAN FRANCISCO: Parag Agrawal who took over Monday as the new head of Twitter shot from relative obscurity as the platform's technology expert to becoming the latest India-born talent to lead a US tech giant. With Indian-American Agrawal becoming the CEO of Twitter, the number of Indians currently holding important positions in different American tech companies has increased. The list is only likely to grow.

The big names from Indian diaspora who currently run Big Tech in the United States include Google's Sundar Pichai, Twitter's Parag Agrawal, Microsoft's Satya Nadella and more!

Sundar Pichai - Alphabet

The CEO of Alphabet (Google's parent company), Sundar Pichai was born in Chennai, Tamil Nadu in India. He studied at IIT Kharagpur before going to Stanford University to pursue an MS degree in materials science and engineering. Pichai also went on to get an MBA degree from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. Pichai took over CEO duties for Google in August 2015 after Larry Page.

Parag Agrawal - Twitter

Parag Agrawal, the newly-appointed CEO of Twitter, is the latest figure to emerge from the Indian diaspora in the United States. Agrawal went to IIT-Bombay, after which he studied at Stanford University and got a PhD degree in computer science. In 2011, he joined Twitter as a distinguished software engineer, and became the chief technology officer (CTO) in 2017.

Satya Nadella - Microsoft

Microsoft's magic man Satya Nadella was born in Hyderabad, India. Before becoming the CEO of Microsoft, Satya Nadella was the executive vice president of Microsoft's cloud and enterprise group. At Microsoft, Nadella is credited for the company's swift move to cloud computing - overseeing the development of one of the world's largest cloud infrastructures. Nadella received a bachelor's in electrical engineering from the Manipal Institute of Technology in Karnataka, before moving to the US to get an MS degree in computer science from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Before joining Microsoft in 1992, Nadella worked at Sun Microsystems.

Arvind Krishna - IBM

The current chairman and CEO of IBM, Arvind Krishna was born in Andhra Pradesh, India. He has remained the CEO of IBM since April 2020 and also took over chairman duties in January 2021. Krishna was behind IBM's acquisition of Red Hat, the largest one for IBM ever (at \$34 billion). Before moving to the States, Krishna received a BTech degree in electrical engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology in Kanpur. Then, he pursued a PhD degree in electrical engineering from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Krishna succeeded Ginni Rometty, who served as IBM's CEO from 2012-2020.

Shantanu Narayen - Adobe Inc.

Born in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, Shantanu Narayen has been at the helm of Adobe Inc since December 2007. Before becoming the CEO, chairman, and the president of Adobe Inc, Narayen got a bachelor's degree in electronics and communication engineering from University College of Engineering, Osmania University. Not much later, he received a master's degree in computer science from Bowling Green State University in Ohio. Narayen also has an MBA degree from the Haas School of Business, University of California, Berkeley.

Raghuram Raghuram - VMware

The CEO of VMware, Raghuram Raghuram joined the company in 2003. Raghuram has held multiple leadership roles at VMware including CEO. According to VMware, Raghuram is responsible for all of VMware's product and service offerings including centralized services, support, and operational functions. Before working at VMware, Raghuram worked at AOL, Bang Networks, and Netscape - holding product management and marketing roles. Raghuram received a Master's degree in electrical engineering from IIT-Bombay and also has an MBA degree from the Wharton School of Business. —Agencies

Lifestyle | Features

END TO UK VIRUS CURBS MEANS SANTA CLAUS REALLY IS COMING TO TOWN



Santas arrive at The Ministry of Fun in London to take part in Santa School, a series of training courses for professional UK Santas.



Santas sit in class as they take part in Santa School.



Santa's Elf performs outside The Ministry of Fun. —AFP photos



Santas wave to passers-by as they take a break from the classroom during Santa School at The Ministry of Fun.



Santas sit in class as one has his costume inspected, during Santa School at The Ministry of Fun.



Four year old Darcie O'Rourke poses for a photograph with the Santas waiting at a bus stop as they take a break from the classroom during Santa School.

After a "dark year", Britain's Santas are raring to meet children at live events once again this Christmas and even their reindeer are fully jabbed, a lineup of the white-bearded performers said on Tuesday. Due to coronavirus restrictions, many traditional grottos in large stores and shopping malls and children's parties were closed last year, forcing Santas to listen to Christmas gift wish lists online.

This year, despite growing concerns over the new Omicron virus variant, imitators of the jolly festive present-giver working for a specialized London agency were upbeat and hopeful that in-person events will go ahead as planned. "It's going to be the best Christmas ever, ho ho ho!" exclaimed one Santa in full costume attending a training session at Ministry of Fun, an agency that provides the festive entertainers for grottos, pho-

to shoots and video calls.

This Christmas "will be very different, especially after the dark year we've had", said another performer, who gave his name as Santa Kev. Last year, the Santas were hard-hit by lockdown measures, including just before Christmas as cases of the Delta variant soared. This year will be a "world of difference", since "we're back again with more live events", said another of the entertainers, who gave his name simply as Santa. At the same time, "the world has changed since last year, and we will be foolish to ignore those changes", he said.

"After all, we've only just been informed of yet another variant," he added, referring to the heavily mutated Omicron strain of coronavirus. This year, "Christmas is well and truly on," Ministry of Fun director Matt Grist insisted. "The demand for

Christmas activities and to meet you wonderful Santas is greater than it's ever been," he told the group of performers, including seasoned Santas as well as novices, from backgrounds such as acting and teaching.

Demand up

Demand for Santas is up around 20 percent on 2019 pre-pandemic figures, Grist said, taking into account live appearances at grottos, photo shoots and department stores, as well as an online service set up last year. With the spread of the Omicron variant prompting fresh restrictions in England, including compulsory mask wearing in shops and on public transport, "the worldwide challenge with Covid is not over by any means", Grist said.

"We always have to be vigilant, we have to be sensible, we have to be fluid." Santas are equipped

with red masks and grottos allow for social distancing, agency staff said. "All the reindeer are fully jabbed," one Santa said. "And of course whenever I'm travelling on the sleigh, I'll be sure to wear a big red mask."

In a major change brought on by the pandemic, Santas have also got used to making video calls. While the move online was forced last year, the sessions proved popular with more shy children, who "tended to be more comfortable, because they're in their own homes", Grist told AFP. Children like to "show you all the drawings that they've made or toys that they've got or introduce you to their pets and so forth", said one Santa. The training session reminded Santas that their "ho, ho, ho" should be "slightly gentler" when they make video calls and stressed the need for making eye contact by looking at the camera. —AFP

SENEGALESE ARTISTS FIND 'FREEDOM' IN SLAM POETRY

Dilaminou Theila strides confidently onstage in a working-class neighborhood in Senegal's seaside capital Dakar to recite free-form verses about love. "Like the prodigal son/I set out to discover the world and its seductions/But all I got was sorrow," she declaims, in French, winning uproarious applause from about 50 slam-poetry enthusiasts. Theila, a second-year law student and Gabonese national, is one of a growing number of people drawn to the thriving slam scene in the West African metropolis.

In Dakar's Medina district, dozens of slammers—many of them stylish youngsters—have gathered for one of the first open-mic nights after over a year-long hiatus caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Colonialism, Africa's place in the world, feminism and love are recurring themes among the poets, who often recite their verses in a rapid patter reading from their smartphones. "Slam, for us, is a form of expression to free ourselves," Theila told AFP after leaving the stage. "I came tonight and didn't expect to recite," she said, suggesting that she was inspired to perform because of the infectious atmosphere.

Slam poetry, a genre of spoken verse influenced by hip-hop music, is popular across French-speaking Africa. But Senegal has a particularly strong tradition of the art form. Senegalese native Abdourahmane Dabo, who died last year, won the first Africa-wide tournament in 2018. All 14 of the country's regions have slam associations, according to Senegal's Slam League president Omar Keita, in addition to numerous school and university groups. "More and more people are interested," Keita said, adding that even established writers and theatre directors are hoping that slam



A woman performs during a slam session in Dakar. —AFP photos



A man performs during a slam session in Dakar.



A woman performs during a slam session in Dakar.

can bring them new audiences.

"The cheapest therapy"

The rich literary tradition in the nation of 16 million people may contribute to the popularity of slam poetry, Keita suggested. Griots—a caste of storytellers, singers and oral historians—played an important role in traditional Senegalese culture. But Senegal has a vibrant literary tradition too. Senegalese author Mohamed Mbougar Sarr won France's leading literary prize the Prix Goncourt in October, and the country's first president, Leopold Senghor, was a renowned poet.

"We're close to the classical poets," said Keita, the Slam League president. Several slammers interviewed by AFP suggested that the form allowed them to mingle interests in hip hop and literature. Many also pointed to a feeling of release when they recite on stage. "It's an art that allows me to free myself, to say out loud what I think and to relieve all the pressure I often receive in life," said Mbeley Moussa Ndiaye, one of the coordinators of the open-mic night in Medina.

The 31-year-old who goes by the stage name "Dinstroy" is a tax advisor, but remains committed to the hobby he took up in his youth. "We consider that the cheapest therapy in the world is lyrics, it's slam," Ndiaye says. At the open-mic night, slammers slip back and forth between different languages, touching on risky topics such as sex or domestic abuse. Most slam poetry in Senegal is French, but the dominant language Wolof is also widely heard. Not everyone understands, but one of the organizers of the event, Nzengue Ulrich, stresses that the words don't always need to be understood. "What moves us is something else: the rhythm of the person's text," he said. —AFP

'Rust' armorer says barely checked gun before fatal shooting

The woman in charge of the gun fatally fired by Alec Baldwin on the set of "Rust" told police she "didn't really check it too much" immediately before the tragedy. Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, armorer on the low-budget Western, spoke to investigators as they probed how live rounds ended up on the New Mexico film set last month, leading to the death of Halyna Hutchins.



Cinematographer Hutchins was shot and killed as Baldwin rehearsed a scene in which he fires a gun at the camera. According to an affidavit released Tuesday, Gutierrez-Reed told police she had loaded the Colt .45 with five dummy rounds before a lunch break.

After lunch, the weapon was retrieved from a safe, and Gutierrez-Reed added a final round before handing it to another crew member. Moments later, she heard a gun shot from inside the set. Gutierrez-Reed said she "didn't really check it too much" because the weapon had been locked up at lunch. "We had the gun the whole time before that, and nothing happened, and I wasn't in there, and they weren't even supposed to be pulling the hammer back," she added. Police seized more than 500 rounds of ammunition from the set, which they believed to be a mix of blanks, dummy rounds and some suspected live ammunition.

On Tuesday, investigators shared new information about the possible origin of live rounds. Ammunition for the production came from multiple sources, including Seth Kenney, an Arizona weapon rental supplier. Kenney told investigators he may have passed "reloaded ammunition" to the "Rust" set which matched the logo on a cartridge suspected to have contained the live round that killed Halyna. "Reloaded ammunition" refers to rounds that are assembled from component parts, not manufactured as complete live rounds.

Gutierrez-Reed's father Thell Reed, a veteran armorer, said he had provided live ammo to Kenney on a previous film they worked on together that was "not factory made," and which was never returned. Prosecutors have refused to rule out criminal charges against any person involved with "Rust," including Baldwin and Gutierrez-Reed. The pair are also among those named in at least two civil lawsuits filed by other crew members. Gutierrez-Reed has said she has "no idea" why live rounds were present, and her lawyers suggested an act of "sabotage" by disgruntled crew members may have caused the tragic shooting. Reports have emerged of disquiet among staff over allegedly lax safety procedures, and Santa Fe Sheriff Adan Mendoza has spoken of "complacency" on the New Mexico set. But Baldwin has called the tragedy a "one in a trillion episode" and insisted "Rust" had a "well-oiled crew." —AFP

VINTAGE CARS SHOW RACY PAST OF IRAN'S TOPPLED ROYALTY



A 1934 Mercedes-Benz 500K is displayed at the Iran Classic Cars Museum, on the western outskirts of Tehran. —AFP photos



A 1934 Mercedes-Benz 500K is displayed.



A 1930 Pierce Arrow Model A automobile is pictured.



Visitors look at a 1930's Pierce Arrow Model A.



Visitors are pictured at the Iran Classic Cars Museum.



A 1972 MPV automobile (center) - developed and built by the three famous German car manufactures Mercedes-Benz, Porsche and Volkswagen.



Visitors look at 1956 Chrysler 300.



An Iran Classic Car Museum guard stands next to a 1974 Citroen SM (foreground).



Visitors look at a 1922 Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost Model A.

Before they were ousted by the 1979 Islamic revolution, Iran's royal family enjoyed a lavish lifestyle with a taste for fast cars quite unlike any ever built. Now, after half a century hidden away, the royal racers are back on show, with the Iran Historical Car Museum drawing in thousands since it opened to the public in recent weeks. "We consider that these cars are part of Iranian cultural heritage," the museum director Mohammed Faal said. "They belong to the people, not to the royal family."

It is run by the Islamic republic's Bonyad Mostazafan organization—"The Foundation of the Oppressed"—which manages the confiscated property of the toppled regime of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. The line-up is staggering, and includes a car combining a unique engineering collaboration. In 1972, knowing the shah liked German engineering, Mercedes, Porsche and Volkswagen teamed up to build an unprecedented automobile. They created the "MPV Tehran", a bright orange painted single-seater, that was a "gift" to help crown prince Reza, who was then 12, learn how to drive. It has two keys. One, made of silver, limits the

powerful engine to a gentle 30 kilometers per hour (18 miles per hour). The other, in gold, allows the vehicle to speed at 170 kph. While the car hasn't raced since 1979, its sleek lines still inspire those who come to the museum.

Legal battle

Some 20,000 people have visited since its opening, more than the number of people who visit the national museum each month. "I really like this place, because it brings together some of the rare things that remained after the revolution," said Farzaneh, a 55-year-old pensioner. "These objects take us through our history," she added. Sprawling over more than a hectare (nearly three acres), the museum is located in an industrial zone west of Tehran, close to the country's automotive factories. So far, it houses 55 cars, two coaches and four motorcycles, one of which was once driven by Farah Diba, the last empress and widow of the shah.

But a hundred other vehicles are still in warehouses awaiting to be meticulously restored and put on show.

Another prize exhibit is a black Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost, built in 1922. This car is notable not so much for its extravagant luxury, but because the Islamic republic kept hold of the historic gem after an epic battle with the exiled former monarchy. "Six months before the revolution, the car had been sent to Rolls-Royce for repairs," said Faal, the museum's director. "After the fall of the monarchy in 1979, the Pahlavi family demanded that the factory return it to them, claiming that it belonged to the dynasty."

It sparked a furious legal battle. But a British court ruled that, according to its documents, the vehicle belonged to the Iranian state and not the ex-royal family. "The car returned to Iran," Faal said.

Hitler's gift

The jewel of the museum is a 1930 Pierce-Arrow "Model A". At that time it was the most expensive car built in the United States—and was bought by Reza Shah, the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty. Its price tag was an eye-watering \$30,000, equivalent to one eighth of Iran's

state budget at the time, and came complete with a gold-plated bumper and headlights. The car, with the imperial crest fixed to the doors, was used by the shah during ceremonies including his marriage to his second wife Soraya and at the funeral of his father Reza. But when the shah was dethroned and exiled 42 years ago, the car remained.

"It doesn't matter who owned these cars, they belong to the Iranian nation, not to a particular king," Faal added, explaining why the decadent trappings of monarchy were displayed by a regime that despised the shah. "We love to admire the beauty of the car taking into account its history, and we appreciate the efforts of its manufacturers and designers." Another favorite for visitors is the 1934 Mercedes 500 K Autobahn Kurier, a gift from Adolf Hitler to Reza Shah. The car is the last of its kind: of the six built by the German company, five were destroyed during World War II. "Mercedes offered to buy it at a price we would set, because the firm was eager to have it in its museum," said Faal. "We refused." —AFP

Nearly 30 percent of UK birds endangered, report warns

Almost 30 percent of the UK's bird species including greenfinches and swifts are facing serious threat to survival due to factors including climate change, a report published yesterday warned. The "red" list of 70 birds considered most endangered was put together by a coalition of organizations the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) based on the observations of volunteers. The last such report was published in 2015. RSPB chief executive Beccy Speight said the report "is more evidence that the UK's wildlife is in freefall", and warned: "This really is the last chance saloon to halt and reverse the destruction of nature."

The number of bird species whose populations are in severe decline has almost doubled since the list was first compiled 25 years ago and has grown by three species since the last report. The red list already contained once common birds such as house sparrows and starlings and contains 11 new species this time, including greenfinches, swifts and housemartins. The criteria for inclusion include population decline and a reduction in the geographic area where the birds breed.

The latest fall in numbers concerns a broad range of birds with different habitats and feeding preferences, with

the report citing pressures including urbanization, changes to farmland management and invasive species. This includes insect-eating birds that arrive in the UK in summer months and migrate to sub-Saharan Africa for winter, such as swifts and housemartins.

The report suggested possible factors including a loss of swifts' traditional nesting sites in wooden eaves of old buildings, as well as climate change and droughts in Africa. Greenfinches, which often live in woods and farmland, went straight from the green to the red list after being hit by a parasite-induced disease. Waterbirds that spend the winter in the UK such as Bewick's swan also joined the red list, with pressures including shifting of wintering grounds northeast due to milder temperatures.

There were also several examples of recovering populations due to conservation efforts, with the white-tailed eagle moving from red to amber after the previously extinct birds were successfully reintroduced into Scotland. But the report warned that the UK red list is now so long that conservation groups may have to be more selective in targeting which birds to prioritize, "unless nature conservation action becomes bolder, takes place over a greater scale and is much better resourced". —AFP

New republic Barbados names 'Diamond' Rihanna national hero

As Barbados became the world's newest republic, its prime minister's first act was to officially declare the island's most famous citizen, Rihanna, a national hero. Barbados had already conferred the title of ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary on the billionaire multiple Grammy-winning singer and businesswoman in 2018 and tasked her with encouraging education and tourism.

The "Umbrella" songstress commanded "the imagination of the world through the pursuit of excellence with her creativity, her discipline, and above all else, her extraordinary commitment to the land of her birth," Prime Minister Mia Mottley told the assembled dignitaries at the "Pride of Nationhood" celebrations on Tuesday. "On behalf of a grateful nation, but an even prouder people, we therefore present to you the designee for national hero of Barbados, Ambassador Robyn Rihanna Fenty," Mottley said, inviting the singer up to stand alongside her.

"May you continue to shine like a diamond and bring honor to your nation by your



Rihanna Fenty (right) being conferred with the honor of Barbados 11th National Hero by President Dame Sandra Mason.

words, by your actions, and to do credit, wherever you shall go," she said, with a nod to the singer's hit "Diamonds." Mottley paid tribute to the humble origins of Rihanna, who was born in Saint Michael and raised in the capital Bridgetown. Rihanna, 33, grew up in a troubled home in Barbados and was propelled to fame after American producer Evan Rogers recognized her talents. The star parlayed her musical success into a make-up and fashion empire,

with earnings that now dwarf those of other megastars such as Madonna and Beyonce.

Forbes in August estimated she was worth \$1.7 billion, around \$1.4 billion of which comes from the value of her cosmetics company Fenty Beauty, a partnership with French fashion giant LVMH. Mottley said the government chose to honor Rihanna as the first national hero designated by the new republic as a "signal to the world." Rihanna joins a select group of 10 oth-



Rihanna Fenty speaks after becoming Barbados 11th National Hero. —AFP photos

er Barbadians including Garfield Sobers, regarded as one of the greatest cricketers of all time and the only other living national hero.

Sobers was also at the ceremony and hugged Rihanna. The title was conferred on her yesterday morning. Rihanna was among many nominations for national hero submitted by the people of Barbados and Mottley said others would be named by National Heroes Day next year. The independence ceremony was closed to the general public amid a pandemic curfew, which was relaxed to allow Barbadians to enjoy festivities including fireworks displays. The guest of honor was Britain's Prince Charles, who acknowledged the "appalling atrocity of slavery" the island suffered under colonial rule. —AFP

Germany knock out Britain; book Davis Cup semis-finals

Krawietz, Puetz beat British doubles pair

News in brief

Konta retires from tennis

LONDON: Former British number one Johanna Konta announced her retirement from tennis yesterday. The 30-year-old has struggled with persistent knee trouble over the past couple of seasons and has slipped to 113 in the world rankings—a far cry from her career high of number four. Konta, who reached the semi-finals of three of the four majors, plus the quarter-finals of the US Open, made her announcement on social media with a post headlined 'Grateful'. She wrote: "This is the word that I've probably used the most during my career and is the word that I feel explains it best in the end. 'My playing career has come to an end, and I am so incredibly grateful for the career that it turned out to be. All the evidence pointed towards me not 'making' it in this profession. 'However my luck materialized in the people that came into my life and impacted my existence in ways that transcended tennis. —AFP"

Ex-Liverpool, Arsenal star dies

LONDON: Former Liverpool and Arsenal midfielder Ray Kennedy died on Tuesday aged 70 after a long struggle with Parkinson's Disease. Kennedy, a decorated star at Anfield and in north London, was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease in 1984. He won three European Cups and five English league titles with Liverpool after signing from Arsenal in 1974. Kennedy famously scored a crucial goal in Liverpool's 1981 European Cup semi-final second leg against Bayern Munich, sending the Reds to a final they would win against Real Madrid. He was also a key figure for Arsenal when they won the top-flight title and FA Cup, beating Liverpool in the final, in 1971. A testimonial game between Liverpool and Arsenal was held to aid Kennedy's Parkinson's fight in 1991. Later that year, he sold his medals and 17 England caps to help raise funds for his care. —AFP

England women break record

LONDON: Ellen White broke England Women's all-time scoring record as the Lionesses recorded their biggest ever victory by crushing Latvia 20-0 in World Cup qualifying on Tuesday. White scored twice early on to take her level with and then past Kelly Smith's mark of 46 goals, before completing her hat-trick shortly after the break. The Manchester City striker was one of four hat-trick-scorers on the night. Lauren Hemp netted four times, while Beth Mead and substitute Alessia Russo also registered trebles. Beth England notched a brace, and there were also goals from Ella Toone, Georgia Stanway, Jess Carter, Jill Scott and Jordan Nobbs on a historic evening in Doncaster. The result smashed the Lionesses previous record win of 13-0 against Hungary in 2005. England also hit double figures last month when the sides met in Riga with a 10-0 win. —AFP

Evans thrashes Gojowczyk

INNSBRUCK: Dan Evans swatted Peter Gojowczyk aside 6-2, 6-1 on Tuesday to give Britain a 1-0 lead over Germany in their Davis Cup quarter-finals tie in Innsbruck. World number 25 Evans won the first four games of the match and broke Gojowczyk five times to complete a convincing victory in just 55 minutes. Britain, playing without brothers Andy and Jamie Murray, will qualify for the last four if 12th-ranked Cameron Norrie beats Jan-Lennard Struff, Germany's top singles player in the absence of Alexander Zverev. "I worked hard and that was the story of the match," said Evans. "Probably the best tennis I played all year." Gojowczyk, ranked 86th, was given the nod ahead of Dominik Koepfer for the opening rubber but struggled badly on serve and double-faulted four times in two games as Evans raced into a 4-0 lead. —AFP

Troyes denounce 'racist remarks'

PARIS: French club Troyes on Tuesday condemned "racist remarks" made towards the club's South Korea international Suk Hyun-jun in last weekend's Ligue 1 game away to Marseille. Suk came on as a sub for the final 14 minutes of Sunday's 1-0 loss at the Velodrome in a match played behind closed doors due to previous crowd disturbances. Comments of a discriminatory nature were picked up by broadcast microphones when he was on the pitch. A spokesperson for Marseille told AFP that club president Pablo Longoria had contacted his Troyes counterpart to "offer his apologies from OM to the player and Troyes". "OM clearly condemn any racist remarks. Pablo Longoria told the Troyes president he would ask for an explanation from those responsible for the remarks." The spokesperson added that the club had not yet formally identified the individuals in question. —AFP

INNSBRUCK: Kevin Krawietz and Tim Puetz beat British doubles pair Joe Salisbury and Neal Skupski in two tight sets to send Germany through to the Davis Cup semi-finals on Tuesday. The Germans saved four set points in a tense opening tie-break in the decisive rubber in Innsbruck before edging in front. Salisbury and Skupski looked destined to force a third set after surging 5-0 ahead in another tie-break, but Krawietz and Puetz won the final seven points to book a clash with Russia or Sweden in Madrid on Saturday.

"It's great, it's an unbelievable feeling," said German captain Michael Kohlmann. "We had super team chemistry. We had a tough loss today and on Sunday and this team is capable of getting over



Germany to book a clash with Russia or Sweden

these unexpected things." Dan Evans had swatted Peter Gojowczyk aside 6-2, 6-1 in just 55 minutes to give Britain, playing without brothers Andy and Jamie Murray, the lead.

But Jan-Lennard Struff defeated British number one Cameron Norrie 7-6 (8/6), 3-6, 6-2 to pull Germany level at 1-1. World number 51 Struff saved two set points in the opener and broke the 12th-ranked Norrie twice in the decider to set up a winner-takes-all showdown in the doubles. "I'm very happy the way I played today, Cam Norrie is a very tough competitor, who is fighting very hard," said Struff. "It's tough - I had the feeling I had to put the pressure on him - I made it today."

Australian official rejects Djokovic's 'blackmail' claim

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic is not being "blackmailed" by Australian Open organizers, a senior official said yesterday, insisting a requirement for players to be vaccinated was about safety. The 34-year-old world number one would be bidding for a record-breaking 21st Grand Slam title in Melbourne in January, but he has refused to say if he has been jabbed against coronavirus.

His father Srdjan told Serbian television on Sunday his son "probably won't" play the opening Grand Slam of the year over the mandatory inoculation rules. "Of course he would want to go with all his heart," he said. "But I really don't know if that will happen. Probably not under these conditions, with this blackmail and when it's done that way." Martin Pakula, sports minister in Victoria—the state where the Australian Open is held—said he was keen for the nine-time champion to defend his title.

But he told reporters: "If you're a visiting international tennis player or a visiting sportsman of any kind, it's about your responsibility to the community that you are being welcomed into. "And that's why we are asking those international tennis stars to follow the same requirements as Victorians are. "It's not about blackmail, it's about making sure the Victorian community is protected." Tournament chief Craig Tiley made clear last month that all players must be inoculated and there would be no concessions.

The Australian Open went ahead this year but

Woods says no timetable for return but eyes Open

MIAMI: Tiger Woods refused to put a timetable on his return to tournament golf on Tuesday in his first public appearance since a serious car crash earlier this year that left him "lucky to be alive". Speaking to reporters in the Bahamas ahead of the Hero World Challenge, Woods said he would never regain full strength in his right leg, which was left shattered after the crash in Los Angeles in February. Woods, 45, told Golf Digest in an interview on Monday his days as a full-time professional golfer were over, saying that he would pick and choose tournaments from now on.

On Tuesday, the 15-time major winner gave no indication of when he expected to be fit enough to play a full 72-hole professional event, repeatedly emphasizing that his recovery was ongoing and that he still felt pain in his back and leg. "As far as playing at the tour level, I don't know when that's going to happen," Woods said. "Now, I'll play a round here or there, a little bit and giggle, I can do something like that,"

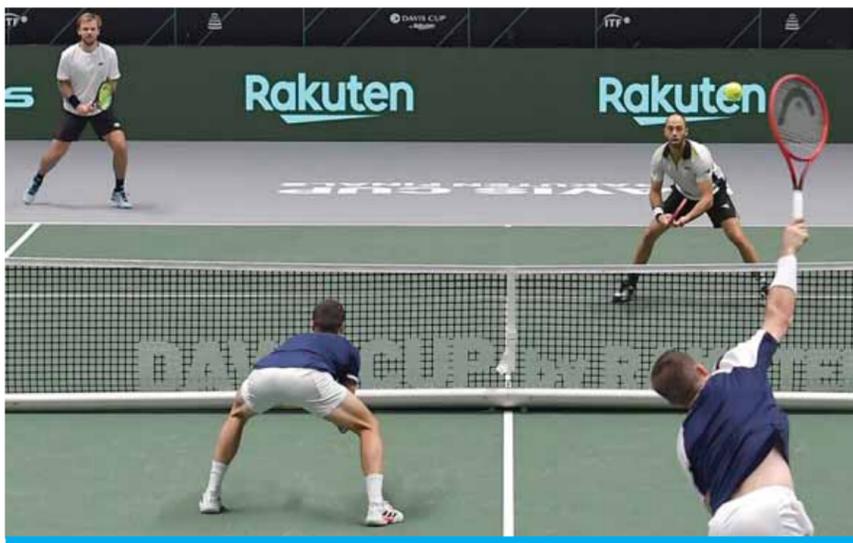
Woods said. Woods reiterated that he expects his post-accident career to mirror that of golfing great Ben Hogan, who was badly injured in a 1949 accident.

Hogan, who won 64 PGA Tour events and nine majors, never played more than nine tournaments in a season following the accident. "I don't foresee this leg ever being what it used to be, hence I'll never have the back what it used to be, and clock's ticking. I'm getting older, I'm not getting any younger," Woods said. "All that combined means a full schedule and a full practice schedule and the recovery that would take to do that. I don't have any desire to do that."

Amputation risk

"But to ramp it up for a few events a year as Mr Hogan did, and he did a pretty good job of it — there's no reason that I can't do that and feel ready. "I may not be tournament-sharp in a sense that I haven't played tournaments, but I think if you practice correctly and you do it correctly, that I've come off surgeries before."

"So I know the recipe for it, I've just got to get to a point where I feel comfortable enough where I can do that again." Although Woods would not speculate about a possible target for return, he admitted he would be keen to play at next year's British Open, which will mark its 150th anniversary at St. Andrews, the home of golf where



INNSBRUCK: Britain's Joe Salisbury (2nd left) and Neal Skupski (right) play against Germany's Kevin Krawietz (left) and Tim Puetz during the men's doubles quarter-final tennis match between Britain and Germany at the Davis Cup tennis tournament in Innsbruck, Austria. —AFP

Norrie fell 4-1 behind in the first set but broke twice and was serving for it at 6-5. Struff, Germany's top singles player in the absence of Alexander Zverev, promptly hit back to take the set to a tie-break. Indian Wells champion Norrie led 6-4 only to see Struff reel off the final four points to snatch the first set. A single break earned Norrie the second set, but Struff kept Germany in the competition by closing out victory with four games in a row. Earlier, world number 25 Evans won the first four games of the match against Gojowczyk and broke five times to complete a convincing victory.

Gojowczyk, ranked 86th, was given the nod ahead of Dominik Koepfer for the opening rubber but struggled badly on serve and double-faulted four times in two games as Evans raced into a 4-0 lead. Evans broke three more times in a one-sided second set, rebounding well from a shock loss to Czech world number 143 Tomas Machac in the group stage on Sunday. Croatia became the first team to reach the semi-finals on Monday by defeating Italy 2-1. They await the winner of Wednesday's quarter-final between Novak Djokovic's Serbia and Kazakhstan. —AFP

Al-Fatat Club reign

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Al-Fatat Club ended in first place at the first Athletics Refresher Tournament by collecting 173 points, while Salwa Club took second with 165 points. Kuwait secured the third position with 105 points; Sahel (4th) with 30 points; while Fatyat Al-Oyouun (5th) grabbed 15 points. The two-day tournament saw strong competition in various disciplines.

Madawi Al-Shimmari from Salwa Al-Sabah Club won a second gold medal after winning the 200m run, while Fajer Mandani from Kuwait Club won the hammer throw. Amal Al-Roumi (from Fatat Club) won the 1500 meters, while the 100m obstacles went to Aameena Al-Marhoom (Fatat Club). Also, Lowlwa Al-Askar (from Fatat) took the 500m race title. In the long jump, Mariam Malallah took the first position, while the Shot Put's first place went to Iman Al-Zankawi (from Fatat Club).

Chairman of Kuwait Athletics Association Sayyar Al-Enezi said the championship was a success due to the participation of the clubs, adding that he "hopes more clubs participate next time." He said they will support all clubs who wish to participate in women's athletics and lauded the role of Chairperson of the Women Sports Committee and Kuwait Olympic Committee Fatima Hayat and her keenness in developing the women's sports activities. Meanwhile Hayat congratulated Fatat Club for taking first place and wished clubs all success in future tournaments.



INNSBRUCK: Serbia's Novak Djokovic throws his racket during the men's doubles group stage match between Serbia and Germany of the Davis Cup tennis tournament in Innsbruck. —AFP

players were forced to spend two weeks in hotel quarantine, crowds were restricted and a five-day snap lockdown was called mid-event. Organizers expect it will run as scheduled in 2022 from January 17. They have said fully vaccinated players can enter Australia without being quarantined or confined to bio-secure bubbles, although that scenario could be complicated by the emergence of the new Omicron coronavirus variant. —AFP



AUGUSTA: In this file photo, American golfer Tiger Woods celebrates after sinking his putt on the 18th green to win in Augusta. Tiger Woods has ruled out making a full-time return to professional golf as he works his way back from career-threatening leg injuries. —AFP

Woods has won twice before.

"Yeah, I would love to play at St. Andrews, there's no doubt about it," Woods said. "Physically, hopefully I can. I've got to get there first. Tournament's not going to go anywhere, but I need to get there. "It's my favorite golf course in the world. To be a two-time Open champion there, just being a part of the champions dinner is really neat. "From my first one in '05 I got to attend a champions dinner, it was pretty neat to be a part of." Woods meanwhile declined to comment directly on his memories of the

crash, which left him unable to walk unassisted for several months.

However he revealed that amputation of his mangled leg, which suffered two compound fractures, had been "on the table". "I'm lucky to be alive but also still have the limb. Those are two crucial things. I'm very grateful that someone upstairs was taking care of me, that I'm able to not only be here but also to walk without a prosthesis," said Woods, who said his rehabilitation had been harder than his multiple comebacks from back and knee surgeries earlier in his career. —AFP

Sports

Juventus see off Salernitana, Atalanta close in on summit

Atalanta are on the heels of Serie A's leaders

MILAN: Juventus escaped Salernitana with a hard-fought 2-0 win on Tuesday which brought some positivity after a difficult week, while Atalanta are on the heels of Serie A's leaders following a Mario Pasalic-inspired 4-0 win over Venezia. Paulo Dybala and Alvaro Morata struck the goals which gave struggling Juve the points at the Stadio Arvedi but they stay seventh, seven points behind Atalanta who sit fourth in the final Champions League spot.

"Right now more than ever we need a sense of responsibility. We don't need to do anything out of the ordinary, we need to do the normal things but with intelligence... today we did that," said Giorgio Chiellini to DAZN. Dybala lashed home the opener in the 21st minute after a neat one-two with Dejan Kulusevski and 10 minutes later Juve thought they had doubled their lead through captain Chiellini.

However after the veteran defender had celebrated pushing home the rebound following Juan Cuadrado's free-kick thwacking the post, the goal was ruled out by VAR officials who spotted Moise Kean straying fractionally offside as the Colombian struck his shot. From there Juventus dominated proceedings but could count themselves very lucky not to enter the final half an hour level with their promoted opponents when, after a confused Juve defence allowed a cross to wriggle out to Luca Ranieri, the 22-year-old could only fire onto the post from close range.

And with 20 minutes remaining Morata made sure of the points for the away side with a deft flick after Federico Bernardeschi's deflected cross fizzed

into him. Dybala then skied a stoppage-time penalty and wasted an opportunity to make the scoreline more emphatic, but few in black and white will care after two embarrassing defeats to Chelsea and Atalanta and a criminal investigation into club accounts and transfer dealings.

Pasalic inspires Atalanta

Pasalic hit a hat-trick as Atalanta continued their superb recent run of form in Bergamo to move within four points of league leaders Napoli, who faced Sassuolo yesterday. After an impressive win at Juve at the weekend, Atalanta won their fourth straight league match thanks to Pasalic's treble and a Teun Koopmeiners strike which puts them level on 31 points with Inter Milan in third.

Gian Piero Gasperini's Atalanta are unbeaten in eight in Italy and cannot be discounted from the title race after swatting promoted Venezia aside despite making a raft of changes from Saturday's win over Juve in Turin. Pasalic made it an uphill battle for the away side when he collected Josip Ilicic's perfect through ball before sliding in his seventh-minute opener, and the Croat rifled home the second five minutes later.

Venezia never looked like responding from their early setback and Koopmeiners made absolutely sure of the points just before the hour mark, arrowing in his first ever Serie A goal from the edge of the box after a neat exchange of passes between Ilicic, Pasalic and Giuseppe Pezzella. And Pasalic complet-



SALERNO: Juventus' Colombian midfielder Juan Cuadrado (left) and Salernitana's Malian midfielder Lassana Coulibaly go for a header during the Italian Serie A football match between Salernitana and Juventus on November 30, 2021. —AFP

ed a perfect evening for him and his high-flying team with a simple finish 10 minutes later following dazzling dribbling from Luis Muriel. After the match Atalanta president Luca Percassi announced that Gasperini had signed a contract extension until 2024, with the option for another year.

In Florence, Dusan Vlahovic extended his lead at the top of the league's scoring charts with his 12th

of the season to put Fiorentina ahead in the 32nd minute against Sampdoria after Jose Callejon had leveled Manolo Gabbiadini's 15th-minute opener for the away side. Riccardo Sottil made it three just before the break to earn Vincenzo Italiano's side, who collapsed at Empoli at the weekend, a welcome 3-1 win which puts them on 24 points in sixth, above Juve on goals scored. —AFP



Fiorentina beat Sampdoria 3-1

changes from Saturday's win over Juve in Turin. Pasalic made it an uphill battle for the away side when he collected Josip Ilicic's perfect through ball before sliding in his seventh-minute opener, and the Croat rifled home the second five minutes later.

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Arab Cup: Algeria overpower Sudan

DOHA: The Algerian national soccer team defeated the Sudanese counterpart four goals without a response yesterday in the first round of Group D of the Arab Cup FIFA Qatar 2021. In the same group, Egypt played against Lebanon in the first round of competitions later yesterday. Up to 16 teams are participating in the tournament, hosted by Doha until December 18, under the umbrella of the International Federation of Football Associations (FIFA).

Qatar, UAE win

Meanwhile, Qatari national football squad defeated their Bahraini peers 1-0 on Tuesday, opening day of the 10th FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2021. The Group A game, held at Al Bayt Stadium in Al-Khor City, some 46 km to the north of the capital city of Doha, saw Abdulaziz Hatem scoring the sole goal at minute 69. With three points in hand, Qatar will face Iraq on Friday in the second round of the group.

In a Group B game, the UAE team beat Syria's 2-1 at the iconic Stadium 974, one of the country's

seven hosting venues of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. Caio Canedo Correa scored the opening goal for the UAE at minute 24, followed by his teammate Ali Saleh's at minute 30 and then Ward El-Salamah scored for Syria at minute 60. The UAE team will face Tunisia in the second round of the same group tomorrow. The tournament, which lasts until December 18, gathered the national teams of 16 Arab countries. Oman soccer team and Iraqi counterparts played a 1-1 match on Tuesday, shortly ahead official kickoff of the Arab football cup.

The 10th FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2021 was inaugurated on Tuesday by Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani at Al Bayt Stadium in Al-Khor City in the presence of FIFA President Gianni Infantino. Sheikh Tamim welcomed the participating teams, expressing joy for Qatar hosting the Arab tournament 12 months ahead of hosting the FIFA World Cup 2022 for the first time in the Middle East.

On his part, Infantino said, in a welcoming speech in Arabic, "Today Qatar is the house of the Arab world, and tomorrow it will be the house of the world." "Let's be one nation, one family. Let's enjoy football together," FIFA President added. The opening ceremony saw exciting artistic and musical shows featuring the Arab heritage and



AL-RAYYAN, Qatar: Sudan's forward Muhamed Abdel Rahman (left) has his penalty saved by Algeria's goalkeeper Rais M'Bolhi (center) during the FIFA Arab Cup 2021 group D football match between Algeria and Sudan yesterday. —AFP

folklore and audiovisual technologies. The ceremony paid tribute to late Arab actors Abdul-Hussein Abdul-Redha and Saeed Saleh. With a total occupancy of 60,000 seats, Al Bayt Stadium will five games in the Arab tournament, including the final on December 18. —KUNA

Revolution overthrown as New York advance in MLS

NEW YORK: Goalkeeper Sean Johnson was the hero as New York City FC upset the top-seeded New England Revolution in a penalty shoot-out Tuesday to advance to Major League Soccer's Eastern Conference finals. Johnson produced a superb stop from New England's Polish striker Adam Buksa before Alex Callens lashed home the winning spot-

kick to complete a 5-3 shoot-out win after the sides finished extra time locked at 2-2. The win means fourth-seeded New York will face the Philadelphia Union on Sunday for a place in MLS's championship game against either the Portland Timbers or Real Salt Lake, who meet in the Western Conference final on Saturday.

An enthralling game went to penalties after a dramatic period of extra-time, which saw Argentine striker Valentin Castellanos fire New York into a 2-1 lead in the 109th minute to put his side seemingly on course for victory. But the game changed just four minutes later when Castellanos was sent off after earning a second yellow card for a mistimed lunge on Revs defender Brandon Bye - a red card that means he will miss Sunday's game in Philadelphia.

That flashpoint changed the complexion of the contest, and as New England poured forward searching for an equalizer,

Canadian international Tajon Buchanan lashed home a 118th-minute volley to tie it at 2-2. There was still time for New England to almost grab victory, but Johnson tipped over a shot from Buksa to ensure the game went to penalties. Earlier, the match had gone to extra time after both sides finished 90 minutes level at 1-1.

New York dominated possession throughout regulation, with the movement of their skillful all South-American forward line of Santiago Rodriguez, Maxi Moralez, Jesus Medina and Castellanos causing problems for the New England defense. —AFP

World squash event in Malaysia cancelled after Zionists barred

KUALA LUMPUR: A major squash tournament in Malaysia has been cancelled, the sport's governing body said, after the Muslim-majority country sparked anger by refusing to grant visas for Zionist players. It is the latest instance of the Southeast Asian nation, which has no diplomatic relations with Zionist entity, barring the country's athletes. The World Team Championship for men had been due to take place in Kuala Lumpur on December 7-12 with 26 squads participating.

But the World Squash Federation (WSF) and Malaysia's squash body said that it had been axed because of the "possibility that some nations would be unable to compete due to the lack of confirmation over the issuing of visas". WSF president Zena Wooldridge said sports officials had sought to influence the highest authorities of Malaysia to ensure the ability of all participating teams, including Zionists, to enter Malaysia and compete. "It is important to WSF that no nation who wishes to compete misses out on the event."

Zionist squash association previously said that countries which participated in a tournament from which Zionist entity was barred would be closing their eyes to "racism and discrimination". The association also threatened to turn to the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Switzerland if the WSF could not resolve the issue. The WSF said the decision to cancel the event was also influenced by the new Omicron coronavirus variant, which it fears could affect travel to Malaysia. —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Khalidiya	24848075
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Kaifan	24849807
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Shamiya	24848913
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Shuwaikh	24814507
Chest Hospital	24849400	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Nuzha	22526804
Adan Hospital	23940620	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Qadsiya	22515088
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Dasmah	22532265
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
		Shaab	22518752
		Qibla	22459381
		Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
		Mirqab	22456536
		Sharq	22465401
		Salmiya	25746401

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144

SHARING ACCOMMODATION

For Filipino Bachelor ONLY Farwaniya block 1, near Oncost and India gate. Available from November 26, 2021. Contact 94418396 or 97345734. **30-11-2021**

CHANGE OF NAME

I, ABDUL RAHMAN ANSARI, FATHER OF SANA, HOLDER OF INDIAN PASSPORT NO. R5458965, CIVIL ID NO. 313020800715, CHANGED MY NAME SANA ANSARI S/O ABDUL RAHMAN ANSARI, INDIAN ADDRESS - SAHIB GANJ CHIKTOLI NEAR MASJID CHAPRA SARAN, TOWEN TAHNA CHAPRA BIHAR. PIN COD-841301. (C 0985)

I, RIXON MAXIM DSOUZA, S/o, Vindo Lawrence Dsouza, R/at Door No. 7-63/44, Saripalla Cross Road, Near 4B Bus Stop, Padil, Mangalore-575007, D.K. District, Karnataka State have changed by name as RICKSON MAXIM DSOUZA for all purpose, Vide affidavit dated 06.11.2021 sworn before notary Abbas N, Mangaluru. (C0984)

I, Javed Ahmed Abdul Hamid, holder of Indian

Passport No: M4640773, Civil ID No: 270020704398, changed my name from Javed Ahmed Abdul Hamid to Shaik Javed Ahmed S/o Shaik Abdul Hamid. Permanent Address: House No. 76-106-A11-A5, Guru-Raghavandra Nagar Ballary Chowrasta Kallur Kurnool 518003. **(C 0986) 2-12-2021**

JOHNNY LONIS S/o LONAPPAN MAZUVANCHERY ATHAPPAN do hereby solemnly affirm and declares that
1. I am known in two names such as JOHNNY LONIS and ANTONY.M.L.
2. As per my Passport my name is JOHNNY LONIS
3. As per my educational certificates my name is ANTONY.M.L.
The aforesaid two different names are the names of one and the same person. **(C 0983)**

DOMINGOS ANTONIO MASCARENAS, ASSOLNA SALTETTE - GOA TO DOMINGOS MASCARENHAS, C/o ANTONIO PIEDADE MASCARENHAS, H.NO: 62/3, BANDA, TOTMADEM, ASSOLNA, ASSOLNA, SOUTH GOA - GOA - 403701. (C 0981) 2-12-2021

I, MOHAMED FAHEMUDDIN SHAJAUDDIN, change my name as FAHEMUDDIN SHAJAUDDIN SHAIKH. (C 0971) 30-11-2021

Suns extend winning streak

Nets sink Knicks in NBA, secure a 112-110 victory



PHOENIX: Stephen Curry #30 of the Golden State Warriors passes the ball around Mikal Bridges #25 of the Phoenix Suns during the second half of the NBA game at Footprint Center on November 30, 2021. The Suns defeated the Warriors 104-96. — AFP

LOS ANGELES: The Phoenix Suns shrugged off an early injury to Devin Booker to extend their winning streak to 17 games with a 104-96 victory over the pace-setting Golden State Warriors on Tuesday. The much-anticipated showdown between the NBA's two best teams did not disappoint as Phoenix shut down Stephen Curry with a superb defensive effort.

The victory vaulted Phoenix to the top of the Western Conference alongside Golden State, who entered Tuesday's contest in Phoenix on the back of a seven-game winning run. Phoenix and Golden State now lead the Western Conference with 18 wins and three defeats each. The Suns' victory was all the more impressive given that star shooting guard Booker departed with a hamstring injury in the second quarter.

With Booker absent, it was left to veteran Chris Paul to shepherd the Suns over the line in the second half. Paul finished with 15 points, 11 assists and six rebounds. DeAndre Ayton led the Suns scorers with 24 points and 11 rebounds, but it was Phoenix's defense which proved the difference, restricting the Warriors scorers to just 18 points in the fourth quarter. "We're an improving defensive team for sure," Suns coach Monty Williams said. "To me this was just will and toughness... our guys just willed themselves to victory."

Williams had special praise for Paul, the 36-year-old point guard who contributed 39 minutes on court after the injury to Booker. "Chris playing 39

minutes speaks to his will and his dedication to the game," Williams said. "We just had a number of guys step up." Jordan Poole led the scoring for the Warriors with 28 points but Curry was restricted to just 12 points on a night when his usual accuracy from beyond the arc deserted him. The Warriors star made only three of 14 attempts from three-point distance.



Brooklyn Nets held off a fierce challenge

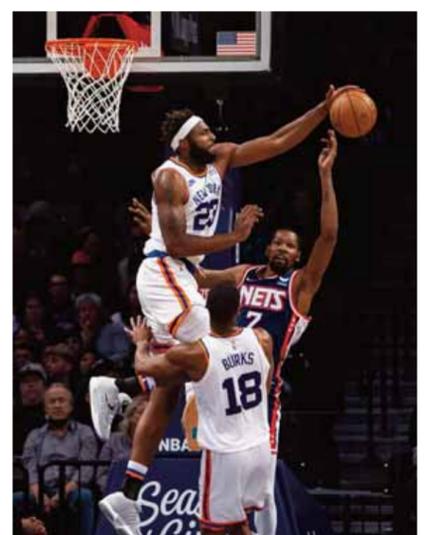
Harden cuts loose

In New York, James Harden produced a gem to finish with 34 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists as the Brooklyn Nets held off a fierce challenge from the New York Knicks to secure a 112-110 victory. Harden gave Brooklyn the early initiative with 15 points in the first quarter while Kevin Durant showed his class with 27 points overall. Durant missed all of his five three-point attempts but was crucial in engineering looks for the red-hot Harden. Cam Thomas added 12 points and Patty Mills 10 for

Brooklyn. The Knicks stayed in touch with five players in double figures led by Alec Burks with 25 points and Julius Randle with 24 points. Evan Fournier set up a thrilling finale with a three-pointer to tie the game for the Knicks at 110-110 with 17.7 seconds remaining.

But Durant cleverly created space on the game's final possession to set up James Johnson, who was fouled and then nailed two free-throws to clinch victory. Johnson's winning points came from a Nets free-throw tally of 25, compared to the Knicks' total of 12. That gulf in free-throw numbers irked Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau, who felt his team were not treated evenly throughout the game. "There's a big discrepancy in free throws, I can tell you that," Thibodeau said. "I don't really care how the game's called, I really don't. You can call it tight, you can call it loose - but it's got to be the same."

In Sacramento, the Los Angeles Lakers overcame the absence of LeBron James to rout the Kings 117-92. James was ruled out of the game early Tuesday after entering the NBA's COVID-19 protocols. The Kings appeared to be poised to exploit the reorganized Lakers line-up after leading by nine points at half-time. But a Lakers scoring blitz after the interval - overwhelming the Kings 67-33 in the second half - completed an impressive turnaround by the 2020 NBA champions. Anthony Davis led the Lakers scorers with 25 points while Russell Westbrook added 23. Malik Monk had 22 off the bench. — AFP



BROOKLYN: Mitchell Robinson #23 of the New York Knicks blocks shot against Kevin Durant #7 of the Brooklyn Nets at Barclays Center on November 30, 2021 in the Brooklyn borough of New York City. — AFP

Norwich deny Newcastle first win of the season

NEWCASTLE: Teemu Pukki denied 10-man Newcastle a first win all season as Norwich earned a 1-1 draw at St James' Park on Tuesday, but wasted a huge chance to deepen the Magpies' relegation fears. Newcastle were a man short for more than 80 minutes after Ciaran Clark saw red for pulling down Pukki. However, Norwich were largely wasteful in trying to make that advantage count and fell behind to Callum Wilson's penalty on the hour mark.

Pukki smashed home on the volley to equalise 11 minutes from time and Norwich should have claimed a massive three points in stoppage time when Martin Dubravka saved from Pierre Lees-Melou. A point does little for either side's hopes of beating the drop as Leeds' 1-0 win over Crystal Palace moved them five points clear of the bottom three. Newcastle are six points off safety in

their bid to minimise the damage before they can turn to the Saudi sovereign wealth fund to strengthen in the January transfer window.

Howe was on the sideline as Newcastle boss at St James' Park for the first time, having missed the 3-3 draw with Brentford 10 days ago after testing positive for coronavirus. The former Bournemouth boss could not have asked for a worse start to a crucial clash between the bottom two before kick-off when Clark inexplicably hauled down Pukki as he threatened to burst clear on goal. "I felt the players showed real resilience, which we're going to need for the upcoming matches," said Howe. "If we can do that 11 against 11, we're definitely going to win some matches."

No side has conceded more goals in the Premier League than Newcastle this season, but Norwich are also the lowest scorers and their lack of quality in the final third was obvious as they labored to create chances despite dominating possession. Newcastle looked to have snatched a first win under Saudi ownership when Billy Gilmour was penalized for handball inside his own box after a

VAR review. Tim Krul nearly denied his former club as he got a hand to Wilson's spot-kick, but saw the ball rebound in off the underside of the bar.

Norwich finally produced a moment of quality to ensure they remain just three points off safety. Dimitris Giannoulis helped the ball back into the box after Dubravka flapped at a cross and Pukki smashed home a volley into the top corner. Norwich then piled on the pressure in the closing stages, but failed to find the winner as Dubravka made amends for his part in the equalizer with a crucial late save.

Leeds gave themselves some breathing space from the bottom three by edging out Palace in stoppage time thanks to Raphinha's penalty. Palace wasted the biggest chance of the game from open play when Christian Benteke headed Wilfried Zaha's pinpoint cross wide. Leeds got the break their season needed deep into added time when Marc Guehi handled from Liam Cooper's header and Raphinha coolly slotted home the resulting spot-kick to move Marcelo Bielsa's men up to 15th. — AFP

Man Utd's Glazer buys T20 franchise in new UAE league

LONDON: Manchester United co-chairman Avram Glazer has acquired a franchise for a new T20 professional cricket league in the United Arab Emirates, organizers announced yesterday. Glazer, also an owner of NFL Super Bowl winners Tampa Bay Buccaneers, completed the purchase in his role as chairman of private equity firm Lancer Capital. The UAE T20 League is a professional six-team competition sanctioned by the Emirates Cricket Board which is set to take place for the first time in February and March 2022.

Yesterday's announcement comes after the Glazer family were outbid in their attempt to buy one of the two new franchises in the money-spinning Indian Premier League - the forerunner of all current global T20 franchise cricket events. "I am very

excited to be a part of UAE T20 at its formation," Avram Glazer said. "UAE T20 promises to be a world-class event that will be transformative to the growth of cricket in the Emirates."

Khalid Al Zarooni, UAE T20 League chairman and vice-chairman of the Emirates Cricket Board, added: "I am very excited to welcome Mr Glazer to the UAE T20 Family. "To have a partner who has invested into sports properties with a long-term perspective is a testament to the strength of the UAE T20 League's business model and its value proposition to fans and its stakeholders, and an ode to the UAE as the destination of choice for global sports events." The names of the franchises have yet to be announced. — AFP