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MPs demand probe into alleged corruption cases

Barrak, others thank Amir for pardon • Ghanem adjourns Assembly session

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Eleven opposition MPs yesterday demanded a comprehensive parliamentary investigation into suspected corruption in which previous and current lawmakers and ministers have been allegedly involved since 2009. In a motion submitted to the National Assembly, the lawmakers called for forming a five-MP investigation committee which will be entrusted to investigate former MPs and ministers and senior state officials and bureaucrats suspected of being involved in corruption cases.

According to the motion, the panel should be elected by the Assembly and must submit the outcome of its probe within three months. The investigation should include money transfers into the suspects' bank accounts or that of their companies since they assumed public

office. It should also cover ownership of real estate, investments and industrial, agricultural and service land plots, normally offered by the state. The committee should also probe tenders and contracts at all ministries including Kuwait Petroleum Corp and its subsidiaries, and arms deals, especially Caracal, Eurofighters and Rafael deals.

Meanwhile, the official gazette did not publish the names of people who were pardoned by HH the Amir, but local media published some names, including all 11 former opposition MPs and activists who have been living in exile in Turkey since the summer of 2018. One of them, ex-MP Musallam Al-Barrak, thanked HH the Amir for the pardon. He also thanked all those who exerted efforts to achieve the pardon.

The names also include relatives of members of an Iran-linked cell who had received various jail terms for harboring

members of the cell despite being wanted by security authorities. A majority of the 25-member cell have been convicted on charges of terrorism and sentenced to long jail terms.

Two leading opposition MPs yesterday criticized the cancellation of the National Assembly's regular session scheduled for yesterday, saying that the cancellation violated the constitution. MPs Shuaib Al-Muwaizri and Mubarak Al-Hajraf said in separate statements that although the government has tendered its resignation, HH the Amir has not yet accepted the resignation and accordingly the Cabinet is still active and should have attended the Assembly session. Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem yesterday adjourned the Assembly session, saying that he had been informed by the prime minister that the Cabinet had resigned and cannot attend the session.



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem adjourns the parliament session over the government's resignation yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

News in brief

426 residency violators deported

KUWAIT: At least 426 residency violators have been deported in a week, according to statistics by the deportation and temporary arrest affairs department, the interior ministry said yesterday. It said the deportations were on instructions of Interior Minister Sheikh Thamer Al-Sabah and follow-up by Undersecretary Maj Gen Sheikh Faisal Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. The decision aims at taking necessary legal action against residency violators as soon as possible. — KUNA

COVID infections pass 250m

PARIS: More than 250 million COVID-19 infections have been recorded worldwide since the start of the pandemic, according to an AFP count. The number of new cases around the world has been slowly increasing over the past few weeks. Nearly 449,000 new daily infections have been recorded on average over the past seven days, against just over 400,000 in mid-October. Of the new infections recorded worldwide, more than 60 percent are in Europe. — AFP

Top UAE diplomat meets Assad

DAMASCUS: The United Arab Emirates' top diplomat met Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad in Damascus yesterday, state media said, in the first such visit by a top UAE official since Syria's war began 10 years ago. The UAE broke ties with Syria in Feb 2012, as the repression of nationwide protests demanding regime change was escalating into a devastating war. In Dec 2018, the UAE reopened its embassy in Damascus. — AFP

Indian journalists investigated

NEW DELHI: Lawyers and journalists are among dozens of people being investigated by police in India over posts on social media about anti-Muslim violence. Authorities have opened a criminal investigation into the owners of 102 social media accounts under strict anti-terrorism legislation for allegedly sharing "fake news" about mob attacks on Muslims in the state of Tripura. — AFP

Kuwait real estate market witnessing 'noticeable rebound'

KUWAIT: Kuwait's real estate market witnessed a "noticeable rebound" during the third quarter of this year, particularly in the investment and residen-

Tuvalu minister films speech standing in sea

GLASGOW: Tuvalu's foreign minister has filmed a video address to be shown at a UN climate summit yesterday standing thigh deep in seawater and pleading for help as his country slips beneath rising oceans. In the video, Simon Kofe tells delegates that "climate change and sea-level rise are deadly and existential risks for Tuvalu and low-lying atoll nations". "We are sinking, but so is everyone else," he

said. "And no matter if we feel the effects today, like Tuvalu, or in a hundred years we will all still feel the dire effects of this global crisis."

The film begins with a close-up Kofe standing at a lectern, wearing a suit and tie, in front of a blue screen with Tuvalu and UN flags. "We are demanding that global net-zero be secured by mid-century, that 1.5 degrees be kept within reach, that urgently needed climate finance be mobilised to address loss and damage," he pleaded. "We are looking for the world to get its act together."

The camera then pulls out to reveal Kofe standing up to his thighs in the water off Tuvalu's coast.

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This videograb taken from footage released yesterday shows Tuvalu's Foreign Minister Simon Kofe standing thigh-deep in seawater as he addresses delegates at the ongoing COP26 conference in Glasgow. — AFP

Closed Morocco, Algeria border divides families

Oujda, Morocco: Fatima Chaaoufi gazes across the sealed Moroccan border towards an Algerian village on the other side, home to family members she hasn't seen for years. "We're so near yet so far," she sighs. Chaaoufi's village of Oulad Bouarfa, east of the Moroccan city of Oujda, lies just a stone's throw from Boussfar, the Algerian village where her brother died a month ago.

Chaaoufi had not been able to see him since 1994, when the border was closed following a diplomatic crisis between the North African rivals.

"When I found out he had died, I couldn't control myself," she said, tears in her eyes. "I ran to the barbed wire. They tried to hold me back but (my grief) was stronger than me." The 75-year-old, sitting in the yard of her family's modest farm wearing a hijab on her head and an apron around her waist, said she had been forced to watch the funeral procession from a distance, "impotent and in tears".

Chaaoufi's is just one of many families divided by a frontier that Algeria closed in 1994 after Morocco accused its neighbor of involvement in a jihadist attack on a Marrakesh hotel that killed two tourists. The frontier has been sealed ever since, and there is little prospect of it opening soon as tensions mount once again between Rabat and Algiers.

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Oujda, Morocco: Algerians take pictures along the border with Morocco on Nov 4, 2021. — AFP

Local

Kuwait Airways announces earning KD 5 million profit in September

One of few airlines without financial support during pandemic

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) announced positive financial results this year. "Great efforts by the management resulted in achieving profits of KD 5 million in September 2021, while losses of KD 3 million were expected. Compared to the pre-pandemic period, KAC registered losses of KD 10 million in September 2019. Now we are expecting that results in October 2021 will be positive as well, which means that we are on the right path to reach our goals," KAC Chairman Ali Al-Dakhan said during a press conference yesterday, which was also attended by CEO Ma'an Razouqi and other directors.

"We are working on reaching the budget breakeven point, and to achieve this goal, we are working on the acquisition of a larger share of passengers by upgrading our services and focusing more on passenger comfort. This includes all our services at T4 terminal - from when they enter the terminal until boarding their flights," he added.

"We know the requirements of our passengers and what difficulties they face during their trip. Passengers have a full right to demand excellent services, and we are obliged to provide it at a top level. We work hard to make their journey on KAC a pleasant and comfortable one. For this reason, KAC has formed a special 'customer service committee', which seeks to develop better services to meet the expectations of our passengers. We have also set up

special numbers for customers to communicate through our social media channels," stated Dakhan.

Fleet renewal

Renewing the KAC fleet is a priority. "We are currently working with Airbus on modifying some of our aircraft booked in 2014. This will allow KAC to modify its operational and marketing plans that suit our future needs. KAC will now have a new fleet that will help the national carrier to attain growth and profitability. We hope that Airbus will meet our demands, especially since we are doing business with them since the early 1980s," he said.

The aviation industry has faced many difficulties due to the coronavirus pandemic, especially the tourism sector. "All airlines were affected and KAC was one of them. A new board of directors was appointed during the pandemic, and in the first year, we faced many obstacles. The most significant was the operational challenges during the coronavirus pandemic and finding new ways to improve and develop KAC's performance to bring it back to its peak," Dakhan explained.

KAC is one of the few airlines in the world that didn't receive any financial support during the coronavirus pandemic. "The company faced many obstacles, including suspending commercial flights for many months before resuming operations gradually at 30 percent capacity," he noted. This led to cutting a number of flights, which led to a hike in fares to cover the cost of flights. "Passengers complained



KUWAIT: KAC Chairman Ali Al-Dakhan speaks during a press conference yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

about the hike, which lasted till this month, when the airport began to function at full capacity after the efforts and cooperation of officials from the Directorate General for Civil Aviation," stressed Dakhan.

"The operations and support sectors were also

affected by the retirement of many experienced staff, who benefited from privatization law no. 6/2008. So we had to set up a new structure that suited our new size. This needed huge efforts from the new board of directors to set new principles for administrative, operational and technical

Gulf Bank extends partnership with Suffix Sports Management

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is launching its much anticipated 'Gulf Bank 642 Marathon' for the seventh consecutive year in recognition of the Marathon's integral role in the local community. As a mark of Gulf Bank's commitment to enhancing community sustainability, the bank has also renewed its contract with event partner Suffix Sports Management for the next three years.

The beloved community event is back this year both in virtual and in-person versions, inviting challenge-seeking athletes as well as beginners to participate in Kuwait's only accredited race on November 20, 2021.

Commenting on the annual event, Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "We have cooperated with Suffix for seven years now, and we are very confident in their excellent performance and management of one of the most important sporting events in Kuwait. We are pleased to renew this strategic partnership with them for the next three years. We are also incredibly excited to announce that the Gulf Bank 642 Marathon is back, bigger and better than ever before! After a two year-long hiatus from in-person marathons, and we are looking forward to welcoming back our returning runners and meeting new participants!"

Ahmad Al-Huzami, CEO of Suffix Sports Management, said: "We are proud to extend our partnership with Gulf Bank for the seventh year in a row. The Gulf Bank 642 Marathon is more than a local sporting activity - it is a community event that everyone looks forward to, year after year. We are very proud to renew our partnership with Gulf Bank for the next three years, and look forward to carrying out a marathon that keeps raising the bar for



KUWAIT: Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank (left) and Ahmad Al-Huzami, CEO of Suffix Sports Management sign the agreement.

sporting events in the region. We are excited to see what Gulf Bank has in store, and can't wait to work together to set and exceed new standards of excellence for years to come."

It is worth noting that Gulf Bank's 642 Marathon has placed Kuwait on the map for international sporting events. As the only road race in Kuwait to have received accreditation from the World Athletics Label Road Races, the marathon acts as a qualifying race for international marathons.

Last year, Gulf Bank wrapped up a special virtual edition of its Gulf Bank 642 Marathon, in which contestants had the opportunity to participate over the period of a month from all around the world. The "Special Edition" virtual race attracted the participation of over 1,037 contestants from 18 countries, and was held in recognition of the role that exercise plays in enhancing both our mental

and physical wellbeing. By implementing creative technological solutions, Gulf Bank was able to successfully organize and carry out the annual marathon known and beloved by the local and international community.

Gulf Bank offers a distinct model for sustainability programs, implementing both internal and community-led initiatives year-round. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining a robust Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) social responsibility program, heading various educational initiatives throughout the year that have a sustainable impact on the lives of youth and society.

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 excel-

lence 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. Moreover, the Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various relevant parties to achieve this vision. For event registration and more information regarding participation as a corporate or in groups, please visit www.gulfbank642marathon.com or access the marathon's dedicated Instagram account @GulfBank642.



The Gulf Bank and Suffix Sports Management teams in a group photo.

Kuwait real estate market witnessing...

Continued from Page 1

He added prices in the commercial sector were "inflated and overrated in most areas".

Abdulaziz Al-Dughaisheem of Al-Dughaisheem Real Estate Agency noted that supply outstripped demand for sea chalets in Khairan. He said the investment sector started recovering with a rise in demand,

which showed that the economic cycle has returned to normal. Emad Haidar, Deputy Chairman of the Brokers Union, confirmed investment and commercial sectors are recovering from the impact of COVID-19.

He expected the local market to witness a remarkable improvement with the full reopening of Kuwait International Airport, which will boost demand for private houses in Hawally, Salmiya and Farwaniya. Kuwait Finance House said in a recent report that real estate transactions in the second quarter of 2021 amounted to KD 1.1 billion (\$3.6 billion), 15 percent higher than the previous quarter, which registered KD 929 million (\$2.9 billion). — KUNA

families, business was good. We never thought we'd get to this point," he said.

Despite being officially closed, the border remained relatively porous as smugglers carried on a thriving trade in petrol and cheap manufactured goods - as well as more illicit items. But in 2013, the Algerian authorities launched what they said was a crackdown on the drug trade, stepping up patrols and digging trenches along the frontier, which prompted Rabat to erect border fences.

Technically, Algerians and Moroccans can fly between each others' countries, but for farming communities along the border, cut off from what could be a key export market, that is little comfort. Many Oulad Bouarfa villagers miss their smuggling years. "It was a good time. We worked on both sides of the border, bringing in fuel from Algeria and selling clothes over there," said resident Mohamed Haddouri. "Today we get by raising animals, but it's not enough to feed my kids. Our future looks tough."

Haddouri said virtually everyone in this part of Morocco has family in Algeria. The two areas have historic links, and late Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika was born in Oujda when both countries were under French rule. Meriem Hamouyi, a fellow villager with henna patterns on her hands, agreed. — AFP

Zionists using facial recognition tech in Hebron

HEBRON: The Zionist army has deployed a sweeping personal data collection program using facial recognition technology targeting Palestinians in parts of the occupied West Bank, an organization working with former soldiers said yesterday. The program sees Zionist troops collecting data of Palestinians in the flashpoint city of Hebron. It was first reported by The Washington Post based on soldier testimony given to the Breaking the Silence organization.

Soldiers on patrol equipped with specialized devices "take photos of every Palestinian that they see, completely arbitrarily," Breaking the Silence advocacy director Ori Givati told AFP. After the picture is taken, the system known as "Blue Wolf" generates four possible results, according to Givati who said the findings were based on testimony from six soldiers who participated in the surveillance effort.

A red result means the individual should be arrested,

yellow means the Palestinian should be detained while an army superior is consulted, and green indicates the individual is free to go. But no result means the Palestinian is not yet in the Blue Wolf system. That prompts the soldier to collect more data. Asked for comment on the reports about Blue Wolf, the Zionist army said it "conducts routine security operations" in the West Bank as part of its "fight against terrorism".

"Naturally, we cannot comment on the IDF's operational capabilities in this context," a spokesman said, referring to the Zionist Defense Forces. Hebron is the only Palestinian city with Jewish settlers living inside it, making the city "the best place" to test Blue Wolf. Breaking the Silence deputy director Nadav Weiman told AFP. He spoke in central Hebron near the holy site known to Muslims as the Ibrahim mosque and to Jews as the Cave of the Patriarchs.

The settlers are guarded by heavy military protection in an urban area, which increases contact between soldiers and Palestinian residents, and the city's vast network of security cameras has been integrated into Blue Wolf, Weiman said. According to Givati, soldiers have competed for prizes over who takes the most pictures. "We are talking about another layer of control. Another layer of things that we allow ourselves to do to the Palestinian people," Givati said. — AFP

which runs until the weekend, to "keep 1.5C alive". Based on latest national emissions cutting plans, Earth is set to warm by 2.7C this century, according to the UN.

Kofe said his nation of 12,000 people was "preparing now for the worst case scenario, where our lands disappear and our people must leave". He also said it was pursuing "bold legal avenues" to ensure that Tuvalu's borders are still recognized internationally if or when its land territory is lost to climate change. "We cannot wait for speeches when the sea is rising around us," he said. "We must take bold, alternative action today to secure tomorrow." — AFP

Closed Morocco, Algeria border...

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In August, after months of growing frictions over the Western Sahara and Morocco's normalization of ties with Israel, Algeria cut diplomatic relations with its neighbor, citing "hostile actions". Morocco dismissed the accusations. Then last week, things took a turn for the worse as Algeria accused Morocco of killing three Algerian civilians on a desert highway through an area of the disputed Western Sahara controlled by the Algerian-backed Polisario Front independence movement.

But despite the bitter rivalry between their governments, Algerians and Moroccans have deep cultural and family ties. "It's so sad to see two brotherly people separated by political decisions," said Bachir Chaouch, who was born in 1951 across the border in El Amria but moved to Morocco before Algeria won independence from France in 1962. Today, he has lost all contact with his uncles, aunts and cousins who stayed in Algeria. "Until 1994, it was different. We used to go and see our

Tuvalu minister films speech...

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Delegates are gathered at the COP26 summit in Glasgow to try and implement the goals of Paris Agreement of limiting global heating to "well below" two degrees Celsius and to a safer 1.5C cap if possible. Host Britain says it wants the conference,

Local

Sulaibikhat Bay, Jahra Corniche key projects in Kuwait Bay development plans

Kuwait in full gear to execute development projects, meet 2035 Vision

KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait is pressing ahead to execute the seven pillars of its New Kuwait Vision 2035 with the objective of transforming the north Arab Gulf state into a financial, commercial and cultural hub. One of the major projects in the vision was the development of the Sulaibikhat Bay and Jahra Sea Front, or Jahra Corniche, all within the 6th pillar of 'Sustainable Diversified Economy' with a total cost of KD 2 billion (\$6.5 billion). The government plans to offer these projects to the private sector and market them internationally with the aim of adding a new tourist destination through development of Kuwait Bay and providing a sea front which consists of entertainment and commercial facilities.

A full-fledged plan will be put in place to develop the 38-kilometer-long Sulaibikhat Bay, stretching from the Free Trade Zone in Shuwaikh to Umm Al-Namel Island west of Kuwait City, and rehabilitate the marine environment. The KD 1.5 billion (\$4.9 billion) project is expected to improve the environment, offer recreational activities, provide 6,000 housing units, create up to 64,000 jobs and up to 5,400 rooms in resorts and hotels.

The 7.3-kilometer-long Jahra Corniche, meanwhile, will be connecting Jaber Al-Ahmad Area with Kuwait Bay. The KD 500 million (\$1.6 billion) project will be located between West of Doha Station to borders of Jahra Natural Reserve, and aimed at creating a balance between environment on one side and establishing touristic and commercial facilities

on the other. The infrastructure of the Jahra Corniche will cost KD 135 million (\$447 million), and the area would include a sport academy, shops, restaurants, fishermen village, playgrounds for children and a designated path for cyclists, in addition to creating 11,519 job opportunities. The Corniche will include a mall and a traditional museum.

Humoud Al-Enezi, Municipal Council member, said the Council was executing the government's development plans in general and the two afore-



Total cost of KD 2 billion

mentioned projects in specific. Enezi said Kuwait Municipality already signed consultation contracts of the two projects, and did preliminary environmental and feasibility studies to pave way for the outlines. Elaborating on the two projects, Al-Enezi said the Sulaibikhat Bay would encourage healthy lifestyle, while the Jahra Corniche would consist of a special hotel for athletes, an academy, a spa resort,



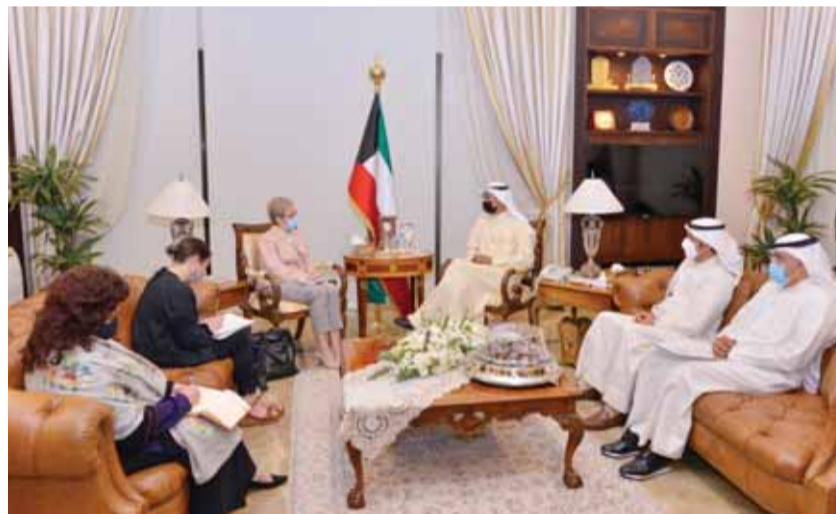
KUWAIT: This October 8, 2021 file photo shows flamingos resting at a beach in Kuwait. Kuwait's beaches offer a great habitat for migratory birds to make their stops during their long annual migration routes. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

a bird observatory and an aquarium. "These projects are part of opening the economy and to have a maximum benefit from distinguished locations in the

country through partnership with the private sector, create new jobs, boosting income and supporting national economy," he said. — KUNA

Deputy Foreign Minister receives UN official

KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Majdi Al-Dhafiri received yesterday Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Iraq Ingibjorg Solrun Gisladdottir, where they discussed the relationship between Kuwait and the UN Office in Iraq. During the meeting, Dhafiri stressed on the necessity of moving forward with the efforts made to find out the fate of prisoners and missing Kuwaitis in Iraq, in addition to reclaiming the National Archives of Kuwait. The meeting was attended by Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Minister's Office Affairs, Ambassador Ayham Al-Omar, and Acting Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organizations Affairs, Counselor Abdulaziz Al-Jarallah. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Majdi Al-Dhafiri meets Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Iraq Ingibjorg Solrun Gisladdottir. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Qatari Ambassador to Kuwait Ali Bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud delivers the letter to Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan photo

Amir invited to attend FIFA Arab Cup 2021

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday a written letter from Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, including good brotherly ties between both countries and an invitation to His Highness the Amir to attend FIFA Arab Cup 2021 opening ceremony due late this month in Doha. The letter was delivered by Qatari Ambassador to Kuwait Ali Bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud to Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Minister inspects new maternity hospital project

KUWAIT: Minister of Public Works Dr Rana Al-Fares yesterday inspected the new maternity hospital project, which is considered one of the biggest health projects in Kuwait with a 780-bed capacity, an ICU with 127 beds, as well as 81 outpatient clinics, 60 labor rooms and 27 operation rooms. The KD 7,220 project was designed according to the latest international systems in healthcare. Located in front of the old maternity hospital in the Sabah Health Zone, the new hospital consists of four buildings, in addition to a building for outpatient clinics and a car park. The project is part of Kuwait's Vision 2035 development plan. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of Public Works Dr Rana Al-Fares is seen while inspecting the new maternity hospital project yesterday. — KUNA

Deputy Chief urges competition among KNG personnel

KUWAIT: The Deputy Chief of Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Lieutenant General (retired) Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah yesterday stressed on the importance of competition among KNG members, as well as honoring the distinguished ones. These remarks came in a statement issued by KNG following the Deputy Chief's visit to Protection and Reinforcement Commander, Brigadier General Hamad Salem, to examine the mechanism of workflow, as he listened to an explanation of the tasks and duties of this Command, besides their main activities and the current training season. He called on the Command members to reflect a positive image about KNG, and to be extremely cautious at the locations they are assigned to monitor and guard. He expressed sat-



Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah

isfaction at the remarkable efforts he witnessed, that aim at improving the efficiency and performance of command members. — KUNA

Kuwait oil price up \$2.53 to \$83.03 pb

KUWAIT: Kuwait crude oil went up by \$2.53 during Monday's trading to reach \$83.03 per barrel (pb), compared with \$80.50 pb on Friday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. Brent crude rose by 72 cents to reach \$83.44 pb and West Texas Intermediate went up \$68 cents to \$81.95 pb. The OPEC daily basket

price went up by \$2.23 to \$82.34 a barrel on Monday, compared with \$84.66 Sunday, the organization said yesterday. Annual average rate of the OPEC basket in the past year amounted to \$41.47 pb. OPEC+ alliance decided during the 22nd ministerial meeting on Thursday to continue adhering to the current oil production plan; designed to increase the output gradually. Stakeholders agreed on pursuing increase of the crude supplies by 400,000 barrels per day, effective December. The crude oil output will be revised anew during another meeting at this level, to be held virtually on December 2. — KUNA



Haitham Al-Ghais

Kuwait nominates Haitham Al-Ghais for OPEC chief post

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Oil yesterday nominated ex-Kuwaiti governor to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Haitham Al-Ghais for OPEC Secretary-General's post, to succeed outgoing chief Mohammad Barkindo whose term ends in July. In a statement, the ministry said that Al-Ghais has been OPEC Kuwait governor since 2017, and chaired the joint technical committee between OPEC and non-OPEC countries. He also chaired the organization's internal check committee and has many contributions at the organization, it added. Ghais has extensive experience extending over nearly 30 years in the field of global oil markets and the oil industry, and has a wide presence and participation in many international oil conferences and forums. — KUNA

Kuwait condemns Houthi attempts to threaten Saudi security

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry denounced on Monday in the strongest terms the persistent attempts of the Houthi militias' attempts to jeopardize the security of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The recent targeting of Khamis Mushait city, south Saudi Arabia, with an explosives-laden drone and the threatening of maritime navigation in the Straits of Bab Al-Mandab and the southern Red Sea with a booby-trapped boat represent a serious escalation of the aggression on civilian targets and

the security of Saudi Arabia, the ministry said in a statement. The continuation of such hostilities poses a flagrant violation of the rules of the international humanitarian law, which requires a prompt and decisive response from the international community to prevent such threats and bring the perpetrators to book, it stressed. The statement renewed Kuwait's full solidarity with sisterly Saudi Arabia and full support to whatever measures it might take to protect its security, stability and sovereignty. — KUNA

Local

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EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125
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IOMP elects Kuwaiti doctor to head MEFOMP

KUWAIT: The International Organization for Medical Physics (IOMP) elected Head of the Radiation Physics Department at the Kuwait Cancer Control Center Dr Meshari Al-Nuaimi to head the Middle East Federation of Medical Physics (MEFOMP), becoming the first Kuwaiti to occupy this position. Dr Nuaimi said yesterday



Dr Meshari Al-Nuaimi

that MEFOMP aims to improve the quality of medical physics practices in the field of diagnostic radiology, nuclear medicine and radiotherapy to keep pace with the continuous progress in this field in the countries of the Middle East. MEFOMP is a non-governmental, non-profit professional and scientific organization that was established by IOMP in

2009 to build a cooperation network between specialists in the field of medical physics that includes these countries: Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Yemen, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan and Iraq, Al-Nuaimi explained. Dr Nuaimi received the annual Excellence Award 2021 from IOMP. This selection and honor shows the scientific and professional confidence in Kuwaiti expertise as well as their progress in this field at regional and international levels. —KUNA

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: People walk along the waterfront at sunset in Kuwait City on November 1, 2021. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Five Kuwaiti investors participate in Challenge, Innovation Forum in Qatar

DOHA: Five Kuwaiti inventors representing Kuwait Scientific Club will present their innovations to the Challenge and Innovation Forum (CIF), held in Doha, with participation of 100 inventors from 38 countries. Inventor Hussain Bumajdad will participate with a device to open doors used in case of emergency, while Shaikha Al-Majed will show a writing pen for blind people. Moreover, Adel Al-Wasees will present a cool steam watering system, while Farah Al-Mutawa participates with a system that protects boats in cases of fire, drowning and accidents, in addition to Salman Al-Otaibi who will present a portable washing machine.

In a statement to the press, member of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Scientific Club and head of the delegation Ali Al-Jumaa said the club's participation in this forum aims to present the distinguished Kuwaiti inventions that have received international certificates from concerned authorities. The participation of the Kuwaiti inventors with 100 young inventors came after selecting them among 6,000 participants, he added.

The Challenge and Innovation Forum (CIF) is considered a unique event in the region. It includes several competitions, events, and interactive science programs aimed at motivating and encouraging inventors, from all over the world, to partici-



DOHA: A group photo of Kuwaiti inventors participating in the Challenge and Innovation Forum (CIF). —KUNA

ate in this huge event. CIF will present several projects that reflect the roles of research, development and innovation in achieving a knowledge-based economy. The forum will also contribute to directing the attention of the international commu-

nity to learning more about the latest developments in the fields of innovation and modern technologies. In addition, to provide an opportunity to get acquainted with several participations and achievements of the youth. —KUNA

Kuwait participates in city planning int'l conference

DOHA: The State of Kuwait is keen on applying sustained urban development principles on city planning, a visiting official of the Gulf state has affirmed. The affirmation of this approach was declared by the Undersecretary of Kuwait's Municipality and member of a team specialized in designing united strategy for architectural planning in Gulf countries Saad Al-Muhilby yesterday. Muhilby stated on the sidelines of the 57th conference of International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP) for the year 2021, that applying comprehensive urban planning measures aims to develop adaptable cities, able to withstand harsh weather conditions and develop policies to ease environmental challenges such as pollution and global warming. He added that architectural planning deals with multipurpose technologies, rapid changes and sudden challenges.

Muhilby touched on Kuwait's interest in applying architectural policies

and managing operations in the field of comprehensive planning, and transforming its cities to ecofriendly cities. Muhilby stated that architectural development aims to preserve the authenticity of Kuwaiti identity in architecture by integrating heritage with creativity, and utilizing the unique ecosystem. He pointed out that the conference, with promise of (new times .. better places .. stronger societies), aims to facilitate the exchange of expertise and ideas, and to attain a better future for people in people-friendly cities. Muhilby stated that the conference sheds light on the necessity of carving a new path and developing creative methods, in order to build better places for local communities. He also said that it aims to strengthen new urban principles in regards to health, luxury, and lessons learned from the pandemic.

On Kuwait's participation in the conference, Muhilby commented that a work sheet with Kuwait's organiza-



DOHA: Undersecretary of Kuwait's Municipality Saad Al-Muhilby (center) with administration of coordination chief Jassim Al-Habib and head of the planning department Suleiman Al-Rashed. — KUNA

tional structure will be presented today during the discussions session. The session will be attended by GCC representatives specialized in executing united architectural strategy for member states. It will also be discussing border areas and future development opportunities. The conference, taking place in Doha, was launched yesterday and will last until

Nov 11. Participating in it are 350 persons from all over the world, 150 of whom participating remotely, and it handles matters of international planning, architectural strategies and other related topics. Representing Kuwait, in addition to Muhilby, is administration of coordination chief Jassim Al-Habib and head of the planning department Suleiman Al-Rashed. — KUNA

Fundraiser helped cover kidney dialysis costs for many patients

KUWAIT: Chairman of Kuwait Humanitarian Friendship Society (KHFS) Ahmad Al-Sarraf thanked people who supported and contributed to the success of the "Khairna fi Kuwaitana" (our goodness is in our Kuwait) campaign, which reached out to many insolvent patients by covering the cost of their kidney dialysis sessions in October. Sarraf said the society is preparing studies for other humanitarian campaigns to be announced soon. Meanwhile, KHFS Director General Khalid bin Sabt said that the funds collected during the campaign are directed to needy patients without any deductions. The first payment was made for 60 kidney dialysis sessions, and the society will continue with it the payments according to the hospitals' capacities, he further noted.



KUWAIT: Sulaibikhat firemen put out a fire that started in discarded tires left in an open area in Sulaibiya yesterday. No injuries were reported as an investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the blaze, Kuwait Fire Force said in a statement.





'In a corner': German unvaccinated defiant as COVID rules tighten

Will tensions spike in Iraq after drone 'message' to PM?

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GRODNO: Photo shows migrants at the Belarusian-Polish border in the Grodno region. Poland and Belarus squared off yesterday over thousands of migrants aiming to enter EU member Poland, with Warsaw saying the wave threatened the security of the entire bloc. — AFP

Poland and Belarus square off

Armed troops deployed amid escalating tensions

WARSAW: Poland and Belarus squared off yesterday over thousands of migrants aiming to enter EU member Poland, with Warsaw saying the wave threatened the security of the entire bloc. Minsk warned against "provocations" on the border, where armed troops from both countries are deployed amid escalating tensions.

Trapped between the rhetoric are thousands of people, many escaping war and poverty in the Middle East, trying to survive outdoors in squalid conditions as temperatures dip toward freezing. The European Union accuses Belarus strongman President Alexander Lukashenko of orchestrating the crisis in retaliation for Western sanctions on Minsk, charges that he denies. On Monday Poland blocked a bid by hundreds of migrants to breach the razor-wire border fence as thousands more massed in the area.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said yesterday that Warsaw would continue to turn the migrants away. "Sealing the Polish border is our national interest. But today the stability and security of the entire EU is at stake," Morawiecki said

on Twitter. "This hybrid attack of Lukashenko's regime is aimed at all of us. We will not be intimidated and will defend peace in Europe with our partners from NATO and EU." Belarus hit back, with the defense ministry calling the allegations "unfounded and unsubstantiated" and accusing Poland of "deliberately" escalating tensions.

It said that Poland had deployed 10,000 military personnel to the border without giving prior warning to Belarusian authorities, in what it said was a violation of joint security agreements. "We would like to warn the Polish side in advance against any provocations directed against the Republic of Belarus to justify illegal use of force against disadvantaged, unarmed people, among whom there are many children and women," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

Meanwhile Poland's defense ministry tweeted out video footage yesterday morning showing what it said appeared to be a "large group of Belarusian officers" approaching the vicinity of the migrants camps near the Polish border village of Kuznica.

The latest grim chapter of Europe's migrant crisis saw Washington and Brussels call on Minsk to stop what they describe as an orchestrated influx. NATO on Monday also hit out at Minsk, accusing the government there of using the migrants as political pawns, while the European Union called for fresh sanctions against Belarus.

Many of the migrants and refugees seeking entry into Poland are desperately fleeing war and poverty-wracked countries in the Middle East. They say they are stuck between a rock and a hard

place, with the Belarusian side refusing to allow them to return to Minsk and fly home, while Poland does not let them cross and make asylum claims. Polish regional police tweeted video footage of migrants sitting around tents and campfires on the other side of the razor fence, as a wall of Polish officers looked on. "According to our estimates, there could even be 12,000-15,000 migrants in Belarus," Polish special services spokesman Stanislaw Zaryn told Polish radio.

Some 4,000 were estimated to be massed near Kuznica close to the Belarusian border, the services said yesterday. Belarus state news agency Belta's correspondent said about 3,000 people were in a camp near the border. Polish government spokesman Piotr Muller had warned Monday that "there may be an escalation of this type of action on the Polish border in the near future, which will be of an armed nature." Belarusian interior minister Ivan Kubrakov told the state-run news agency Belta yesterday that the migrants were in the ex-Soviet country "legally," adding: "there have been no violations of the law on the part of migrants so far." — AFP



Thousands of migrants eye EU nation

Climate scientists fear tipping points

PARIS: Leaders may be going into the UN climate summit in Glasgow with the do-or-die goal of limiting global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius, but breaching that cap is not what keeps scientists awake at night. The real disaster scenario begins with the triggering of invisible climate tripwires known as tipping points. "Climate tipping points are a game-changing risk - an existential threat - and we need to do everything within our power to avoid them," said Tim Lenton, director of the Global Systems Institute at the University of Exeter.

What's a tipping point?

Anyone who has leaned back in a chair balancing on two legs knows there is a threshold beyond which you irrevocably crash to the floor. That portal between two stable states - in this case, an upright versus a fallen-over chair - is a tipping point, and Earth's complex, interlocking climate system is full of them. These temperature thresholds have potentially widespread impacts. If temperatures rise enough to melt the ice sheets atop Greenland and West Antarctica, it could lift oceans more than a dozen meters.

The Amazon tropical forest, upon which we depend to soak up carbon pollution, could turn into savannah. Or shallow subsoil known as permafrost - mostly in Siberia - tenuously holding twice the amount of greenhouse gases already in the atmosphere could see those harmful emissions seep into the air. "We have seen a number of tipping points already in coral reefs and polar systems, and more are likely in the near term,"

the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) said in a draft report on climate impacts, due out in February, obtained by AFP. In most cases, reversing the changes set in motion would be beyond the grasp of humanity for many generations, if not millennia.

Why so scary?

One of the first scientists to unlock the secret of tipping points recalled suddenly understanding some 15 years ago why they were so ominous. "It was an 'Oh Shit!' moment," Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, founding director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), told AFP in an interview. "Planetary machinery - the monsoon system, ocean circulation, the jet stream, the big ecosystems - abounds with non-linear systems," he said, referring to the potential for abrupt, dramatic change. "That means you have so many points of no return."

In Antarctica, more than half the ice shelves that prevent glaciers - some larger in area than England and Scotland combined - from sliding into the ocean and lifting sea levels are at risk of crumbling due to climate change. "It is like uncorking a bottle, and we are uncorking them one by one," said Schellnhuber. Earth-altering tipping points have different temperature thresholds. Scientists know these tripwires are there, but not exactly where they lie.

Even more unsettling is how easily our already belaboured efforts to eliminate carbon pollution could be overwhelmed by the changes we are setting in motion. If thawing permafrost surrenders as much CO2 as humanity stops emitting, we find ourselves fighting a war on two fronts: on top of the struggle to slash our own emissions we'd have to cope with those generated by the planet itself.

How many are there?

Scientists count about 15 significant tipping points in the planet's climate system. Some are regional, others are global, all are interconnected. Those least resistant to global warming and closest to a point of no return are tropical coral reefs, the West Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets, alpine glaciers, Arctic summer sea ice and the Amazon forest. Parts of the climate system more resistant to rising temperatures include the global currents that redistribute heat through the oceans, the Arctic jet stream, the Indian monsoon, El Ninos in the Pacific, and desertification in the Sahel. While permafrost probably doesn't have a single temperature tripwire, the IPCC estimates it will release tens of billions of tons of CO2 for every extra degree of global warming. The last holdout would be East Antarctica's ice sheet, which holds 56 meters worth of sea-level rise.

Why are we hearing?

The IPCC's most recent mega-report is the first to give tipping points more than a cursory mention.

"Abrupt responses and tipping points of the climate system... cannot be ruled out," the UN's climate science advisory body now warns. While scientists have long been aware of the danger that tipping points pose, part of the problem has been the inability of climate models - which are built to track gradual, linear change - to anticipate the timing or impact of abrupt shocks. "Just because tipping points are challenging to predict doesn't mean they can be ignored," Lenton said.

What is the ripple effect?

A new wave of research is focusing on how sudden shifts triggered by tipping points ripple across the climate system, leading to possible chain reactions. Accelerating melt-



GLASGOW: Little Amal - a giant puppet depicting a Syrian refugee girl is the focus of media attention on Gender Day at the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow yesterday. — AFP

off from the Greenland ice sheet, for example, is almost certainly slowing down the conveyor belt of ocean currents known as the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC). This, in turn, could push Earth's tropical rain belt southward and weaken the African and Asian monsoons, upon which hundreds of millions depend for rain-fed crops. Scientists cannot rule out the possibility that the AMOC will stall altogether, as it has in the past. If this happened, European winters would become much harsher and sea levels in the North Atlantic basin could rise substantially. There are dozens of other ways in which facets of the climate system are intertwined.

What is a 'hothouse Earth'?

Earth's past tells us that continuing greenhouse gas emissions "could tip the global cli-

mate into a permanent hot state," according to the recent IPCC report. Think of it as the ultimate tipping point: "hothouse Earth". The last time atmospheric concentrations of CO2 matched today's levels, some three million years ago, temperatures were at least 3C more and sea levels five-to-25 meters higher.

A combination of more carbon pollution and emissions from permafrost and dying forests "might set us on such a trajectory in little more than a century," said Jan Zalasiewicz, a palaeo-biology professor at the University of Leicester. Johan Rockstrom, PIK director, said a 2C cap on warming was "not a social or economic choice, it is actually a planetary boundary". "The moment that the Earth system flips over from being self-cooling - which it still is - to self-warming, that is the moment that we lose control," he said. — AFP

International

Georgia ex-leader 'abused in prison, fears for his life'

Saakashvili on hunger strike in protest

News in brief

26 die in Niger school fire

NIAMEY: At least 26 children aged between five and six burnt to death on Monday when their straw and wood classrooms caught fire in southern Niger, seven months after a similar tragedy in the capital Niamey. "Right now, we have 26 dead and 13 injured, four of them seriously," said Chaibou Aboubacar, mayor of Maradi city. Niger, one of the poorest countries in the world, has tried to fix shortages of school buildings by constructing thousands of straw and wood sheds to serve as classrooms, with children sometimes sitting on the ground. Fires in the highly flammable classrooms are common but rarely result in casualties. Three days of mourning have been declared in the Maradi region from yesterday. Twenty children were burnt to death in a school fire in a working-class district of Niamey in April. —AFP

Knife-wielding attacker

OSLO: Norwegian police said they shot and killed a knife-wielding man who threatened several people yesterday in central Oslo before attacking a patrol car that arrived on the scene. A policeman was injured as the officers tried to arrest the attacker in the capital's Bislett neighborhood, police told a press conference. No details about the identity of the attacker or his motive were disclosed. "We're not excluding any motives, but there is nothing at this stage that indicates this is a terror attack," police inspector Egil Jorgen Brekke told reporters. According to tabloid VG, the man was Russian and in his 30s, and had been sentenced to psychiatric care in December 2020 after stabbing a man in Oslo in 2019. Footage posted by witnesses on social media and broadcast by Norwegian media show the barebreasted suspect wielding a large knife on the pavement outside a shop. —AFP

Mass funeral for blast victims

FREETOWN: Sierra Leone on Monday held a mass burial for dozens of victims of the fuel-tanker explosion that ripped through the capital Freetown and killed at least 115 people, according to the latest toll. Thousands of mourners lined the road as 85 bodies were taken to a cemetery on the outskirts of the city that had been used in the past to bury victims of Ebola outbreaks, an AFP correspondent at the scene said. The explosion was sparked after a lorry crashed into a fuel tanker on Friday. Witnesses say most of the victims were street sellers and motorcyclists who were engulfed in flames as they tried to retrieve fuel leaking from the tanker before it ignited. "We are here today to give a dignified burial to our compatriots," President Julius Maada Bio said at the funeral, promising a thorough investigation to ensure such an event would not happen again. —AFP

Tunisian demonstrator dies

AGUEREB: A Tunisian demonstrator died overnight after inhaling tear gas as police dispersed protests over the reopening of a landfill site, a medic and a relative said yesterday. The 35-year-old died in the town of Aguerieb in the central region of Sfax, which has seen weeks of angry demonstrations over a growing waste crisis. "Abderrazek Lacheheb was transferred to Aguerieb hospital suffering from asphyxia," a hospital official said. The man's cousin Houcine Lacheheb said the man had been alive when he arrived at the hospital but had died after security forces fired tear gas outside. "It was the police who killed him," he said. An AFP journalist in Aguerieb saw security forces using tear gas to disperse stone-throwing demonstrators. Tunisian human rights group FTDES said Aguerieb had seen "a violent intervention by security forces on Monday night to force the reopening of the Qena rubbish dump". —AFP

German infection rate soars

BERLIN: Germany's incoming coalition parties have unveiled fresh proposals to fight the country's COVID resurgence, as the weekly rate of new coronavirus infections hit an all-time high. Germany registered an incidence rate of 201.1 new cases per 100,000 people over the past seven days, the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) said, surpassing the previous record of 197.6 reached on December 22, 2020. The surge in cases, blamed on the nation's relatively low vaccination rate, has prompted widespread alarm in recent weeks as hospital beds fill up rapidly. Underlining the urgency, the three parties striving to form Germany's next coalition government following September's general election presented a raft of pandemic-fighting proposals - despite not officially being in power yet. —AFP

TBILISI: Georgia's jailed ex-president and opposition leader Mikheil Saakashvili, who has been on hunger strike for weeks, said on Monday he feared for his life after prison guards assaulted him. Saakashvili, who served as president between 2004 and 2013, was arrested on October 1 on his return from exile in Ukraine. He has refused food for 39 days to protest against his imprisonment, which he says is politically motivated.

His jailing has exacerbated a political crisis that erupted last year after the opposition denounced fraud in parliamentary elections won narrowly by



Political crisis exacerbated

the ruling Georgian Dream party. The guards "abused me verbally, punched me on the neck, dragged me on the ground by my hair", Saakashvili said in a letter released through his lawyer, adding that his controversial transfer to a prison hospital was "aimed at killing" him. He was moved on Monday to a prison hospital that rights officials say fails to ensure his proper treatment.

The flamboyant pro-Western reformer's arrest provoked the largest anti-government demonstrations in a decade. Chanting Saakashvili's name, about 40,000 demonstrators flooded on Monday

'In a corner': German unvaccinated defiant as rules tighten

RADEBERG: The eastern German state of Saxony may have ordered tough curbs on the unvaccinated to push them to get the COVID-19 jab, but shop assistant Sabine Lonnatzsch, 59, is unmoved. The new rules are "discriminatory" because they are "pushing the unvaccinated further into a corner," she tells AFP. She won't change her mind about getting inoculated—she just won't go to restaurants or events anymore. "I've had corona cases in my family and in my eyes it is nothing more than a bad flu," she says. With COVID-19 infections rocketing in Germany, Saxony this week became the first to largely exclude unvaccinated people from indoor dining, cinemas and bars.

The new rules, likely to be emulated by other states in the coming weeks, are designed not only to reduce the spread of COVID-19 but also to encourage more people to get inoculated. But Lonnatzsch is not the only one resisting the jab in the town

of Radeberg in Bautzen district, which has one of the lowest vaccination rates in the country at just 45.7 percent. The clothing store No 1 Mode where she works has a sign in the window that lets customers know that all are welcome—regardless of vaccination status.

'Bad for business'

Across the town square, the co-owner of Cafe Roethig also has no plans to get the vaccine. Like many people in the region, Carola Roethig, 58, is "not convinced" by the jab because "it was developed in such a short space of time". The district of Bautzen has one of the highest incidence rates in the country at 645.3 cases per 100,000 people, but Roethig is not worried about catching the virus.

The new rules are "definitely bad for business," she says at the cafe's bakery counter, which is lined with untouched fresh cakes, tarts and iced donuts.

Ex-minister's lucrative second job deepens Britain's sleaze row

LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson yesterday faced fresh accusations of sleaze among his ruling Conservatives, following a report that a party lawmaker earned more than £1 million in the last year from a second job. Geoffrey Cox, a lawyer and former attorney general, netted the lucrative sums for legal work while collecting his Tory MP annual salary of around £82,000 (\$111,000, 96,000 euros), the Daily Mail said.

The additional pay, detailed in parliament's register of interests, came in part from advising the government of the British Virgin Islands, a UK overseas territory and tax haven accused of corruption, it

Separated relatives finally find 'human connection' at JFK

NEW YORK: As soon as she spots her son Liam at New York's JFK airport, Alison Henry runs towards him and gives him a long hug, tears welling up in her eyes. "I just can't believe it, two and half years!" she says after stepping off a British Airways flight from London, as the United States reopened to vaccinated visitors Monday. "It's just so emotional, overwhelming," Henry, 63, tells AFP.

She and 31-year-old Liam have spoken every week since the United States drastically limited travel from several countries, including the UK, at the start of the pandemic in March 2020. "(But) this human connection, when it's real and in front of you, is what I missed the most," says Liam, who has lived in Brooklyn for several years, his eyes glistening above his face mask. He has lots of places to show his parents and grandmother Patricia - who didn't hesitate to make the trip despite being almost 88 years old - but mostly they just plan to spend time together.

"Every day we have been watching the news, waiting and waiting for America to open up," said mum



TBILISI: Georgians rally to demand the release of the jailed ex-president and opposition leader Mikheil Saakashvili in Tbilisi. — AFP

evening into the central Freedom Square in the Georgian capital Tbilisi, AFP reporters saw. "A mass, permanent protest movement begins in Georgia and will not stop until Mikheil Saakashvili is set free and snap elections are called," Nika Melia, the chairman of Saakashvili's United National Movement party, told the crowd.

"We will not disperse, our protest will be relentless and peaceful, we will not let the regime provoke us to a civil confrontation." Protesters then marched through downtown Tbilisi towards the prime minister's office, vowing to blockade the building. Prime Minister Irakli "Garibashvili will not be able to leave

or enter his office", Melia said. One of the demonstrators, businessman Niko Mgeladze, 46, said: "Saakashvili is a victim of political vendetta, we will not stop until he is liberated."

The pro-opposition Mtavari TV station aired footage of hundreds of riot police being deployed outside government buildings. On Monday morning, doctors who examined Saakashvili said he was "at high risk of multi-systemic complications and needs to be urgently treated in a high-tech clinic". Georgia's rights ombudswoman Nino Lomjaria said the prison hospital failed to meet the doctors' criteria. — AFP



RADEBERG: People queue in front of a vaccination centre in Radeberg, eastern Germany, to get a COVID vaccination without an appointment. — AFP

"Many of our customers are not vaccinated, so we are losing income, because fewer people are coming in," she says. The rules are also bad for her personal life. "I'm not allowed to go to a restaurant in the evening and have a nice dinner with my husband. I don't

think it is right." Outside the cafe, 40-year-old Susan feels the same. "Nothing would convince me" to get the jab, she says, without giving her last name. "I see no sense in it because (vaccinated people) can still get the disease and infect others." — AFP

added. Cox also utilized changes to parliamentary attendance rules brought in during the coronavirus pandemic to vote remotely in the House of Commons from the Caribbean while working there, the paper found. His office did not respond to a request for comment.

The revelations intensify the pressure on Johnson, following days of criticism over sleaze and cronyism claims against his government which began with the botched handling of another Conservative lawmaker's case. The UK leader prompted outrage last week when he tried to overhaul parliament's internal disciplinary process, which would have prevented the 30-day suspension of Owen Paterson. Paterson was found to have committed an "egregious" rules breach, after repeatedly lobbying ministers and officials for two companies paying him more than £100,000 a year.

Although Johnson swiftly abandoned the unprecedented overhaul attempts - prompting Paterson to

resign from parliament - it threw the spotlight on a raft of allegations around MPs' behavior. Johnson also drew renewed fire for skipping an emergency debate Monday on the standards system regulating lawmakers, instead making a visit to a hospital in northeast England. Attention is now increasingly turning to the issue of MPs' second jobs, with reports yesterday detailing at least 10 other Conservatives with outside work earning them more than £50,000 a year.

In a series of interviews, deputy prime minister Dominic Raab said there were already "strict rules about declarations and accountability" over second jobs. Raab told Times Radio that Cox's work in the British Virgin Islands "is a legitimate thing to do as long as it's properly declared". "In terms of accountability, it will be up to voters to decide whether their MP representing them is (has) got the right priorities and that's the same for all of us," he added to LBC radio. "That's the ultimate accountability we have in our democracy." — AFP



NEW YORK: A couple embrace as they stand before airline staff after arriving on a flight from the UK, following the easing of pandemic travel restrictions at JFK international airport in New York. — AFP

Alison. They booked their tickets as soon as the announcement was made official last month. At terminal seven inside JFK, the first passengers off BA's first flight since the borders reopened are greeted with clapping and cheering and company-colored red, white and blue balloons. They also receive cookies in the shape of a yellow taxi, a big apple and the Statue of Liberty, three symbols of the metropolis that is desperate to welcome back tourists to boost its ravaged economy.

Businessmen are among the first to disembark. "It's great to be back. It's fantastic," several of them say to waiting TV crews. Next come the passengers eager to reunite with loved ones. They include a grandmother who has never seen her grandson before, a man who waits with a bouquet of red roses for a close friend he has not seen for 11 years, and an aunt who finds her two nieces and plans a big family reunion dinner tonight. After 730 days of separation, Jill Chambers is finally able to hug her sister and nephews. "I'm so happy," she repeats over and over, her eyes red.

Before finding Chambers, her sister Louise Erebara had warned: "I'm going to cry like a hysteric." "It's been terrible not knowing when we were going to see them again due to Covid, not knowing if the borders were ever going to open," Erebara said. For Max, a young man in a hurry to reunite with friends and family, the separation was also "very, very hard." "We communicated on Zoom, but it's not the same as in real life," he told AFP before rushing towards the exit. To mark the occasion, British Airways gave the flight the prestigious number "BA1," which belonged to the Concorde when it was still flying between London and New York. The trip was "fantastic," says BA CEO Sean Doyle, making his first visit to New York since the beginning of last year. BA never completely stopped its services throughout the pandemic, but the first flight of the reopening is "a very important milestone," he tells AFP. — AFP

International

Chinese city offers cash for clues in COVID 'people's war'

City traces the source of its latest outbreak

BEIJING: A COVID-hit Chinese city is offering thousands of dollars for anyone giving clues in tracing the source of its latest outbreak, as part of a "people's war" to stamp out one of the country's largest resurgences in months. China reported 43 local cases yesterday in a Delta-driven surge that has fanned out to 20 provinces and regions, keeping new case numbers in the double-digits over the past three weeks. As more countries lift COVID measures, Beijing officials have stuck stubbornly to a zero-COVID strategy that has maintained low infection numbers due to strict border closures, targeted lockdowns and long quarantines.



Current outbreak hits over 40 cities

But the current outbreak has hit more than 40 cities, and officials in Heihe - a northern city on the border with Russia - said they would offer 100,000 yuan (\$15,500) as a reward for information. "In order to uncover the source of this virus outbreak as soon as possible and find out the chain of transmission, it is necessary to wage a people's war of epidemic prevention and control," the city government said in a notice.

Officials said cases of smuggling, illegal hunting and cross-border fishing should be reported immediately, adding that those who have bought imported goods online ought to "immediately sterilize" them and send



BEIJING: Commuters ride the subway during evening rush hour in Beijing yesterday. — AFP

them for tests. The latest wave has seen millions put under lockdown and domestic travel rules tightened, with many planes and trains cancelled. A cluster in central Henan province has been linked to schools, as health authorities urged more rapid vaccination of children. Over 3.5 million vaccine doses have been given to children aged between three and 11, according to official data.

Beijing's rigorous anti-virus stance - which has been used as political capital to extol the virtues of China's leadership - has started to draw more public debate in recent weeks. In an interview with Phoenix Television being shared on Chinese social media, virologist and University of Hong Kong professor Guan Yi

appeared to call for better data to evaluate China's vaccine efficacy. "We should not be carrying out mass nucleic acid tests at every turn" to detect COVID-19 cases, or blindly taking booster jabs, he said.

He instead urged antibody tests and timely updates by vaccine makers on the effectiveness of their jabs against variants. The country has five conditionally approved vaccines, but their published efficacy rates - varying between around 50 and 82 percent - lag behind rival jabs from Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna. The official Xinhua news agency has lashed out against critics of China's approach, saying "strict containment measures are still the best way to save lives" and calling Beijing's efforts "unquestionable". — AFP

Will tensions spike in Iraq after drone 'message' to PM?

BAGHDAD: An assassination attempt targeting Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi marks the latest escalation in tensions following last month's legislative polls, amid allegations of fraud from pro-Iran groups. The attack came after pro-Iran factions and their supporters had denounced the election results, which saw the Fatah (Conquest) Alliance - political arm of the predominantly Shiite paramilitary Hashed Al-Shaabi - shed a large number of seats in parliament.

The attempt early Sunday also followed days of violence as hundreds of Hashed supporters protested outside - then attempted to storm - the heavily fortified Green Zone that houses the premier's residence, the government and diplomatic missions. The prime minister escaped unharmed after an explosive-laden drone hit his residence, although two bodyguards were reportedly wounded.

What is context?

Analysts interviewed by AFP were unanimous that the attack was closely linked to the elections and the negotiations to follow on forging parliamentary alliances ahead of selecting a new government. Renad Mansour, a senior research fellow at the UK-based Chatham House, said pro-Iran groups, such as the Hashed, use "coercive power" to "maintain their standing, notwithstanding whether they won or lost the election".

These groups refuse to be excluded from any back-stage negotiations on the formation of the next government, he said. On the eve of the attack on Kadhem's house, firebrand Shiite cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr, whose movement gained the largest number of seats in the polls, met several Sunni and Shiite officials - notably excluding any Fatah Alliance members.

According to Lahib Higel, a senior Iraq analyst at the Belgium-based International Crisis Group, the pro-Iran factions have "sought different tactics to put pressure on government formation negotiations". These have included "claiming the election results are fraud, using street pressure and as we saw two days ago the attempted breach of the Green Zone", she said. Hundreds of supporters of the Fatah Alliance set



BAGHDAD: Cars are parked outside one of the Green Zone entrances in the Iraqi capital, hours after a drone attack on the residence of Iraq's prime minister inside the zone. — AFP

up camp on Saturday outside the Green Zone, hours before the assassination bid, which has gone unclaimed.

Violence as political weapon?

On Friday evening, following clashes during the pro-Iran demonstrations, Qais Al-Khazali, head of the Asaib Ahl Al-Haq force - a key component of the Hashed - "threatened" Kadhem, according to Hamdi Malik, an associate fellow at the Washington Institute. He has tweeted a video of Khazali seen addressing Kadhem and vowing the premier would be put on trial for the "blood of the martyrs" - referring to two protesters reportedly killed in the clashes. Khazali was among those who condemned the attack. Malik said that although Kadhem's home had been targeted by drones in the past as a "message", the latest attempt in which the residence was struck went a step further. According to Mansour of Chatham House, drone attacks in Iraq have become a "common strategy of warning".

Such attacks have often targeted US interests in Baghdad and the Kurdish capital Arbil in northern Iraq. They remain largely unclaimed but have been blamed on groups loyal to Iran and seeking the expulsion of US forces from Iraq. In recent years, anger has mounted towards the Hashed, particularly among youth who accuse it of being more loyal to Iranian interests than those of Iraqis. Pro-Iran factions have also been blamed for the targeting and killing of demonstrators in near-nationwide protests that began in October 2019. — AFP



SAN JOSE: Nicaraguan citizens exiled in Costa Rica protest against the results of the Nicaraguan election, outside the Nicaraguan Embassy in San Jose. — AFP

did face dismissed by critics as regime loyalists. The British government said the ballot was "an election in name only," while US President Joe Biden said its outcome was "rigged" long before the "pantomime election." On Monday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken threatened further sanctions and visa restrictions "for those complicit in supporting the Ortega-Murillo government's undemocratic acts."

Faced with international criticism, Ortega lashed out at Spain and the European Union, saying they were led by "fascists" and "Nazi parliamentarians." Overnight in the streets of the capital Managua, supporters waving red and black flags of Ortega's party celebrated in the Plaza de las Victorias. "Whether the Yankees like it or not, we rule!" said one woman.

ISS astronauts return to Earth after 6-month

WASHINGTON: Four astronauts returned to Earth Monday in a SpaceX craft after spending six months on the International Space Station, a NASA live broadcast showed, marking the end of a busy mission. The international crew conducted thousands of experiments in orbit and helped upgrade the solar panels on the ISS during their "Crew-2" mission. Its descent slowed by four huge parachutes, their Dragon spacecraft - dubbed "Endeavour" - splashed down in the Gulf of Mexico at 10:33 pm before it was lifted onto a recovery ship. NASA astronauts Megan McArthur and Shane Kimbrough, Akihiko Hoshide of Japan and Frenchman Thomas Pesquet from the European Space Agency were then taken out of the capsule and placed on stretchers as a precautionary measure - human bodies need to re-adjust to gravity after extended periods in space.

"It's great to be back to Planet Earth," Kimbrough was heard saying on the NASA live broadcast after Dragon splashed down. The ISS activities of the Crew-2 astronauts included documenting the surface of the Earth to record human-caused changes and natural events, growing Hatch Chile peppers, and studying worms to better understand human health changes in space. "Proud to have represented France once again in space! Next stop, the Moon?" Pesquet had tweeted ahead of the trip home. Their journey back to Earth began when Endeavour undocked from the ISS at 2:05 pm, NASA announced. It then looped around the ISS for around an hour-and-a-half to take photographs, the first such mission since a Russian Soyuz performed a similar maneuver in 2018. The Dragon, which flew mostly autonomously, has a small circular window at the top of its forward hatch through which the astronauts can point their cameras.

The departure was delayed a day by high winds. Bad weather and what NASA called a "minor medical issue" have also pushed back the departure of the next set of astronauts, on the Crew-3 mission, which is now set to launch Wednesday. Until then, the ISS will be crewed by only three astronauts - two Russians and one American. SpaceX began providing astronauts a taxi service to the ISS in 2020, ending nine years of US reliance on Russian rockets for the journey following the end of the Space Shuttle program. — AFP

News in brief

Hamas sentences 3 to death

GAZA: The Islamist movement Hamas which rules the Gaza Strip said yesterday it had sentenced three people to death, two of them for collaborating with its enemy. The Hamas military court said recent rulings "included three death sentences, two of them against collaborators with the occupation, and the third against a drug dealer". The court also ruled on 11 other cases involving the same charges. All were handed jail terms ranging from four years to life, except for one suspect whose drug trafficking charge was dropped. Hamas took over the Gaza Strip in 2007 and has ruled it since, while Zionist entity has imposed a blockade on the territory. Since then, Hamas and Zionist entity have fought four wars, in 2008, 2012, 2014 and this year. Previously, Hamas announced in late October it had sentenced six Palestinian "informants" to death for collaborating with Zionists. — AFP

11,000 cross into Uganda

GENEVA: At least 11,000 people have crossed into Uganda to escape clashes in eastern DR Congo that flared at the weekend, the UN Refugee Agency said yesterday. The number is the largest refugee influx into Uganda for more than a year, said UNHCR spokeswoman Shabia Mantoo, adding that the vast majority were women and children. "An upsurge of fighting in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has forced at least 11,000 people to flee across the border into Uganda since Sunday night," Mantoo told a briefing in Geneva. "The fighting between militia groups and Congo's armed forces is taking place in North Kivu's Rutshuru Territory." Some 8,000 asylum-seekers crossed at Bunagana town and another 3,000 at the Kibaya border point, both of which are around 500 kilometers southwest of Uganda's capital Kampala. — AFP

Soldier, 15 jihadists killed

OUAGADOUGOU: One Burkina Faso soldier and around 15 jihadists died in fighting over the weekend, the army of the west African nation said. The soldier died on Saturday in eastern Komadjar province in a battle that saw about 15 "terrorists neutralized", it said. "One soldier from the detachment unfortunately fell during the fighting," the statement said, adding that three others were wounded. The army's response "enabled the neutralization of around 15 terrorists and the recovery of their weapons. A large quantity of ammunition and motorbikes were also seized," it said. Burkina Faso has been facing regular and deadly jihadist attacks since 2015, particularly in the northern and eastern regions, close to Mali and Niger. — AFP

Nurse gets life sentence

TOKYO: A former nurse who murdered three patients by contaminating their intravenous drips with disinfectant was sentenced to life in prison yesterday by a Japanese court, according to local media. During her trial, 34-year-old Ayumi Kuboki admitted to killing the patients in their 70s and 80s five years ago in a case that shocked Japan. She had previously told police she may have killed 20 people over just two months, but later told prosecutors she could not comment on that during the trial. The presiding judge at the Yokohama district court said he had considered handing Kuboki the death sentence, public broadcaster NHK reported. "She said she regrets (her actions) and wants to pay for her crime. There's a chance she will be reformed, and I couldn't help but to hesitate over choosing a death sentence," the judge said. — AFP

Ethiopia's year-long war

ADDIS ABABA: Foreign envoys scrambled yesterday to end Ethiopia's year-long war, hoping an African Union-led push can bring about a cessation of hostilities before a feared rebel march on the capital. Jeffrey Feltman, US special envoy for the Horn of Africa, returned to Ethiopia for a late-night meeting with his AU counterpart, former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, the State Department said. "We believe there is a small window of opening to work with (Obasanjo)," spokesman Ned Price told reporters Monday. Last week Feltman met top Ethiopian officials before travelling to Kenya to see President Uhuru Kenyatta, who has been closely involved in regional mediation efforts. "We have engaged with the TPLF as well," Price said, referring to the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) rebel group. — AFP

Ortega under fire for Nicaragua vote 'farce'

MANAGUA: Nicaragua's longtime leader Daniel Ortega faced a torrent of international criticism Monday after he won a fourth straight presidential term in what critics described as a "farce" election with his political opponents jailed or exiled. With Ortega's victory in Sunday's poll a foregone conclusion, the United States and Europe led fierce condemnation of the 75-year-old former guerrilla whom they accused of dictatorial tactics and of crushing dissent. A partial official count from the Supreme Electoral Council showed Ortega and wife Rosario Murillo, his vice president, securing 75 percent of votes.

Nicaragua is now fully "an autocratic regime" after the deeply deficient elections handed Ortega his fifth overall presidential term, the European Union said. The polls "lack legitimacy" after Ortega "eliminated all credible electoral competition," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said in a withering statement on behalf of the 27-nation bloc, adding further sanctions were being considered. The election took place without independent international observers and with most foreign media denied access to the country.

Spain branded the vote "a farce against democracy," with seven would-be presidential challengers detained in Nicaragua since June and the five contenders Ortega

Nicaragua's neighbor Costa Rica, however, said there was no way to determine whether the vote was "credible, independent, free, fair and inclusive." Uruguay and Colombia were among other Latin American states to not recognize the outcome.

Former guerrilla hero Ortega launched a new attack on his opponents Sunday, saying: "This day we are standing up to those who promote terrorism, finance war, to those who sow terror, death." He was referring to Nicaraguans who took part in massive protests against his government in 2018, which were met with a violent crackdown that claimed more than 300 lives in Central America's poorest country. Some 150 people have been jailed since then, including 39 opposition figures rounded up since June. — AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2021

Boursa Kuwait co-hosts the Network Forum's Middle East Meeting 2021

Meeting held in collaboration with Kuwait Clearing Company

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait hosted The Network Forum's (TNF) Middle East Meeting, which was held from 8-9 November 2021, along with Kuwait Clearing Company (KCC), to highlight the latest capital market developments in the region.

The Network Forum is a curated global community for the custody, settlement, and post-trade industry, aiming to provide a structured networking environment, in which key issues are discussed, developments are communicated, and best practices shared. The TNF's Middle East Meeting gave experts from across the region the chance to discuss the latest projects and products, the sub-custody landscape and its recent developments, as well as central securities depository initiatives and structure. Also discussed were the latest standards and practices in Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) reporting, how technology is shaping our future as well as regulations and reforms.

Commenting on the initiative, Boursa Kuwait Chief Executive Officer Mohammad Saud Al-Osaimi, said, "Boursa Kuwait's hosting of the Network Forum's Middle East Meeting comes as part of our commitment to raising awareness of the larger investment community to the latest developments in Kuwait and the Middle East, which is fast becoming an important investment destination for investors worldwide."

Al-Osaimi added, "Throughout the pandemic, stock markets were still able to attract local and

international investors, launch an assortment of products and services, and see many companies list, accomplishments that I am sure we are all proud of. I would like to thank the Network Forum and our co-hosts, Kuwait Clearing Company, for their efforts in making this event a successful one."

Speaking on behalf of the Network Forum, Managing Director Andrew Barman said, "The Network Forum is delighted that the Middle East Meeting was a resounding achievement. I would like to thank Boursa Kuwait and Kuwait Clearing Company for co-hosting this event and contributing to its success, and look forward to further collaborations in the future."

Boursa Kuwait's sponsorship and hosting of the event came as part of the exchange's commitment to promote knowledge, awareness and transparency through the sustained approach to education with respect to all key stakeholders. The company has continued to fund and support a range of high-impact, education-focused initiatives as well as enhanced collaboration with local, regional and



Mohammad Saud Al-Osaimi



Andrew Barman

international strategic partners as part of the "Education" pillar of its Corporate Sustainability strategy, which is in line with Goal 4 - Quality Education - and Goal 17 - Partnership for the Goals of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the National Development Plan for the State of Kuwait.

The company's Corporate Sustainability strategy stipulates ensuring initiatives apply and fall in line with the company's corporate social responsibility (CSR), industry best practice standards and investor expectations, creating strong and sustainable partnerships that ultimately achieve success and allow Boursa Kuwait to leverage the capabilities and strengths of other companies or organizations that have experience in different fields, and integrating sustainability efforts with the company

culture, in order to achieve longevity and an ongoing impact that is carried on and instilled in the day-to-day operations of the stock exchange.

As part of the strategy, Boursa Kuwait has launched many initiatives in partnership with local and international organizations, focusing on support for nongovernmental organizations and charity programs, financial literacy and capital market awareness, the empowerment of women, environmental protection as well as safety and preventive measures against COVID-19.

Since it was established by the Capital Markets Authority to take over the responsibilities of the Kuwait Stock Exchange in 2014, Boursa Kuwait has worked diligently to build a progressive exchange platform based on efficiency and transparency, with a view to creating long-term value for the company's stakeholders in the economic, social and environmental dimensions.

Guided by a mission-driven strategy that focuses on developing the market in line with international standards, Boursa Kuwait has successfully introduced innovative investment tools, reinforced transparency, and restructured the market to increase its competitiveness and liquidity. The company's market developments and enhancements have contributed to the reclassification of the Kuwaiti capital market to "Emerging Market" status in the world's top three indices, strengthening Kuwait's position as a leading financial center in the region.

Evergrande raises \$144m before payment deadline

BEIJING: Crisis-hit property developer Evergrande has managed to raise around \$144 million by slashing its stake in an internet company, days before a looming debt interest payment deadline. Evergrande sold a 5.7 percent stake totaling HK\$1.12 billion (\$144m) in HengTen Networks Group in three separate transactions from last Thursday, Hong Kong stock exchange filings showed.

The indebted property developer faces a Wednesday deadline for an overdue \$148 million offshore bond coupon payment it initially missed last month. The crisis at one of China's biggest property developers has hammered investor sentiment, rattled the key real estate market and fuelled fears of a spillover into the wider economy. Battered down in a sea of debt worth more than \$300 billion, Evergrande has been trying to dispose of its assets to raise cash.

But some offshore bond holders said they had not received payments of over \$80 million that were due Saturday, Bloomberg reported. The HengTen sale reduced Evergrande's stake in the internet services firm from 26.55 percent to 20.82 percent, according to the filings.

That leaves Tencent as the biggest remaining shareholder, with an almost 24 percent stake.

Evergrande was plunged into crisis after Beijing began clamping down on the country's colossal property sector last year, a move that has prompted rare public anger and protests from anxious homebuyers, suppliers and investors. In October, Evergrande managed to avert default twice after making overdue interest payments to offshore bond holders.

In a bid to shore up investor confidence, it recently announced that it delivered over 57,000 properties to buyers between July and October. But a planned deal to sell a \$2.6 billion stake in its property arm to a Hong Kong developer fell through last month, sending shares tumbling as it resumed trading on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange after a 17-day suspension. Stresses in China's real estate sector including from heavily-indebted Evergrande have the potential to impact the United States if they spread first to the Chinese financial system, the Federal Reserve said.

Noting the concerns about high debt levels and inflated real estate values causing regulators in Beijing to take action, the central bank's latest Financial Stability Report said the stresses could cause "a sudden correction of real estate prices" and impact the China's financial system.

As one of China's biggest property developers, fears around Evergrande's debt mountain have battered investor sentiment and shaken the country's mammoth real estate market, but the firm recently met an interest payment it was expected to miss. "Given the size of China's economy and financial system as well as its extensive trade linkages with the rest of the world, financial stresses in China could strain global financial markets through a deterioration of risk sentiment, pose risks to global economic growth, and affect the United States," the report said. —AFP

Philippine economic growth beats forecasts in Q3

MANILA: The Philippine economy grew more than expected in the third quarter, the government said yesterday, as a rebound in consumer spending overcame pandemic lockdowns and other restrictions to rein in the fast-spreading COVID delta variant. Gross domestic product expanded 7.1 percent, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority, better than the 4.9 percent predicted in a Bloomberg survey and following a blockbuster 12 percent rate in the previous three months.

The second-quarter reading was the best performance in more than three decades and came as the country emerged from a deep recession that saw five quarters of contraction caused by the virus.

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Karl Chua said the third quarter growth validated the government's approach to fighting COVID with strict containment measures.

"Our strategy was correct. The results are clear," Chua said in a virtual briefing. "This careful balancing between Covid-19 and non COVID-19 needs led to the continued expansion of most sectors."

Palestinian economy recovering at slow pace: World Bank

GAZA CITY: The Palestinian Territories' economy is showing "signs of recovery" but still faces serious challenges including "very high unemployment and deteriorating social conditions" in Gaza, the World Bank said yesterday. In the first half of 2021, growth reached 5.4 percent, and is expected to reach 6 percent this year, the World Bank said in a report. However, growth in 2022 is predicted to slow to around 3 percent, it added.

"The way ahead is still uncertain," said Kanthan Shankar, World Bank Country Director for the West Bank and Gaza, adding that progress "depends on coordinated actions by all parties in revitalizing the economy and providing job opportunities for the young population."

The Gaza Strip was hit hard during 11-days of



GAZA STRIP: In the first half of 2021, growth in the Palestinian Territories reached 5.4 percent, and is expected to reach 6 percent this year, the World Bank said in a report.



MANILA, Philippines: This file photo taken on August 6, 2021 shows policemen checking documents of motorists at a border check point in Marikina City, suburban Manila, after authorities imposed another lockdown to slow the spread of the coronavirus. — AFP

With GDP growth reaching 4.9 percent in the first nine months, Chua said the Philippines is likely to attain the higher end of the government's 4-5 percent target this year. "The recovery is accelerating and it is very likely that we will hit or even exceed the high end of our growth target for 2021," he added.

Chua has previously said it will take the Philippines more than a decade to return to its

devastating conflict with Zionist forces in May, while the economy was also impacted by restrictions imposed to stem the spread of coronavirus. In Gaza, a Palestinian enclave of two million people controlled by the Hamas, unemployment stands at 45 percent, while the poverty rate has risen to 59 percent from 43 percent five years ago.

"The dire living conditions and the high dependency on social assistance of the people of Gaza is of particular concern," Shankar said. In the occupied West Bank, the unemployment rate is around 17 percent, the World Bank calculates, saying the "Palestinian Authority's fiscal situation remains very challenging" and warning it was "no longer able to borrow from domestic banks". The PA's deficit is expected to reach \$1.36 billion in 2021, it added.

The World Bank called on donors "to help reduce the budget deficit", and for the "systematic transfer" of revenues by Zionist regime raises from businesses operating in the so-called Area C of the West Bank, where Zionist regime holds full control under the 1995 Oslo Accords. "Releasing some of these funds would provide much needed quick financing in these difficult times," it added. — AFP

pre-pandemic growth path. He said the "long-run total cost of COVID and quarantine" will reach 41 trillion pesos (\$810 billion), which would be felt over the next 10 to 40 years. More than 2.8 million people have been infected in the Philippines, with more than 44,000 deaths. But cases have fallen sharply in recent weeks-to levels last seen in February-allowing the government to reopen parts of the economy. —AFP

US wholesale prices may be accelerating

WASHINGTON: US wholesale prices remained high in October and showed signs of accelerating again, the government reported yesterday, as the world's largest economy battles a wave of inflation.

The producer price index (PPI) rose 0.6 percent, seasonally adjusted, in October, according to the Labor Department, which was in line with analyst expectations and slightly higher than September's increase. Compared to the same month in 2020, PPI increased 8.6 percent, the same rate as the prior month, the report said. The United States has seen prices increase throughout this year as business normalized with the help of widespread COVID-19 vaccines.

But rising inflation has been fueled by shortages of workers and components, amid a global snarl in supply chains. Goods made up the majority of the wholesale price increases, particularly energy, which rose 4.8 percent last month. Among services, transportation and warehousing prices increased 1.7 percent. "With supply dynamics showing few signs of abating before year end, we look for PPI inflation to peak later in (the fourth quarter) before price pressures gradually moderate across 2022," Mahir Rasheed of Oxford Economics said.

The PPI data signaled building price pressures in the pipeline that could spill over to consumers. With volatile food, energy and trade costs excluded, PPI rose 0.4 percent last month, faster than the 0.1 percent increase in September, and it was up 6.2 percent year-over-year in October after a 5.9 percent gain the month prior. The Labor Department will release consumer price data today, which economists also expect to accelerate. —AFP

Business

Burgan Bank announces rights issue of up to 375m shares at 190 fils per share

Planned capital increase of up to KD 71.25m to strengthen capital base

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced its to start the subscription process to increase its capital by offering 375 million shares, at a value of KD 71.25 million, in line with its strategy to achieve further development and growth. The bank will use this capital increase to enhance its growth strategy in its core market, Kuwait, as well as to strengthen its financial base to improve its competitiveness by supporting its operational capabilities, enhancing its services and reinforcing its capital base.

The rights issue period will open on November 14th, and will last 15 days, with a share price set at 190 fils, a nominal value of 100 fils and an issuance premium of 90 fils. Upon the completion of the initial rights issue subscription period, any unsubscribed shares will be offered to the public in an 8-day public offering period,

which would start on December 5th. Kamco Investment Company K.S.C.P. (Kamco Invest) will serve as the Lead Manager and Subscription Agent, while Kuwait Financial Centre K.P.S.C. (Markaz) will act as the Joint Lead Manager and Underwriter.

In its statement about the offering, Burgan Bank highlighted that the capital increase will enable the Bank to achieve its growth plans and improving both the financial and operational performance, enabling Burgan to deliver growth in shareholder earnings.

Burgan Bank is pursuing a long-term transformation journey to develop and restructure its operational model and invest further in its technological infrastructure and digital transformation to maintain its competitive edge and grow its market share. The planned capital

increase will also enable the Bank to provide increased credit facilities to SMEs and corporate customers, which would support the country's economic growth.

The Bank's most recent financial results showcased a solid financial performance, with a reported net income attributable to shareholders of the Bank of KD 40.3 million for the first nine months of 2021, and a steady growth rate of 23.6 percent comparable to the same period of the previous period. The financial results also underscored solid operating revenue amounting to KD 166.6 million, which were supported by the high non-interest income of KD 73.3 million (up 29.5 percent year-on-year), and the lower loan loss provision levels that improved by 11.5 percent compared to the same period in 2020.

Established in 1977, Burgan Bank is currently the third largest bank by assets in Kuwait. From its earliest days, the Bank has significantly focused on the corporate and financial institution sectors, in addition to diversifying its offering to cater to its growing retail and private banking customer base. Burgan Bank has majority-owned subsidiaries, collectively known as the "Burgan Bank Group", in the MENAT region. This Group is supported by one of the largest branch networks across the region and includes: Gulf Bank Algeria - AGB (Algeria), Bank of Baghdad - BOB (Iraq & Lebanon), Tunis International Bank - TIB (Tunisia), and the fully owned Burgan Bank Turkey. Furthermore, Burgan Bank has a presence in the UAE through its corporate office, Burgan Financial Services Limited.



The winner Mohammad Abdulsamad Waheedi with Johair Marafi, Zainah Al-Falah and Khadeeja Al-Temeemi from ABK.

Mohammad Waheedi lucky winner of Alfouz draw prize of KD 10,000

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced Mohammad Abdulsamad Waheedi as the winner of KD10,000 in the very first Alfouz weekly draw. The draw was held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and announced live on Q8 Pulse Station FM88.8 on 8th November, 2021.

Loai Muqames, CEO of ABK - Kuwait said, "On behalf of ABK, I would like to extend our congratulations to Mohammad Abdulsamad Waheedi on being the very first winner of our Alfouz draw. Alfouz was launched as part of our commitment to helping customers achieve their financial goals, while simultaneously offering enriching rewards and incentives. We are happy to be able to make a difference through

encouraging our clients to save, while at the same time giving them a chance to win with Alfouz."

To start the Alfouz savings journey, existing ABK customers can open an Alfouz Draw Account online, and new customers can open their accounts by visiting any ABK branch. Every KD 100 saved is equivalent to one entry into the draw. Therefore the more customers save the bigger their chances of winning the weekly prize of KD 10,000 or the ultimate grand prize of a 10-year salary of KD5,000 per month paid by ABK. Both new and existing ABK customers can benefit from this opportunity with a small minimum account balance of KD 100 needed to enter the draw. The next draw date will be on Sunday, 14th November, 2021.

Fahed Abushaar recognized as one of POWER 100 GMs in Mideast

KUWAIT: Hotelier Middle East Magazine, recently announced in its November issue the list of the POWER 100 General Managers in the Middle East region. Fahed Abushaar, Complex General Manager of Sheraton Kuwait Hotels and former Area Director of the Middle East was featured on the list, along with other pioneers in this sector within the region.



Fahed Abushaar

With more than 40 years of experience, Fahed Abushaar shaped the hospitality industry in Kuwait. With an unwavering passion, he played a significant role in leading the market with unmatched luxury hospitality in the country. Despite tremendous difficulties, he led with great empathy and exceptional leadership together with the support of the owners of Sheraton Kuwait Hotels to alleviate the burden and consequences of the harsh conditions that afflicted the world in general and especially the hotel industry.

Amidst the soaring pandemic and the challenges in the market, he managed to move forward with the renovation plans and strengthen his commitment to introduce one of the most prestigious luxury brands to Kuwait - the St Regis Kuwait City.

Abushaar congratulated all the general managers included in the list and thanked the selection committee of Hotelier Middle East Magazine. He also extended his gratitude towards the associates for their unwavering support to remain steadfast in the mission to serve our guests with the highest standards of unparalleled service.

German exports fall for second straight month

FRANKFURT: German exports fell for the second month in a row in September as Europe's top economy grapples with global supply shortages, official data showed yesterday. Germany exported 112.3 billion euros (\$130.2 billion) worth of goods in September, adjusted for the season-a 0.7 percent drop from the

previous month, according to federal statistics agency Destatis. Imports rose by 0.1 percent to 99.2 billion euros. The August drop in exports was the first since April 2020, when the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic stifled the global economy.

The upheaval caused by COVID-19 has given rise to global shortages in components, such as semiconductors, timber and plastics, limiting production in key sectors for the German economy such as the car industry. A business survey found that shortages of materials eased in October, though companies still expect the situation to remain difficult for months to come. The German government has downgraded its forecast for economic growth this year from 3.5 percent to 2.6 percent. —AFP

New gold rush fuels Amazon destruction

SAO FELIX DO XINGU, Brazil: Standing over the gaping pit in the middle of his small farm, Brazilian wildcat miner Antonio Silva struggles to explain why he joined the new gold rush sweeping the Amazon. The 61-year-old grandfather of six had planned to retire from illegal mining, and the environmental destruction that comes along with it.

He bought this farm in rural Sao Felix do Xingu, in the southeastern Amazon, and was starting a cattle ranch on a long-deforested patch of jungle where he would not have to cut down more trees.

But then the pandemic hit, gold prices soared, and Silva—a pseudonym, as the man is involved in illicit activity—couldn't resist the temptation of easy money. He put his retirement plans on hold and spent 50,000 reais (\$9,000) of his meager savings to rent an excavator, hire four workers, and dig a hole the size of a large house that now dominates his emerald pastures.

Filled with murky gray-green water, the hole is outfitted with a pump sitting on a ramshackle raft that delivers muddy sediment to a sluice to be panned for gold. To his chagrin, he has found only trace amounts so far. "I know it's wrong, I know the problems mining causes. But I don't have anything else," says Silva, who got his start mining in the gold rush of the 1970s and 80s at the infamous Serra Pelada mine, known for images of tens of thousands of mud-soaked men swarming its cavernous sides like ants, hauling sacks of dirt from its bowels.

Now, illegal mining is surging again in the mineral-rich Amazon basin, fueled by poverty, greed, impunity and record gold prices. As investors have sought a haven from pandemic-induced economic chaos in gold, illegal miners have responded by hacking giant rust-colored scars into the lush green of the world's biggest rainforest.

Mining has already destroyed a record 114 square kilometers (44 square miles) of the Brazilian Amazon this year—more than 10,000 football pitches. Silva's operation is relatively tiny, and the land he's damaging is his own. But much of the destruction is on protected indigenous reservations.

There, gangs with heavy equipment and brutal tactics are installing huge mines, attacking villages, spreading disease, poisoning the water—and devastating the very communities experts say are key to saving the Amazon.

'You'll have to kill me'

The Brazilian Amazon has 1.2 million square kilometers (450,000 square miles) of indigenous reservations. Most of it is pristine forest, thanks to native traditions of living in harmony with nature. Mineral-rich and remote, many reservations are also easy prey for illegal mining gangs. Their camps often are a breeding ground for other crimes, prosecutors say, including the drugs trade, sex trafficking and slave labor.

The government estimates there are 4,000 illegal miners operating on indigenous territory in the Amazon, though activists say the figure is much higher. Recent studies found they used 100 tons of mercury in 2019-2020 to separate gold dust from soil—and that up to 80 percent of children in nearby villages show signs of neurological damage from exposure to it.

Mercury also poisons the fish that many indige-

nous communities rely on for food. Native peoples facing this nightmare have begun organizing anti-mining patrols and protests—sometimes paying a heavy price.

Maria Leusa Munduruku is a leader of the Munduruku people, whose territory has been among the hardest hit. When illegal miners started buying off community members with cash, alcohol and drugs in a bid to move in on tribal land, Munduruku, 34, organized local women to resist.

Soon, she was getting death threats, she says. On May 26, armed men swarmed her home. "They poured gasoline on my house, then set it on fire," she says, red flowers crowning her black hair, her baby nursing at her breast.

"I said I wasn't leaving, that they would have to kill me. Somehow, my house survived. God only knows why it didn't catch fire. They burned everything inside it," Munduruku, who has five children and a grandson, did not back down. In September, she traveled to Brasilia, some 2,500 kilometers (1,550 miles) from her village, to help lead a protest of indigenous women demanding the government protect their land.

That rally came in the wake of another major indigenous demonstration in the capital a month earlier, also over land rights issues. "We have to make sure our children have a river to fish in, land to live on," she says. "That's why I keep fighting."

Backed by Bolsonaro

Brazil mined 107 tons of gold last year, making it the world's seventh-biggest producer. Illegal mines have exploded under far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, who has pushed to open indigenous reservations to mining since taking office in 2019. A recent study found just one-third of Brazil's gold production is certified as legally mined.

Current regulations allow sellers to vouch for the origin of their gold by simply signing a paper.

The Amazon region is notoriously hard to police. "We realized using only on-the-ground police operations was an exercise in futility," says Helena Palmquist, spokeswoman for the federal prosecutors' office in the northern state of Para.

Miners would flee into the jungle when police arrived, she says. Authorities burned the machinery left behind. But in a sign of how well-financed the gangs are, they easily replaced the excavators, which cost 600,000 reais apiece. So prosecutors got creative, going after the powerful financiers trafficking illegal gold. In August, they moved to suspend the operations of three major gold dealerships, asking a court to fine them 10.6 billion reais. The ruling is pending.

But there are powerful interests in play. "Gold-sector lobbyists regularly meet with the environment minister, with top administration officials. They have direct access to the government," Palmquist says.

"And there's a very deep-rooted idea here in Brazil that the Amazon is a good that exists to be exploited." That may be changing.

In downtown Sao Felix, Dantas Ferreira is fishing at dusk on the Xingu River, a bright blue Amazon tributary, just upstream from where another river, the Fresco, dumps its turbid, brown-stained waters into the Xingu's crystalline ones.

Authorities say the Fresco is badly polluted with illegal mining waste. Like most people in Sao Felix, Ferreira, a 53-year-old cattle rancher, is a proud Bolsonaro supporter.

But he says the environmental destruction in the region has gone too far.

The president "needs to stop this," he says. "If they don't crack down on illegal mining, our water is never going to be normal again." — AFP



SAO FELIX DO XINGU, Brazil: Illegal gold miners rest on a broken machinery at an illegal gold mine in Sao Felix do Xingu, Para state, Brazil. — AFP

Consumption driving Kuwait's economic rebound; population declines to 4.63m

Higher oil prices ease public finance and liquidity pressures

KUWAIT: Kuwait's post-pandemic recovery is proceeding apace, facilitated by a relatively high vaccination rate that has helped push daily new coronavirus cases down to the low double digits. Keen for the economy to return to a pre-pandemic normal as quickly as possible, the government moved in recent weeks to lift all mobility restrictions for vaccinated people and permitted the airport to open to full capacity. The list of countries eligible for commercial and tourist visit visas was also widened.

Consumer activity has driven the non-oil economic recovery, accelerating to record highs on pent-up demand and support from the government's loan repayment holiday for nationals. Real estate activity has also rebounded, with residential property sales seeing good growth partly as investor preferences shift towards that sector. Household credit growth also remained in double digits in the third quarter, while the local equity market built on momentum from the second quarter to notch up further gains and put in one of the best performances among emerging markets so far this year.

Of course, the annual growth rebound across various metrics appears more impressive given the low base of a very weak 2020, and weak spots do remain, notably in the business sector, which has been hamstrung by pandemic-linked job losses and weak projects activity, and reflected in lackluster corporate credit.

Moreover, public finances remain under pressure, even if liquidity has improved with the increase in oil prices. There is little to suggest that recent spikes in energy and commodity prices more generally are due to structural rather than cyclical factors, so the imperative for fiscal consolidation and reform remains.

But the prospects for an improvement in the country's political economy look markedly better now than they did even three months ago following a relatively successful National Dialogue. Discussions appear to have been conducted and resolved in a spirit of executive-legislative compromise.

Oil prices surge

Oil prices have spiked to levels not seen since 2014, driven by robust post-pandemic oil demand and lagging oil supply, which have combined to leave the market increasingly tight. International benchmark Brent crude topped \$86/bbl in late October, closing the month at \$84.4/bbl having ended the third quarter up 4.5 percent q/q at \$78.5/bbl.

While global oil demand surged in 3Q21 (+2.6 mb/d q/q to 97.8 mb/d), global oil supply did not keep pace (+2.1 mb/d q/q to 96.3 mb/d), leading to a market deficit and stock drawdown of almost 1.5 mb/d. OPEC+ production was constrained both by supply outages in some members and its cautious overall view that market uncertainty remains high and oil demand fickle. The Saudis especially did not want to bring more crude to the market only to have to cut back should demand turn out weaker than expected. The US, India and Japan have, nevertheless, kept up the pressure on OPEC+ to increase supply by more than the 400 kb/d per month the group committed to.

Kuwait's crude production averaged 2.47 mb/d in September, according to official sources. As per the OPEC+ schedule, Kuwait's output is projected to increase by 27 kb/d every month to May 2022, after which the country's reference baseline will increase by 150 kb/d to 2.96 mb/d.

Meanwhile, production capacity declines are becoming an increasing challenge in some of Kuwait's key oil fields, including the workhorse Burgan field. According to Kuwait Oil Company's (KOC) latest annual report, its production capacity fell to a 12-year low of 2.63 mb/d at the end of FY20/21. Kuwait's total production capacity (including the Neutral Zone) is not expected to top 3.0 mb/d until 2023 on current plans. Kuwait Petroleum Corporation is targeting 3.5 mb/d by 2025, of which 3.2 mb/d will originate from KOC and the remainder from the shared Neutral Zone.

The (much delayed) release of consumer price index figures for May figures show that inflation ticked up to 3.2 percent y/y (+0.3 percent m/m) from 3.1 percent in April, driven by a combination of pent-up demand and supply chain constraints. While increases were recorded in many of the index sub-components, they were most acute in the food (+11.3 percent y/y), recreation (+7.8 percent) and clothing (+5.9 percent) categories. Indeed, the double-digit price increase in the food and beverages category was the highest in the available data record (the prices of fruits and meat were up more than 20 percent y/y), and a reflection of markedly higher international food prices. On the other hand, housing services inflation was steady (+0.1 percent y/y). Core inflation, which excludes both food and housing, held at 2.7 percent y/y.

Consumer activity has been buoyant ever since the public emerged from lockdown in June 2021, driving the broader economic recovery with double-digit gains. It has also been supported by the six-month loan repayment holiday for Kuwaitis, which ends this quarter. Total (Knet) consumer spending growth accelerated again in September, to 23 percent y/y (+21 percent y/y in 3Q21) to another record monthly high, of KD 2.54 billion. The uptick in activity in 3Q21 came even while more spending will have been diverted abroad, following the loosening of travel restrictions in the summer.

In terms of payment channels, the trend of con-



KUWAIT: Kuwait's population fell by a further 0.9 percent to 4.63 million in the first 6 months of 2021. This followed a decline of 2.2 percent in 2020—the largest in almost 30 years—due to the departure of some 134,000 expatriates amid the pandemic. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

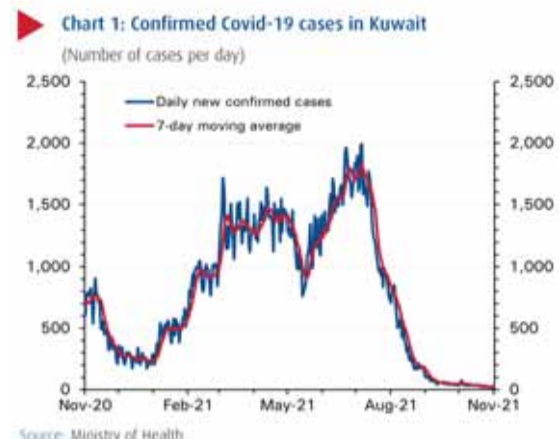
- Economic growth is gaining momentum, supported by private consumption and oil sector gains amid higher oil prices.
- Parliament has reconvened and economic reform prospects appear more positive after the National Dialogue.
- Consumer, real estate and stock market activity have all been buoyant, as daily COVID-19 cases fall to March-2020 levels.
- Higher oil prices have helped ease some of the pressure on the public finances, but the imperative of reform remains strong.
- The population fell 0.9% to 4.63mn in the first half of 2021, with expatriate numbers continuing to decline.

sumers preferring to pay online and through point-of-sale facilities rather than via cash continued. Online and POS spending grew by 48 percent y/y and 16.2 percent y/y, respectively, in 3Q21, while ATM withdrawals fell by 4.7 percent y/y over the same period.

Real estate sales strong

Real estate activity has been robust in recent months. Sales in 3Q21 totaled KD 1.1 billion (+16 percent q/q; +63 percent y/y), driven in large part by strong activity in the residential sector and a general increase in home and land prices. Commercial and investment (i.e. apartment) sector sales also improved, but remain below pre-pandemic levels. The investment sector continues to suffer from low demand and substantial vacancies.

Part of the reason for the divergence in performance between the residential and investment sector is a shift in purchasers' preference towards residential properties, which gained further momentum in 2017 after utilities tariffs on investment properties were raised. The coronavirus pandemic was also a factor, pressuring the incomes and employment of expatriates, who are major drivers of the apartment rental market. Looking ahead, residential activity should benefit from healthy demand and a still-limited supply of new units. Economic growth is returning and business activity is gradually recovering, which should be positive for both the commercial and investment sectors. But barring



a sudden increase in the preference of Kuwaitis for apartment rentals, the investment sector would probably still need to be supported by expatriate demand.

Project awards ease in 3Q21

Major project activity slowed in 3Q21, with the value of awarded contracts dropping markedly to KD 152 million from KD 482 million in Q2, and -57 percent y/y, according to MEED Projects. By the end of the third quarter, awards had totaled KD 916 million year-to-date. While this is an improvement on the pandemic-affected final three quarters of 2020, it is still soft from an historical perspective. MEED Projects had estimated total awards of KD 2.4 billion this year, with KD 1.5 billion scheduled for 4Q21 (including KOC's JPF 4 & 5 Production Facilities and the MPW's Northern Regional Road projects, worth KD 294 million and KD 189 million, respectively). However, this seems unlikely.

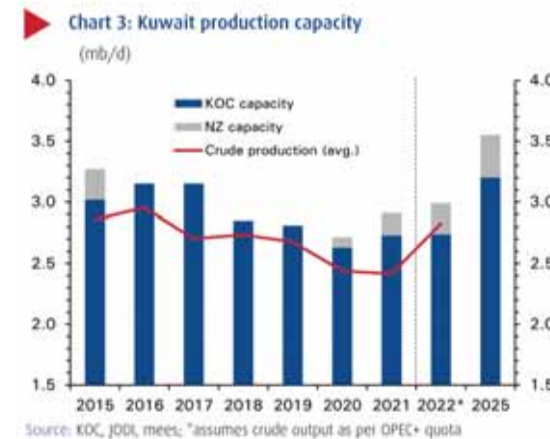
While recent softness decline is largely a reflec-

tion of delays in government tendering and approvals as the government takes closer control of its capital expenditures amid tighter liquidity, a post-pandemic shortage of labor and materials is also playing a part. Among the contracts awarded in 3Q21, the largest was on the South Kuwait Excavation Transportation & Remediation Project: Zone 3 for KD 75 million.

Population declines

Data from the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) show that Kuwait's population fell by a further 0.9 percent to 4.63 million in the first 6 months of 2021. This followed a decline of 2.2 percent in 2020—the largest in almost 30 years—due to the departure of some 134,000 resident expatriates amid the pandemic. Another 56,330 expatriates left the country in 1H21 (-1.8 percent), bringing the expatriate population down to a 2017 level of 3.15 million. The Kuwaiti population, on the other hand, grew by 0.9 percent to 1.47 million in the first 6 months of the year. In terms of the demographic balance, the share of Kuwaitis in the population, at 31.8 percent, is at its highest since 2011.

Employment looks on course for a second consecutive year of declines, with the mid-year figure of 2.76 million a reduction of 1.7 percent from the end-2020 level. This is exclusively due to a decline in expatriate employment (-2.2 percent to 2.34 million) in the first half of the year amid pandemic-linked job shedding and ongoing Kuwaitisation policies, especially in the public sector. Here, expatriate numbers have dropped by



more than 20 percent since end-2016.

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti employment growth was up 1.3 percent in the first six months of the year to 422,891. Employment gains were public sector-driven (+1.8 percent), with the number of Kuwaitis working in the private sector declining 1.5 percent to 62,296. As a result, the share of all employed Kuwaitis working in the private sector declined to a multi-year low of 14.7 percent - a trend that should be reversed if the government is to address the long-term challenge of trimming its rising wage bill.

Fiscal reforms

The government announced in 3Q21 its intention to institute spending cuts of 10 percent across all the ministries in the current fiscal year. This would bring budgeted spending down to KD 20.7 billion and, if coupled to higher-than-anticipated oil revenues thanks to the surge in oil prices, could result in the fiscal deficit falling significantly from 33 percent of GDP to around 5

percent of GDP.

According to just-published public finance figures by the Ministry of Finance (MOF) covering the first four months of the current fiscal year (April-July), the overall improvement in the public finances was quite marked: the cumulative fiscal deficit narrowed to KD 49.9 million by end-July on revenues of KD 5.16 billion and expenditures of KD 5.21 billion. A greater than 100 percent increase in oil revenues compared to the same period last year was a major factor, as was a significant reduction in capital spending, to a mere KD 127 million. It should be noted that these figures are preliminary and spending, especially on infrastructure projects, will undoubtedly increase further into the fiscal year. It does look increasingly likely, though, that the fiscal deficit could come in substantially below the previous forecast of around 10.5 percent of GDP, especially if oil prices stay at current levels.

Fiscal reforms could also be on the agenda following the conclusion of the Amiri-sponsored National Dialogue and the commencement of the second session of the sixteenth legislative term. It was reported that a whole raft of economic reforms will be submitted by the cabinet for parliamentary approval. The delayed debt law and other proposals such as implementing the VAT, repricing of government services, sanctioning withdrawals from the Future Generations Fund and establishing economic zones are expected to be voted on.

External surplus in 1Q21 falls

The external current account surplus narrowed in the first quarter of 2021 to KD 1.6 billion (estimated 15.7 percent of GDP) from KD 3.7 billion (43 percent of GDP) in 4Q20. This decline was largely due to a sizeable reduction in investment income (-62 percent q/q to KD 1.8 billion) that offset increases in the trade balance resulting from higher oil exports. On the other hand, net outflows from the capital and financial account declined on lower portfolio investment outflows. Central bank reserve assets fell by KD 1.2 billion to KD 13.4 billion at the end of 1Q21 (41 percent of GDP), which is sufficient to cover almost 13 months of goods & services imports.

Domestic credit growth accelerated to a year-high of 3.8 percent y/y in August, driven by robust gains in household borrowing. This has been at multi-year highs of more than 11.0 percent y/y in recent months, and supported in large part by the six-month deferral of loan repayments for Kuwaiti borrowers. The repayment holiday will expire in October, after which household credit growth is expected to soften.

Robust consumer borrowing has helped offset some of the weakness in business lending, which continues to be muted, with growth of only 0.3 percent y/y in August. Lending to the trade (-12.6 percent) and construction (-8.2 percent) sectors has been in negative territory. This is most likely due to a combination of weak project activity amid government capex cutbacks and ongoing pandemic-linked uncertainty. In contrast, lending to the oil & gas and industrial sectors, 13.8 percent and 8.9 percent, respectively, has been accelerating. Looking ahead, business credit growth may be supported by the further normalization of economic activities (given the pick-up in vaccination rates and the easing of pandemic-related restrictions), although we note that historically, business credit expansion in the second half of the year is usually softer than in the first half.

In August, resident deposits were down on the corresponding month last year for a fifth consecutive month (-2.4 percent y/y), as 2020's pandemic-linked higher savings rate-helped by the loan repayment holiday-made way for an increased spending rate this year. Private-sector deposits, which account for almost 84 percent of total bank deposits, were down by 2.3 percent y/y in August, while government deposits declined by 2.6 percent amid tighter liquidity. While deposit growth has slowed, the increasing share of current and savings deposits in relation to the more expensive time deposits is a positive trend as far as banks are concerned. With the final quarter of the year underway, deposit growth should benefit from the increase in oil prices.

Equities remain bullish

Local equities continued to trend upwards in 3Q21, with the Kuwait All-Share Index building on the previous quarter's gains to settle 7.5 percent q/q higher at 6,864 by end-3Q21. The index extended those gains in October, closing at 7,108 (+3.5 percent m/m) by the end of the month. The index is also among the top performing emerging market indices in 2021, with a year-to-date gain of 26 percent (as of 22 October).

Premier market equities have been the driving force (+8.1 percent q/q), especially consumer and financial services stocks. Market capitalization reached a near 12-year high of over KD 40 billion and turnover averaged KD 50 million/day in October. Sentiment has been markedly more bullish amid elevated oil prices and sharply lower coronavirus cases. The market outlook is supported by the progress made in vaccinating the public, the surge in oil prices, strong consumer activity and, over the last few weeks especially, the generally upbeat mood that has permeated executive-legislative relations following a relatively positive National Dialogue. However, a fall back in oil prices and negative global sentiment caused by the likely start of Fed policy tightening are downside risks.



KAICO wins two coveted Peugeot awards from Stellantis MENA

‘Teamwork, constant drive for excellence brought the achievement to KAICO’

KUWAIT: Kuwait Automotive Imports Company has received two impressive Peugeot awards from Stellantis MENA (3rd largest global automotive group under which Peugeot brand operates) during the Peugeot Regional Dealer Conference for their outstanding achievements and excellent teamwork in the Aftersales Department:

1. Best Customer Retention
2. Best Service Operation Standards Implementation

Through this award program, Peugeot confirms that the distributor activities are aligned with their goal of “Motion & Emotion” ways better service. KAICO General Manager Ashish Tandon along with Peugeot Business Manager, Stefan Craita and

Peugeot Kuwait management team have been congratulated by the Regional Managing Director, Rakesh Nair, for this spectacular achievement, proving once more that Peugeot has a trusted, reliable partner in the State of Kuwait at KAICO.

“Teamwork and a constant drive for excellence of each team member brought the significant achievement to KAICO. Such accomplishment is a solid base to build on future success, a great motivation in such unique times and tough market challenges in 2021 to work even stronger together to keep delivering excellence in customer service,” commented Ashish Tandon.

During the course of two days of the Regional

Sales, Marketing & Aftersales Conference, KAICO has been presented with the brand’s ambition, plans and future model line-up, aimed at providing an even more enhanced mobility solution to its customers through an outstanding brand onboarding, aftersales services and overall ownership experience.

Stefan Craita added: “KAICO is always focused on delivering incomparable customer service, handling employees and customers like family, constantly working together to ensure all customer expectations are met and exceeded. These achievements are an opportunity to build on previous years of accomplishments by providing exceptional service to our



customers and improving our Peugeot operations through current network of showrooms and aftersales service centers.”



Meshal Al-Mutairi



Talal Al-Arbeed

KFH launches ‘With Your Card, the Journey Begins’ campaign with unique prizes

KUWAIT: In a distinguished and unique ceremony held at KFH auto showroom in presence of the executive management and a large group of partners and concerned people, KFH had launched the campaign “With Your Card the Journey Begins”, which is developed exclusively for the KFH Mastercard cardholders, in cooperation with Mastercard, Kuwait Airways Corporation - Oasis club and Ali Al-Ghanem & Sons Co as part of KFH’s efforts to offer customer’s with unique benefits and enhance their banking experience.

In his speech during the campaign launch ceremony, KFH Group Acting DGM - Credit and Charge Card Products, Talal Al-Arbeed said: “As accustomed by our customers, our campaigns are unique, distinct, add value to customers experience and present valuable prizes to a large number of winners”. He emphasized that the prizes of the “With Your Card the Journey Begins” campaign comprise of Oasis club travel miles and luxurious Land Rover cars (Defender).

Al-Arbeed added that the campaign will give 204 winners the opportunity to win by using KFH Mastercard credit and prepaid cards. He mentioned that transactions that qualify the customer to enter the draw will include all purchase transactions using KFH Mastercard credit and prepaid cards locally and globally where every KD 1 local purchase transaction shall give the customer one chance to enter the draw while every KD 1 global purchase transaction shall give the customer 10 chances to enter the draw. Al-Arbeed said that the campaign shall continue for four months till 10th February 2022 and the campaign prizes shall be distributed as follows:

- Draws for Kuwait Airways Oasis club Miles, 200 winners of travel miles (50 winners each month). Each winner shall get 50K miles from the Oasis club.
- Draws for Land Rover (Defender) cars - 4 winners (one winner each month)

Furthermore, Al-Arbeed said that KFH shall execute, through the campaign “With Your Card the Journey Begins”, a fully integrated program comprising of various events and activities for both customers and society. The program includes various competitions, prizes, and innovative events.

He mentioned that establishing a link between the prizes and the card usage inside and outside Kuwait shall enhance the usage of the cards in the local market, activate merchants’ sales and achieve the mutual interest of KFH and its partners: Mastercard, Kuwait Airways Oasis club and Ali Al-Ghanem & Sons Co. and shall create an added value to the customers experience in shopping and banking services as targeted by KFH.

Al-Arbeed emphasized that KFH is always keen on enhancing cooperation with its partners to plan and execute several campaigns as this would reflect positively on the customer’s satisfaction, usage volume, expand KFH market share and enhance KFH pioneering position in the banking cards market.

Finally, Al-Arbeed extended his gratitude and appreciation to Mastercard, Kuwait Airways Corporation and Ali Al-Ghanem and Sons Co. for their fruitful cooperation. Also, he appreciated the teamwork efforts extended by all KFH departments.

The launch of the campaign has remarkably impressed the audience and the followers of KFH accounts on social media channels. Many people and officials of all participating parties attended the launch in addition to many bloggers on social media who are concerned with travel and cars.

Campaign launch streaming

The campaign launch ceremony commenced with the drawing of the curtain in an innovative way followed by an elaboration on the details of the campaign through live streaming on KFH accounts on social media platforms. The prizes were exhibit-

ed to the crowd in the form of plane model for Kuwait Airways while a Land Rover (Defender) car was exhibited in a separate platform at KFH Auto so that the audience would be acquainted with its design and features.

Mastercard

From her side, Nadia Al-Ghasasi, Country Manager, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait and Iraq, Mastercard said: “We are very pleased with our partnership with KFH in the campaign “With Your Card the Journey Begins”. Our cardholders can benefit from the various benefits and great advantages which they expect from KFH Mastercard cards. They shall receive rewarding prizes when using the cards locally and abroad. Through our partnership with KFH we renew our commitment to provide our cardholders with a safe, comfortable and easy payment experience”.

Kuwait Airways Corporation

From his side, Meshal Al-Mutairi, Director - Commercially Important Persons at Kuwait Airways said: “I would like to welcome all members and customers to our campaign “With Your Card the Journey Begins”. We are very pleased to launch a new campaign in partnership with KFH and in cooperation with Mastercard and Ali Al-Ghanem & Sons Co., we have decided to make this campaign unique and distinguished for customers by presenting valuable prizes including travel miles to different destinations as well as luxury cars. There will be several winners in the draws made by KFH for the holders of KFH Mastercard credit and prepaid cards. As we care about customer’s comfort and shopping experience the customer will get rewarding miles and a chance to enter the draw for every KD 1 purchase transaction using KFH Mastercard cards.

Our strategy in the national carrier loyalty program “Oasis Club” is to focus on customer in the first place. We have always promised our customers to provide all means of comfort and distinguished services in cooperation with our partners through recurring campaigns that would bring happiness and joy to our valuable members.

I would like, on this occasion, to inform all Oasis club members, as we promised them in our online programs, that they can now use KAC mobile application to view their balances and accounts. For those who have not updated their information I recommend that they visit or email our customer service to update their information and benefit from the application advantages. Our valuable customers can benefit from the holiday packages for Economy class, Business class, first class and families at competitive prices by contacting 1806060 to avail the full service provided. A payment link is also provided on mobiles at any time or place and all destinations.

Last and not the least, I would like to thank you all for your concern and interest in this distinguished event. We are highly competitive and thrive to provide hospitality and warm welcome to all passengers. Our passengers’ loyalty is the source of pride for all KAC employees.”

Toshiba to split business into 3

TOKYO: Toshiba plans to split into three companies as early as 2023, a report said yesterday, after a series of crises at the firm including the ouster of the board’s chairman and a contentious buyout offer. The Nikkei business daily said the three units would focus on infrastructure, devices and semiconductor memory and are expected to be listed, possibly within two years.

Toshiba told AFP the option of splitting its business up was under consideration but said nothing had been decided. The Nikkei, which did not cite sources, said the move could be announced Friday when Toshiba reports earnings. “We are drafting a mid-term business plan to enhance our corporate value, and dividing our businesses is one of the options, but there is nothing officially decided at this point,” Toshiba spokesman Tatsuro Oishi said. “We will swiftly announce if we decide anything that should be disclosed,” he said. The decision, if confirmed, would cap a period of enormous upheaval for the firm, once a symbol of Japan’s advanced technology and economic power.

In June, shareholders voted to oust the board’s chairman after a series of scandals and losses, in a rare victory for activist investors in corporate Japan. The move followed the damaging revelations of an independent probe that concluded Toshiba attempted to block shareholders from exercising their proposal and voting rights.

The investigation’s report detailed how the firm had pursued an intervention from Japan’s Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry to help sway a board vote.

The revelations came after an unexpected buyout offer in April from a private equity fund associated with then-CEO Nobuaki Kurumatani. The offer sparked uproar, with allegations it was intended to blunt the influence of activist investors. Other offers emerged subsequently, and Kurumatani resigned in April, though he insisted it was not related to the buyout controversy.

‘Damp squib’

The decision to split Toshiba’s businesses “is a consequence of listening to activist shareholders”, said Hideki Yasuda, an analyst with Ace Research Institute. The move would be seen by proponents as maximizing the combined market value of Toshiba’s operations.

But he warned there could be downsides. “You can’t cover losses in one business with profits in other businesses,” making individual segments of Toshiba’s operation potentially more vulnerable, he said.

The Nikkei noted that splitting up conglomerates had been a successful strategy for some firms in the United States, including Hewlett-Packard. But for others such as chemical giant DuPont, which separated into three firms under shareholder pressure, overall market capitalization is now lower, the daily pointed out.

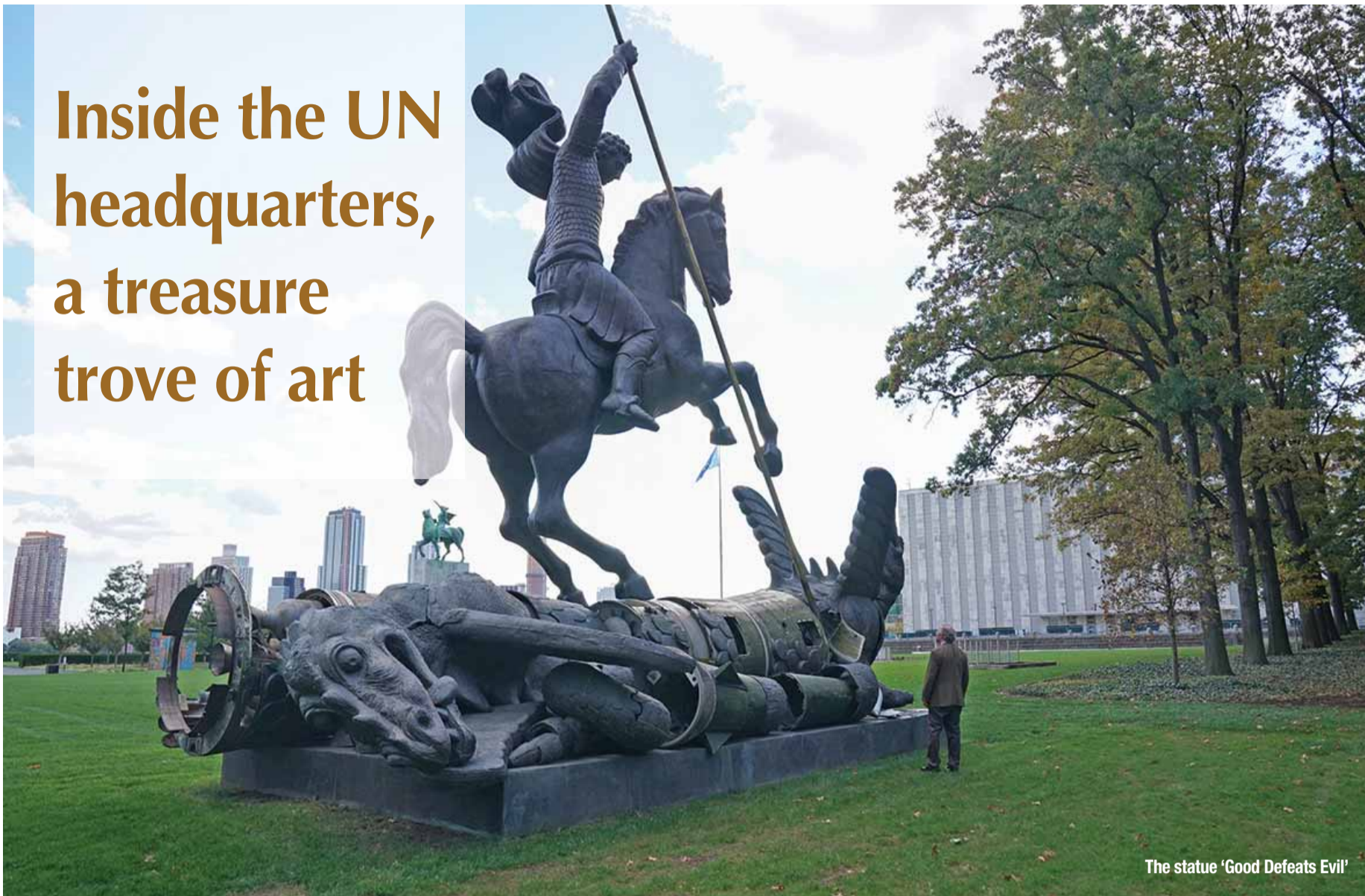
The move is relatively rare in Japan, and Toshiba would be the first major conglomerate to split into completely independent listed companies, the Nikkei said. Yasuda said Toshiba faces unique pressure from its shareholders, putting it in a different position to other major Japanese companies. But, he added, “if (the split) proves to be successful, others would follow suit”.

LightStream Research analyst Mio Kato said a move to split Toshiba’s business suggested a lack of management, dubbing it a “bit of a damp squib.” “Given the intense pressure they have been under, we read this announcement as a signal that there just isn’t massive demand for Toshiba’s assets,” Kato wrote on independent investment research network site Smartkarma.—AFP



Lifestyle | Features

Inside the UN headquarters, a treasure trove of art



The statue 'Good Defeats Evil'



Werner Schmidt of the United Nations discusses artworks at The United Nations. — AFP photos



The Fernand Leger murals in the General Assembly Hall

Marc Chagall, Henry Moore and Fernand Leger. In almost eight decades, the UN headquarters in New York has accumulated numerous artworks, making it home to a little-known but precious collection. The crises that nations deal with inside the center of international diplomacy are expressed through some of the 400 works, which have been donated by 150 of the 193 member countries. "We have an art collection that would be the envy of many museums in the world. And we are not a museum," says Werner Schmidt, who oversees the collection that tourists could partially visit

before the pandemic but which currently remains closed to the public.

The artworks represent historical moments, artistic trends and the particularities of donor countries, some of which have ceased to exist, such as East Germany, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Among the most spectacular is "War and Peace" by Brazilian artist Candido Portinari. The two murals frame the entrance to the General Assembly, the heart of the world body. "At the entrance the delegates see a landscape of war and despair and at the exit, a world in peace and harmony," Schmidt told AFP. It's an allegory of the goal of the UN since its creation in 1945: to settle disputes through dialogue.

Chagall himself went to the UN in 1964 to deliver his "Windows", a stained glass artwork that is now damaged but nobody knows how. It was part of a collection that UN officials put together after the death of former Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld and fifteen employees in a plane crash en route to negotiate a ceasefire in then Zaire in 1961. Sculptor Henry Moore's admiration for Hammarskjöld led him to donate his "Reclining Figure" statue to the UN and is on display in its gardens.

'Positive language'

A monumental work by American artist Barbara Hepworth, a rare woman represented among the artworks, also stands out. Other works include a daily scene from a Saudi desert oasis in solid gold, gifted by Saudi Arabia, and a sculptured gold palm tree with bunches of pearls in place of dates, which was donated by



The statue 'Rising Man'.

Bahrain. African pieces, a gigantic Chinese vase and furniture by renowned designers also enrich the collection. Some works reflect pivotal moments in a country's history such as a tapestry that depicts the horrors of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant explosion in 1986.

East German sculptor Fritz Cremer's "The Rising Man" was intended to be a celebration of the communist regime but aroused the hostility of intellectuals in the country. Nearby is the sculpture "Good Defeats Evil." Donated by the Soviet Union, it depicts St. George slaying a dragon and is built entirely from nuclear missile casings.

Two abstract frescoes by Leger flank the General Assembly amphitheater. Ex-

US president Harry Truman remarked that they resembled bacon and eggs and a rabbit being pulled from a hat. No one ever contradicted him, according to Schmidt. A tapestry depicting Pablo Picasso's "Guernica" greeted members at the entrance to the Security Council chamber as a haunting reminder of the horrors of war for almost four decades before it was returned to Nelson Rockefeller's heirs earlier this year. Any country can donate a work, as long as it's not offensive. "It has to be art that does not upset other member states. It has to be art that speaks to all, in the same positive language," says Schmidt. —AFP



A stainless window by Marc Chagall

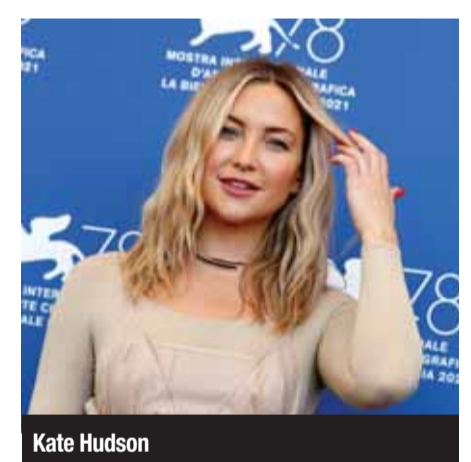
Ariana Grande's beauty line needed to feel 'super authentic' to her

Ariana Grande only wanted to release a beauty line if it felt "super authentic" to her. The 28-year-old Grammy-winner launches R.E.M. Beauty on Friday has admitted she wouldn't have invested herself in the venture if it didn't feel "super intentional". In a Zoom call to promote the brand witnessed by People, she explained: "It has to feel super intentional, super fuelled by passion and feel super authentic to me. "I've spent a lot of time in the make-up chair. Now to re-define my relationship and have my own version of it will hopefully inspire people to express themselves in a new way."



Ariana Grande

The 'positions' hitmaker went on to share how cooking up the products was very similar to writing a pop song "in a weird way". She said: "They're totally different outlets of storytelling but they hold hands in a weird way. When you're writing a song, [you're] spending time with the pre-chorus to make sure that the notes set up the hook in the proper way. Or making sure that the harmonies aren't fighting with the bells in the background. It's the same thing as putting together these formulas and making sure everything is complementary." On why she named the brand after her song of the same name from 2018's 'Sweetener' LP, she said: "I feel like that song really encompasses a lot of my favourite parts of my sound phonetically. Also, with rapid eye movement and focusing on dreams, eyes are our most effective communicators. "You can say more with the way that you look at someone than you can with words sometimes. —BangShowbiz



Kate Hudson

Kate Hudson is 'pre-planning' the planning' of her wedding

The 42-year-old actress is preparing to marry Danny Fujikawa and she admitted it takes a lot of organisation, so she's just starting to think about the things she will need to arrange for their big day. The 'Bride Wars' star told 'Entertainment Tonight': "You know what I'm doing? I'm pre-planning the planning. Just kind of thinking of what we want to do and then I'm going back and forth between like, what is this really going to look like? "Obviously, we're so excited. But the idea of planning a wedding is like, a lot, it's a lot. I made a whole movie about it." The 'Almost Famous' star has Ryder, 17, with ex-husband Chris Robinson, Bingham, 10, with former fiancé Matt Bellamy, and Rani, three, with Danny, and all the kids are looking forward to the wedding.

She added: "I think they're really excited. It was something they were really excited for, all of us, and I'm just really happy." Kate makes to-do lists to keep herself on track and thinks "structure" is key for her finding the right balance in her life. She said: "I have one of those crazy lives where I do a lot of things in one day and I'm scheduled to a T. "I don't want too many things happening. I like being with my kids, I like being able to do spontaneous things with my kids, so I think structure is what helps me balance the most." The 'Truth Be Told' actress is excited about a family Thanksgiving later this month. She said: "Thanksgiving, I think, is my favorite holiday, 'cause I love to cook. I love to bake, so I bake pies. "I love Thanksgiving, and I think it'll be really amazing this year because we'll actually be able to celebrate all together, which I'm really excited about." — Bang Showbiz

I Speak Club: Focuses on communication and leadership skills

I Speak Club was launched in 2016 in Kuwait through Toastmasters International Organization, an educational non-profit organization that established from 1924, in the States. The club's focuses advanced curricula offered by the organization in several languages, where the club adopts both Arabic and English. These educational curricula are presented in an interactive way that focuses on human skills, which are:

Communication skills

The abilities that use when providing or receiving various types of information, such as communicating ideas and feelings to other parties, or expressing what is happening around, and includes (public speaking, listening, using words and tone of voice, understanding body language, confidence, etc).

Leadership skills

Personal traits and basic abilities to achieve success and development, which focus on the process of organizing others and working with them to achieve a common goal, and includes (self-management, motivation, planning, responsibility, inspiration, decision-making, delegation, relationship building, Time management, problem solving, assignment of tasks, etc.).

Activity

Volunteer, non-profit, independent, based on community service, focused on providing a healthy educational environment to practice and develop communication and leadership skills in an interactive manner, as its activity is a stimulating and encouraging environment only.

Work style

The working style of the club is (organized and based on methodology). The club meets twice a month (the first and third week of every month throughout the year) in an official capacity, and its members work during those meetings to practice a set of educational roles in an interactive way to develop their communication and leadership skills through the organization's customized curriculum. Which can be followed up and obtained through the organization's website (www.toastmasters.com), where the member walks through educational stages chosen by himself, and works on them with the motivation of the rest of the members and the club officers.

The target audience

The club is open to all, but it is intended

for those over (18) years old. The club focuses on those who suffer from speech challenges such as stammering and stuttering, fears of communicating with others and facing the public, and challenges of personal abilities such as self-confidence, commitment to time, planning, etc.

The future

The club's vision for the future is to expand by attracting more active members, as there will be more activities characterized by educational background and social interaction, as well as supporting members to face their own challenges, and most importantly creating more leaders in various areas of life to serve the community.



A camel trader arranges his belongings as others look on near their camels at the Pushkar Camel Fair in Pushkar in the northeastern Indian state of Rajasthan. — AFP photos



A camel trader stands in front of his camels at the Pushkar Camel Fair in Pushkar.

India's Pushkar Camel Fair returns after COVID hump

Hundreds of herders and their animals gathered in the desert city of Pushkar yesterday for India's biggest camel-trading fair. The northern city typically attracts thousands of Hindu pilgrims, cattle traders and herders for the annual event, but it was called off in 2020 because of the pandemic. The gathering in the desert state of Rajasthan sees traditional camel breeding communities trek some-

times hundreds of kilometers (miles) from their remote villages to trade their animals.

The 13-day fair, which opened on Monday, coincides with several auspicious days in the Hindu calendar, adding to the crowds thronging the revered lakeside city. "Pushkar is about both cattle trading and religious rituals," Prafull Mathur from Rajasthan's animal husbandry department told AFP. "The COVID-19 situation hasn't

fully normalized but we still expect a good attendance," Mathur added. Organizers usually hold competitions for camel herders, which are a major attraction for domestic and international tourists, but the government hasn't yet clarified if the contests will be allowed this year.

The fair is the only time of the year when camel breeders-most of whom live in remote, nomadic communities in the

desert-can earn cash income that helps sustain their way of life. The camels are mostly purchased by people from Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh to use on their farms or as transport. Other animals, including horses, are also bought and sold at the event. India's security forces deployed along the international border with Pakistan also use camels extensively to patrol remote stretches.

To help remote camel breeding communities diversify their income, the government has been trying to promote camel milk, camel leather and camel bone products. The region's prominent camel herding community, Raikas, believe that the Hindu god Shiva handed them the responsibility to rear camels.-AFP

Indian star Kamal Haasan to launch metaverse avatar

Film superstar Kamal Haasan is set to become the first Indian actor to launch an avatar in the "metaverse" as celebrities seek to expand their fan base into the virtual world. Haasan, who turned 67 on Sunday, said in a statement on his birthday that he was "excited to explore the emerging intersection of the digital and physical world". He added that he planned to auction virtual memorabilia in the form of non-fungible tokens (NFTs) at an unspecified time.

Celebrity NFT platform Fantico will create a metaverse game where the actor will have his own world, the statement added. It will allow fans to interact with his digital avatars, buy memorabilia and participate in meet-and-greet sessions within the game. "To have a legend such as Kamal Haasan on our platform will only set the trend for more creators to adapt to the future of fan engagement," said Fantico founder Abhayanand Singh.

The announcement comes a week



In this file photo Indian cinema actor and founder of 'Makkal Needhi Mayyam' party Kamal Haasan speaks during a media conference in Chennai. — AFP

after Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan raised just under \$970,000 from an auction of his digital memorabilia-the first for an Indian celebrity-according to NFT trading platform Guardian Link. NFTs-digital works of art, music, animation, images or video with a certificate of authenticity created by blockchain technology-have soared in popularity in recent months. The metaverse meanwhile has recently gained attention after Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg said last month that the tech giant saw the virtual reality version of the internet as the future. Veteran screen icon Haasan, who also produces, directs and sings in many of his movies, is a massive star primarily in India's Tamil-language film industry. — AFP

Taika Waititi to adapt 'The Incal' comics for big screen

Taika Waititi will direct the first big-screen adaptation of best-selling and highly influential sci-fi comic book series "The Incal." The New Zealander who directed Marvel superhero hit "Thor: Ragnarok" and won an Oscar for his "Jojo Rabbit" screenplay-will also co-write the movie, said publisher Humanoids Associates. Waititi said he was "stunned to be given the opportunity" to bring the creation of cult Franco-Chilean comics writer Alejandro Jodorowsky and French artist Moebius to life.

"The Incal" has sold millions of copies around the world since its debut in the late 1970s, and is one of the highest-selling sci-fi graphic novels in history. A sprawling space opera, it follows bumbling intergalactic private eye John Difool as he finds a mystical artifact which is coveted by powerful factions across the galaxy. He is compelled to save the universe, while undertaking a spiritual journey that takes in questions such as the meaning of existence. Jodorowsky-a filmmaker in his own right-famously tried to make a highly ambitious movie version of "Dune" in the 1970s, but ended up using elements of that failed



In this file photo New Zealand director Taika Waititi arrives for the L.A. premiere of "Last Night in Soho" at the Academy Museum in Los Angeles. — AFP

project to write "The Incal" soon after.

"The films and graphic novels of Alejandro Jodorowsky have influenced me and so many others for so long," Waititi said in a statement. The movie is Humanoids Associates' "first of many forays into film production," the French publisher said in a press release, and comes as comic-book adaptations continue to dominate Hollywood and the global box office. Waititi is also directing the eagerly awaited Marvel sequel "Thor: Love and Thunder," due out in June, starring Natalie Portman, Chris Hemsworth, Matt Damon and Christian Bale. "When Humanoids' CEO Fabrice Giger introduced me to Taika Waititi's work, it became obvious to me that he was the one," said Jodorowsky, 92, in the statement. "I fully trust Taika's creativity to give 'The Incal' a stunning take, intimate and at the same time of cosmic proportions." — AFP

Baldwin calls for police to watch guns on set after 'Rust'

Police officers should be stationed on all film productions where guns are being used, Alec Baldwin said Monday, weeks after he fatally shot a crew member in a tragic on-set accident in New Mexico. The US actor and producer fired a Colt .45 he had been told was safe on the set of Western "Rust," striking and killing cinematographer Halyna Hutchins. "Every film/TV set that uses guns, fake or otherwise, should have a police officer on set, hired by the production, to specifically monitor weapons safety," Baldwin tweeted.

A police investigation into the tragic incident is in progress, with prosecutors refusing to rule out criminal charges against anyone, including Baldwin. Ahead of a rehearsal involving a shooting scene, Baldwin had been handed a firearm and told it was a "cold gun"-industry speak for a prop that was deemed cleared and safe to use. Baldwin has described the "incidental accident" as a "one in a trillion episode." Calls have grown since the incident for better control of weapons on Hollywood sets, and Baldwin previously said the effort was "something I am extremely interested in." — AFP



Nuit Balneaires, an artist represented by Dada Gallery, poses for a picture in front of his artwork at the ArtX annual art fair at the Federal Palace Hotel, Victoria Island, in Lagos. — AFP photos



Ayoola Gbolahan, an artist represented by Kanbi projects, poses for a picture in front of his artwork.



Art enthusiasts look at an artwork by Barry Yusufu titled "Home Girl".

Nigeria takes early steps into international art world

Nigeria's elite sipped champagne and splashed thousands of dollars on contemporary paintings at a fair in Lagos this week, an early step into the international art world for Africa's most populous nation. In front of major players from cinema, fashion and finance, about 30 art galleries from across the African continent-but also from Paris, London and Barcelona-showed off their best pieces at the ArtX fair.

"Nigeria's art collectors are not well known globally, and when we arrived here we didn't realise the potential," said Lea Perier Loko from the Paris-based gallery Septieme. "When collectors fall for something, they don't hesitate to spend!" The pieces they sold first were two gigantic blue paintings by Kenyan artist Kaloki Nyamai that represent "a part of history that isn't found in books". The two paintings, each measuring 2 metres square, were sold separately for \$20,000 (17,300 euros). "In Paris, it's much more difficult to sell paintings of this size.

It really shows the difference in scale with Lagos," said Perier Loko. Among its 210 million residents, oil-rich Nigeria has some of the world's wealthiest people, with bankers and traders now becoming important contemporary art collectors. For a long

time, Nigeria's art scene was known for looking inward, with its collectors buying colourful, local figurative art. "Things have changed a lot," said Delphine Lopez from one of the continent's best-known galleries, Cecile Fakhoury.

'Bold, energetic' Lagos

Her gallery has decided to bet on three Ivorian artists and two others from Benin at its stand. Visitors stop, intrigued by a tapestry made from raffia sprinkled with

seashells and pieces of string, created by Franco-Ivorian Marie-Claire Messouma Manlanbien. "There is an ancient culture of textile art and tapestry in West Africa, and yet it's different to what you find here in Nigeria," said Lopez.

ArtX founder Tokini Peterside launched the project in 2016 to open up collectors in Nigeria to other markets, as well as to bring international galleries to the country. "I wanted the world to understand the city in the way that I did, and to see the city for

what it truly is... a very dynamic place with incredible, passionate, bold, energetic people," said the 36-year-old. And she hoped that the fair could also "counter the alternative, more negative image that usually is used to portray Lagos and Nigeria". Africa's most populous country is known for being home to Boko Haram, one of the world's most violent jihadist groups.

Its dynamic creative industry, miles away from the northeast insurgency, is often less known. "When we announced

that we were coming to ArtX in Lagos, some people asked us why, if there was even an art scene in Nigeria, and if it was not too dangerous," said Perier Loko of Septieme gallery. Yet many of the country's artists, singers and designers are powerhouses on the continent and globally. For those who made the trip, coming to Lagos was a winning bet, and many hope to come back and continue exploring the Nigerian art market. — AFP



Malong Sanb, founder of Galerie Mam, poses for a picture in front of her gallery's booth.



Alduphina, an artist represented by Pacers Gallery, poses for a portrait in front of her work.

Sports

Spain and Italy face decisive dates in World Cup qualifying

Netherlands, France, England on brink of advancing

PARIS: The first stage of European qualifying for next year's World Cup concludes over the next week with Portugal, Spain, Italy and the Netherlands among the nations facing crucial games in the quest to make it to Qatar. The 10 group winners will secure qualification for football's global showpiece which kicks off on November 21, 2022. The 10 runners-up will get another chance to qualify in play-offs next March. AFP Sport looks at what's up for grabs in the remaining group games:

Spain have all to play for

Spain showed on their runs to the Euro 2020 semi-finals and the Nations League final that they are again a force to be reckoned with. However, the 2010 world champions still have work to do to secure their place in Qatar from qualifying Group B. Luis Enrique's side sit second, two points behind leaders Sweden. They head to Athens tomorrow to play Greece, who held them to a 1-1 draw at home in March. Failure to win this time would give Sweden the chance to clinch top spot with victory in Georgia. Otherwise the group will be decided when Spain host Sweden — including a 40-year-old Zlatan Ibrahimovic — in Seville on Sunday.



Two crucial matches for Portugal

teams met in Euro 2020's opening game.

Whoever wins will be left requiring just a point in their final qualifier, with the Azzurri going to Northern Ireland on Monday while the Swiss host Bulgaria. "We mustn't think that we have everything to lose," said coach Roberto Mancini. "We know what we are capable of, and if we play our game I think we will perform well. And we will have fun."

The Netherlands are tantalizingly close to returning to the World Cup after also missing out in 2018. Louis van Gaal's side are two points clear of Norway atop Group G with a superior goal difference to that of the Norwegians or third-placed Turkey. That effectively means a draw in Montenegro on Saturday should not damage them, as long as they then avoid defeat against Norway — who are without injured forward Erling Haaland — in Rotterdam.

The battle between Russia and 2018 World Cup runners-up Croatia in Group H is tight, with the Russians currently two points ahead before hosting Cyprus tomorrow. As long as Croatia don't slip up in Malta, they can claim top spot when they host Russia in Split on Sunday.

England, France almost there

Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal are currently second in Group A, a point behind Serbia. However, they have a game in hand in the Republic of Ireland tomorrow and a better goal difference. Whatever happens there, the group will be decided when Portugal host Serbia in Lisbon on Sunday.

Reigning world champions France can clinch qual-



MADRID: Spain's coach Luis Enrique (second right) speaks with his players during a training session in Madrid on Monday, ahead of their FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 qualifying football match against Greece. — AFP

ification by beating Kazakhstan in Paris on Saturday. Even a draw would be enough provided Finland fail to win earlier, but otherwise Les Bleus — without the injured Paul Pogba — can wrap up their spot in Qatar when they travel to Helsinki on Tuesday.

England are three points ahead of Poland in Group I, so the Euro 2020 runners-up will qualify by taking at least four points from games at home to Albania and away in San Marino. Belgium will win Group E by defeating Estonia in Brussels on Saturday, while an unlikely loss could set up a group decider in Wales.

Already qualified

Four-time world champions Germany have already secured their place at the finals from Group J. Five members of their squad were forced into quarantine yesterday after one player tested positive for COVID-19. Behind them, Romania, North Macedonia, Armenia and Iceland can all still take the play-off place. Denmark have romped to qualification from Group F. Scotland need three more points from games in Moldova and at home to Denmark to take the play-off place. — AFP

News in brief

Pogba out of France squad

PARIS: Manchester United midfielder Paul Pogba has been ruled out of France's upcoming World Cup qualifiers with a thigh injury suffered in training on Monday, the French Football Federation said. The 28-year-old limped out of training at France's Clairefontaine base after taking a shot. Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's Man United side are next in action on November 20 at Watford in the Premier League. The FFF said Pogba was the "victim of an injury to the quadriceps of the right thigh". France host Kazakhstan on Saturday knowing victory would secure a place at next year's World Cup, before their final Group D game in Finland next week. Roma midfielder Jordan Veretout has replaced Pogba in the squad.

Sharma new India captain

NEW DELHI: Rohit Sharma has been named the new captain of India's T20 side, replacing Virat Kohli, the cricket board said yesterday after the side were dumped out of the T20 World Cup. The Board of Cricket Control of India tweeted that the 34-year-old opening batsman was "named the T20I Captain for India" as it announced the squad for an upcoming tour by New Zealand. Kohli, who took over T20I captaincy in 2017, had announced his decision to step down in September, citing his "immense workload". He remains the skipper of the one-day and Test teams. The announcement follows news that former batting legend Rahul Dravid was replacing Ravi Shastri as coach for all formats following the World Cup, where India failed to qualify for the semi-finals.

Marquez out of MotoGP finale

MADRID: Marc Marquez has still to fully recover from last month's off-road training accident and will sit out the season-closing Valencia MotoGP this weekend, his Honda team announced yesterday. The six-time MotoGP world champion "won't take part in the last race of the season nor in testing at Jerez on November 18/19", Honda announced. The 28-year-old is still suffering from "a minor head injury" his team added after the fall which forced him to miss last Sunday's Algarve Grand Prix. "On his rest days he continued to not feel well and is having a problem with his sight," the statement revealed. Results of tests on Monday confirmed he has a "new case of double vision" following the one he experienced in 2011 after a Moto2 crash in Malaysia.

UAE hosts bowling tourneys

KUWAIT: President of the International and Asian Bowling Federations, Chairman of Kuwait Bowling Club Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah lauded UAE's efforts as it prepares to host several world championships between November 6 and November 26. Sheikh Talal spoke before his departure to Dubai yesterday, saying that activities will begin with the men and women's world championship events from November 6 until 15 November, followed by wheelchair events for the men and women championship, and then several championships for those who are aged between 50 and 65. He said diverse competitions allow for expanding participation and give equal opportunity for all age groups to take part in a competitive atmosphere.

Kimmich among German players in COVID quarantine

BERLIN: Unvaccinated Bayern Munich star Joshua Kimmich is one of five players in Germany's national football squad having to quarantine after one tested positive for coronavirus, the German federation (DFB) said yesterday. The infected player, Niklas Suele, is fully vaccinated and currently asymptomatic, added the DFB.

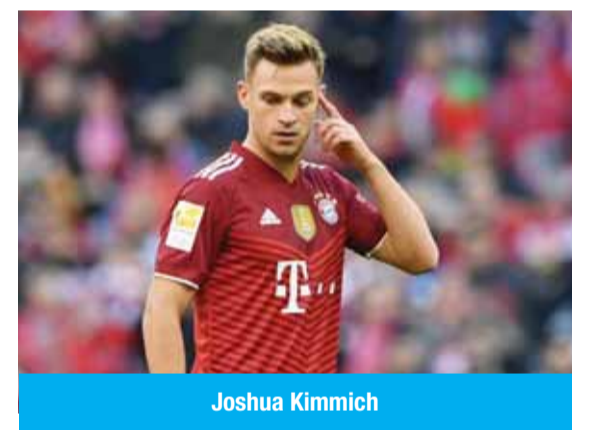
Fellow Bayern teammates Kimmich, Serge Gnabry and Jamal Musiala as well as Karim Adeyemi of RB Salzburg, have been asked to iso-

late because they are close contacts of his, even though they have tested negative, DFB chief director Bierhoff said.

"This news, coming so close before the final World Cup qualifiers, is bitter for the coaching team as well as for Die Mannschaft," said Bierhoff. The latest high-profile case comes as Germany is fighting a surge in new infections, with its seven-day COVID rate striking a new record yesterday.

It also puts the spotlight again on Kimmich, who had sparked a fierce debate in the country last month when he revealed he opted not to get vaccinated, because of "personal concerns". It even prompted Interior Minister Horst Seehofer to urge him directly to rethink his position as "vaccination is the main weapon in the fight against the pandemic".

Kimmich appears to be in the minority as more than 90 percent of footballers and backroom staff



Joshua Kimmich

in Germany's top two leagues are vaccinated, according to figures released last month by the German Football League (DFL). — AFP

Returning fans to play key part in Asian World Cup qualifying

HONG KONG: Home support could prove decisive in Asian World Cup qualifying tomorrow when Australia play on their own patch for the first time in two years while a full house will roar on Son Heung-min's South Korea.

The coronavirus has played havoc with Asian qualifying for Qatar, forcing some teams to play home games overseas and some matches staged in front of limited crowds or empty stadiums. Australia have been especially hard hit, playing 11 of their 12 qualifiers for next year's World Cup on the road.

It has not harmed them — they won a record 11 games in a row until a 2-1 defeat in Japan blew qualifying Group B wide open last month. The Socceroos are hoping that their fans can roar them to victory in Sydney in a key clash against Saudi Arabia, who top the group with a perfect 12 points from four matches.

Australia are second on nine points, ahead of Oman and Japan who are on six. The top two in each of the two Asian groups automatically qualify

England, New Zealand eye T20 final spot in shadow of 2019 classic

ABU DHABI: Eoin Morgan's England have been hit by injuries but go into today's Twenty20 World Cup semi-final as favorites against New Zealand, two years after both sides clashed in a dramatic 50-over final. England have lost opening batsman Jason Roy and pace bowler Tymal Mills but they sealed a final-four place with four wins in five Super 12 games.

Roy collapsed on the pitch with a calf injury in England's final group match that they lost to South Africa and was later ruled out of the tournament and replaced by James Vince. England's aggressive brand of cricket got them past West Indies, Bangladesh, Australia and Sri Lanka with clinical ease to finish as group leaders ahead of the Aussies.

But the Kiwis are no pushovers and who better than England to appreciate the Black Caps' worth after they needed a super over to edge out Kane Williamson's side when the 2019 ODI World Cup

final finished in a tie.

"If England and New Zealand provide a fraction of the drama they did on a glorious afternoon at Lord's in July 2019, then the T20 World Cup might get the spark it desperately craves this week," former England captain Mike Atherton wrote in The Times.

New Zealand matched England's 241 courtesy of Ben Stokes' unbeaten 84 at the end of 50 overs and then their 15 in the super over before England were declared winners on boundary count. England have reached the final four of the T20 World Cup without star performers Stokes and Jofra Archer and Roy's departure adds to their woes ahead of Wednesday's game in Abu Dhabi.

Li Tie's side play Oman tomorrow and Australia on Tuesday, both in the UAE. "We have been longing to play our upcoming games at home," the former Everton midfielder Li, now China's coach, told the state Xinhua news agency.

If Group B looks open, Group A is a little more clear-cut. Iran, who travel to Lebanon and then play Syria in Amman, are top with 10 points from a maximum 12. South Korea have failed to sparkle but are still second in Group A and unbeaten. In Tottenham Hotspur forward Son they also have a world-class talent. — AFP

'Magic recipe'

Jos Buttler hit the tournament's only century in his unbeaten 101 against Sri Lanka and remains second best run-getter behind Pakistan captain Babar Azam (264) with 240 runs. Chris Woakes leads the pace bowling charge ably supplemented by Chris Jordan while spinners Adil Rashid and Moeen Ali have proved their value with eight and seven wickets each respectively. New Zealand have been the perennial underdogs in top events but a runners-up finish in the ODI World Cup and becoming world Test champions after beating India in the final has proved their consistency across formats. — AFP

Pakistan 'emperor' Babar ready to conquer world

DUBAI: He was the fresh-faced 15-year-old who stared down Shoaib Akhtar in the nets, became the highest-ranked T20 batsman in the world before being elevated to national hero after masterminding a rare Pakistan victory over India.

In the breathless aftermath of that 10-wicket win over their fiercest rivals at the World Cup, the national cricket captain was even likened by one commentator to emperor Zahiruddin Babar who conquered India in the 16th century and founded the Mughal Dynasty.

Fortunately for Pakistan, the unassuming 27-year-old Babar Azam has his feet firmly on the ground. He has guided his team to five wins in five games at the T20 showpiece and a semi-final clash against Australia in Dubai tomorrow. Along the way, he has piled up a tournament-leading 264 runs. On Sunday, against Scotland, he hit his fourth half century of the competition.

It all started with a brilliant unbeaten 68 against India. That innings, in tandem with fellow opener Mohammad Rizwan's 79 not out, gave Pakistan their first win over their arch-rivals in 13 World Cup matches. He then scored 51 against Afghanistan and 70 against Namibia — innings that helped him regain the number one spot in the international T20 rankings.

"Obviously it's a proud moment," said Babar. "The focus on the goal and hard work are behind this and I want to improve day by day." In April this year, Babar also ended Indian maestro Virat Kohli's three-year tenure as number one ODI batsman with scores of 103, 32 and 94 in a three-match series in South Africa which Pakistan won 2-1.

Babar has risen from modest beginnings but was a YouTube hit at 13. Acting as a ballboy at Lahore's Gaddafi stadium in October, 2007, he confidently pounced a six from South Africa's JP Duminy which had been launched over long-on.

The slow motion replays and praise from the TV commentators who hailed his nonchalance gave Babar surprise airtime. His talents were obvious but his father Azam Siddique was determined that the teenage Babar didn't get too far ahead of himself. "It's a blessing for me that my father supported me so much," he said. "To be honest, he still scolds me if I don't play well or get out by playing a rash shot." — AFP

Sports

'We're pioneers' - Barca's La Masia finally opens its doors to women

Nine female players enroll at Barca's famed football academy

BARCELONA: When Claudia Riumallo Pineda wakes up, it does not take her long to know where she is. From her bedroom window she can see the Johan Cruyff Stadium inside Barcelona's Ciutat Esportiva training ground, where she dreams of one day playing for the women's first team.

She is on the right track. The 18-year-old is one of nine trailblazers who this season became the first female players to enroll at La Masia, Barca's famed football academy and proving ground for the likes of Lionel Messi, Andres Iniesta and Xavi Hernandez. Since its opening in 1979 as an old house next to Camp Nou, La Masia has never had female residents. But the women's team has been knocking on the door for a long time, with Barcelona Femeni winning the Champions League, Liga Femenina and Copa de la Reina last season.

"This year they have given us La Masia, which is a gift," says Claudia, who for years had to travel an hour by car from her town of Girona just to be able to train with girls. After playing for local rivals Espanyol, she now represents Barca B and in the afternoons studies chemistry at university.



SANT JOAN DESPI: In this file photo taken on September 20, 2021 Barcelona's women's B team Spanish goalkeeper Laura Coronado poses in front of the La Masia Residence, Oriol Tort Education Center, in Sant Joan Despi. — AFP

Gavi, the latest gem of the men's team, arrived when he was eleven years old and continues to live there. The 19-year-old Ansu Fati is also a former resident. "The good thing we have at this club is the mirror is very clear," explains Markel Zubizarreta, sporting director of Barcelona Femeni. "We just have to look at the men's side to see what we have to aim for."

From strength to strength

In the corridor heading towards the games room is another reminder: a mural on the wall in tribute to the game between Levante and Barca on November 25, 2012. It was another win that contributed to Barca winning the title that year but also a milestone for La Masia, after Barcelona had 11 homegrown players on the pitch, not to mention the coach, the late Tito Vilanova.

At that time it was difficult to imagine how the female team could find breathing space at a club where the men's team was so dominant — but the women's game continues to go from strength to strength. In 2020, there were 77,400 licensed female players in Spain, 7.2 percent of all the federated footballers, according to statistics from the Ministry of Sports. It is still a small figure, but a clear improvement from 2011,

when there were only 36,200, 4.3 percent of the total.

"There are many things that are still missing, such as professionalization in the League," says Coronado. "We know the salaries are not going to be equal, but we would like to be able to live more comfortably from football, and that's what we're fighting for." Spain's Ministry for Sport approved the professionalization of La Liga Femenina in June but negotiations to see it through are proving complicated.

For all

Like many of her generation, Barca defender Jana Fernandez started out playing with boys. At six years old, she convinced her parents to let her join her local team and, now 19, she has already won the treble. But the road has not been easy.

"I try to remind the girls who are at La Masia now to take advantage as much as possible because I would have loved to be here," explains Fernandez, who combines professional football with a career in advertising. Women's sport has taken a big leap in recent years, but there is still work to do. "We want to fight to get more and more for those playing now," says Fernandez. "And for those that are still to come." — AFP

“ There is still work to do ”

Shaken by financial crisis and the unexpected departure of Messi, most of the good news around the club these days comes from the women's team. As well as last season's treble, Barca's captain Alexia Putellas was chosen as UEFA's best player of the year and is now also nominated, along with four teammates, for the Women's Ballon d'Or.

"It's a huge responsibility because we are the pioneers but it's also nice to know that you are one of the first women to go to La Masia," says Laura Coronado, an 18-year-old goalkeeper. Coronado's photo, like that of the 105 others at La Masia spread across the club's five professional sports, now hangs in the reception of the more modern complex that took over from the original in 2011.

Boswell kicks game-winning field goal as Steelers edge Bears

LOS ANGELES: Chris Boswell booted a 40-yard field goal with 26 seconds left as the Pittsburgh Steelers extended their win streak to four games by coming from behind to squeeze past the Chicago Bears 29-27 on Monday.

Veteran quarterback Ben Roethlisberger combined with receiver Pat Freiermuth for two earlier touchdowns, setting the stage for Boswell's game-winning kick in front of a crowd of 68,400 at Pittsburgh's Heinz Field. "It was a strange game, but it is fun," said Roethlisberger, who completed 21 of 30 passes without an interception. "I wish it wasn't so close. We made it a little stressful but I am proud of the guys."

The mistake-prone Bears seized their only lead of the contest on a 16-yard touchdown pass from rookie quarterback Justin Fields to Darnell Mooney with 1:46 remaining in the fourth quarter. But Roethlisberger and the Steelers weren't willing to quit as they rallied to win and improve to 5-3 on the season.

Pittsburgh prevailed despite being outgained 414 yards to 280 and outscored 21-9 in the fourth quarter. Chicago was penalized a season-high 12 times for 115 yards. The Bears suffered their fourth consecutive loss to drop to 3-6 after a promising start to the season.



PITTSBURGH: Kicker Chris Boswell #9 of the Pittsburgh Steelers kicks the game-winning field goal against the Chicago Bears during the fourth quarter at Heinz Field on Monday in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. — AFP

Fields had the best offensive game of his first NFL season, passing for 291 yards with a touchdown and an interception. This was the second straight week the Steelers have rallied for the win. Last week they came back to beat Cleveland 15-10.

Boswell missed the second half of that game with a concussion and didn't practice much with the team this week. Bears coach Matt Nagy returned to the sidelines Monday following a one-game absence due to the league's COVID-19 health protocols. — AFP

Saudi golf investment not a Norman conquest, says Asian Tour chief

HONG KONG: Greg Norman and his billionaire Saudi backers are not taking over the Asian Tour, insists the circuit's chief, after the Australian great's new company pledged \$200 million to create 10 new tournaments. Nor is the former world number one launching a breakaway "super league" via his plunge into the Asian Tour that shook the golf world, tour commissioner and CEO Cho Minn Thant told AFP.

Norman last month revealed he was the CEO of newly formed LIV Golf Investments, a Saudi sovereign wealth fund-backed company committing \$200 million to 10 new global events on the Asian Tour schedule over the next decade.

Scant on detail, the announcement was interpreted by some as the first move in establishing Norman's oft-touted "super league" that could split men's professional golf and threaten the dominance of the US PGA Tour. Such speculation is wide of the mark, Cho said, while acknowledging that Norman has ambitions to create a superstar golf circuit separate to the main tours. "I think there's been a misconception that LIV Golf has taken over the Asian Tour and we are going to get the 'LIV Golf Tour' or the 'Saudi Tour', which is incorrect," said Cho, speaking by video link from Jupiter, Florida, where two-time major winner Norman is based. "They are a promoter who are adding 10 events to our tournament schedule. Our structure remains the same," assured Cho, who is finalizing details on a 25-event Asian Tour 2022 calendar.

'Most lucrative season'

It will begin with the \$5 million Saudi International on February 3-6. That is not part of the new Norman-funded 10-event series but is expected to attract stars such as Dustin Johnson, who won in 2019 and 2021, when the tournament was sanctioned by the European Tour. The 10 new events, likely to kick off in the Middle East and Europe, will join long-standing Asian tournaments such as the Hong Kong Open and Maybank Championship in Malaysia. To take part, players such as Johnson will need a release from the US PGA Tour, which a year ago formed a "strategic alliance" with the European Tour to counter the threat of any breakaway circuit.

"Obviously, before, they were almost assured of being released," said Cho. "But now I guess it's a little bit harder... just because the PGA and European Tours may feel that we're somewhat more competitive." Cho's focus now is on rekindling the Asian Tour, on hold since March 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic. The interrupted 2020-21 season resumes later this month after a 20-month absence with two \$1 million tournaments in Thailand and will conclude with two more in Singapore in January, ahead of the new season launch in February.

Cho revealed the new Norman-backed events will be full-field with "70 to 80 Asian Tour members" with slots available to the top 200 in the world, plus others including elite amateurs. "To have 10 tournaments with prize money above \$1 million each has basically never before been seen on the Asian Tour," said Cho. "It's very likely to be the Asian Tour's most lucrative season." The majority shareholder in LIV Golf Investments is the Saudi Public Investment Fund (PIF), one of the world's largest sovereign wealth funds and behind the takeover of Premier League football club Newcastle United. — AFP

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Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Adan Hospital	23940620	Qadsiya	22515088
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300		Dasmah
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	22532265	
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EMERGENCY
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WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden speaks during an event honoring the 2021 NBA Championship Milwaukee Bucks on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, DC on Monday. — AFP

US President Biden welcomes Bucks as first NBA team back to White House

LOS ANGELES: The Milwaukee Bucks were “humbled” to be the first NBA team in almost five years to visit the White House as guests of the US president. The Bucks met with President Joe Biden on Monday, restarting a tradition that was halted during the tumultuous presidency of Donald Trump. “It’s amazing and humbling to be part of that tradition. It’s very cool,” said Bucks center Brook Lopez, who is from Los Angeles, California.

NBA players had chosen not to attend White House celebrations honoring championship US sports teams over Trump’s Republican policies directed at stripping away some of the rights of minorities, especially the civil rights of America’s Black community.

The Cleveland Cavaliers were the last NBA team to visit the White House, while former president Barack Obama was still in power. On Monday, the players and coaches met with Democratic leader

Biden, who singled out Donte DiVincenzo, who like the president comes from Delaware. “He won two state championships there,” Biden said. “So he’s used to this stuff.”

DiVincenzo said the experience would provide him with lifelong memories. “It’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” DiVincenzo said. “It was a humbling experience, for one, to see somebody from Delaware in the presidency, and two, to be here with the team,

win a championship, be here to celebrate that.”

Biden also talked about the rags-to-riches story of Bucks leading scorer Giannis Antetokounmpo, who rose from poverty growing up in Greece — which included sharing a pair of shoes with his brother — to realize the American dream. “I got a little emotional,” Antetokounmpo said. “I know how much (my family) sacrificed because this doesn’t go back eight years. This goes way back since I was a kid.” — AFP

Curry explodes for 50 as Warriors stay hot in NBA, Jokic ejected

LOS ANGELES: Stephen Curry scored a season-high 50 points and 10 assists as the Golden State Warriors improved to an NBA-leading 9-1 with a 127-113 rout of the Atlanta Hawks on Monday.

It was the 10th career 50-point game for the 33-year-old Curry, who passed Wilt Chamberlain to become the oldest player in NBA history with a 50-point, 10-assist game. Chamberlain did it when he was 31. In 35 minutes of playing time, Curry grabbed seven rebounds, shot nine-of-19 from the three-point line and was a perfect 13-of-13 from the free-throw line. A crowd of 18,060 chanted “MVP, MVP” when he shot the ball.

Curry basked in the glory of the moment, electrifying the Warrior crowd by waving his arms and dominating during several stretches of the game. He scored the Warriors’ first 13 points and also delivered a 10-point unanswered scoring burst in the third quarter.

Curry gave the Chase Center fans in San Francisco a scare in the first quarter when he appeared to injure his shoulder. After seeking medical attention on the sidelines during a timeout, he decided to stay in the game. Jordan Poole chipped in 16 points, while Andrew Wiggins had 13 for the Warriors. Trae Young scored 28 points and added nine assists to lead the Hawks.

Elsewhere, Nikola Jokic had 25 points, 15 rebounds and 10 assists for his first triple-double of the season before being ejected late in the game as the Denver Nuggets beat the Miami Heat 113-96. Jokic could face

possible suspension for retaliating against the Heat’s Markieff Morris and shouldering him hard in the back during a dust-up late in the game. Morris was also ejected.

“I feel bad. I am not supposed to react that way. He bumped me. It was a dirty play and I needed to protect myself,” said Jokic. The drama started when Morris shouldered Jokic in the midsection at half court with just under three minutes left.

Jokic returned the favour with a shoulder check from behind that sent Morris crashing to the floor. Medical personnel brought out a stretcher but Morris was able to get up and walk off the floor on his own. “That was a very dangerous, dirty play,” said Heat coach Erik Spoelstra. The teams meet again November 29 in Miami.

‘Randle a monster’

In Chicago, DeMar DeRozan scored a team-high 28 points as the Chicago Bulls halted the Brooklyn Nets’ five-game win streak with a 118-95 victory. Chicago, who were coming off consecutive single-digit losses to the Philadelphia 76ers, won comfortably after falling behind in the third quarter at United Center. The Nets had their successful run snapped by the Bulls despite Brooklyn’s Kevin Durant scoring 11 of his game-high 38 points in the final quarter.

DeRozan took over early in the fourth, scoring seven points during a key scoring burst by the Bulls. He hit 10 of 20 shots and scored at least 25 points for the fifth consecutive contest as Chicago defeated the Nets



DENVER: Nikola Jokic #15 of the Denver Nuggets runs on during a game against the Miami Heat on Monday at the Ball Arena in Denver, Colorado. — AFP

for the third time in the past 14 meetings.

Zach LaVine added 24 as Chicago shot 46.9 percent and outscored Brooklyn 42-17 in the fourth quarter. LaMarcus Aldridge tallied 19 and James Harden scored 14 as Brooklyn shot just 39.5 percent overall.

In Philadelphia, Julius Randle finished with 31 points and 12 rebounds and made several clutch plays on defense as the New York Knicks beat the short-handed 76ers 103-96. “He was a monster all the way around, the way the game started, the energy he was playing with, he set the tone defensively,” Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau said of Randle. “When he plays like that, it makes us a different team.”

Philadelphia were missing Joel Embiid, who earlier tested positive for the coronavirus. He is expected to be out for at least 10 days. In Los Angeles, Anthony Davis scored 32 points in overtime and added 12 rebounds as the Los Angeles Lakers halted a two-game losing skid with a 126-123 victory over the Charlotte Hornets. — AFP

Ferdinand says time for Solskjaer to leave Man Utd

LONDON: Rio Ferdinand has called for Ole Gunnar Solskjaer to hand over the Manchester United manager’s “baton” after a string of damaging results left the club well off the pace in the Premier League. The Norwegian boss is under intense pressure after a 5-0 home thumping by Liverpool and a one-sided 2-0 defeat at the hands of Manchester City on Saturday.

Ferdinand has been one of many ex-United players to voice support for his former team-mate, who led the club to a second-place finish in the league last season. The ex-England defender said fans started the season full of hope after the high-profile signings of Cristiano Ronaldo, Jadon Sancho and Raphael Varane before results nosedived.

“I sit here now and I don’t think we can challenge to win this league,” Ferdinand said on his Vibe with Five podcast. “I look at our team every week and I’m wondering what are we going to do tactically. I don’t see any philosophy or an identity in the Man United way of playing, whatever that should be from the management. I sit here confused, looking at the team.”

Ferdinand said United had made steady progress during Solskjaer’s



Ole Gunnar Solskjaer

nearly three years at the helm but now he felt there is a need for a change. “I was always deep down a bit skeptical,” said the 43-year-old. “Could he take us on to be champions? I wasn’t sure, I wasn’t fully convinced — I hoped he would be able to do that.”

“But the showing with the squad that he accumulated, to the beginning of this season — and what I’ve seen this season — I just feel it might be about the time now for the baton to be handed over to somebody else who can take us on now. And I think Ole would leave now with his head held high because from when he came in to where he got us to the beginning of the season I think it’s positive.” — AFP