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Amiri pardon panel meets, will issue report in 2 weeks

Assembly to open tomorrow • Panel approves civil rights for bedoons



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and MP Obaid Al-Wasmi at Dar Al-Yamama yesterday. — KUNA photos



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council and head of the Court of Cassation Ahmad Al-Ajeel meet at Bayan Palace yesterday upon the instructions of HH the Amir.

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: A high-level panel appointed by HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to set rules and conditions for an Amiri pardon held its first meeting yesterday, saying it expects to submit its first report to HH the Amir in two weeks. All three members - HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and Head of the Judicial Council Ahmad Al-Ajeel attended the meeting.

Ghanem said in a brief statement after the meeting that the "committee seeks to send its first report to the Amir within two weeks of the start of the (Assembly's) new term" tomorrow. He said the committee has prepared a work plan to complete its

assignment in the shortest time possible. Ghanem said he is optimistic about the outcome of the committee's work.

The committee was formed after 40 lawmakers signed an appeal to HH the Amir to pardon political prisoners, including former MPs who have been living in exile for over three years to escape jail terms. The initiative came after days of national dialogue between the government and three leading opposition MPs, in addition to Ghanem. The prime minister took part in the dialogue.

Nine opposition lawmakers refused to sign the appeal, saying it was not shown to them beforehand, while some of them said the reason for not signing it was because opposition MP Obaid Al-Wasmi, who read the appeal, said they sought authorization

from Ghanem. All the nine lawmakers however have declared their support for the pardon.

The incident created differences within opposition ranks, especially among the group of 31 opposition MPs, who traded accusations publicly. Members of the opposition exiled in Turkey meanwhile issued a statement thanking HH the Amir for his decision to pardon political activists. They also thanked the MPs who took part in the national dialogue - MPs Wasmi, Hasan Jowhar and Muhalhal Al-Mudhaf.

The statement however said they hope the pardon will be issued before the first Assembly session, which takes place two weeks after the inaugural session, which is scheduled for tomorrow.

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News in brief

Bahrain eyes carbon neutrality

MANAMA: Bahrain announced yesterday it aims to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2060, a day after neighboring Saudi Arabia made the same pledge ahead of the COP26 climate summit. Bahrain will use technology including carbon capture, as well as tree planting, to compensate for its emissions. In 1932, Bahrain became the first Gulf Arab state to produce petrol. Its reserves have since almost dried up, but in 2008 it announced it had discovered 80 billion barrels of shale oil. The kingdom only exports refined petroleum, not crude oil. It produces around 200,000 barrels per day, accounting for some 80 percent of state revenues. — AFP

Zionists to build 1,355 settler homes

JERUSALEM: The Zionist entity yesterday announced plans to build more residences for Zionist settlers in the occupied West Bank, drawing immediate condemnation from Palestinians, peace activists and neighboring Jordan. The announcement from the housing and construction ministry in rightwing Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's government said tenders had been published for 1,355 homes in the West Bank, which has been occupied by the Zionist entity since the 1967 Six-Day War. — AFP



KUWAIT: (Left) Students arrive to attend classes at Kuwait University for the first time in a year and a half after coronavirus restrictions were lifted yesterday. (Right) Passengers are seen at Kuwait International Airport after it resumed operations at full capacity yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Kuwait begins returning to normal life

KUWAIT: Amid a decline in COVID-19 infections, Kuwait cautiously entered the fifth phase of a gradual return to normal life, with various sectors returning to full capacity. Yesterday, the air-

port resumed operations at full capacity. Worshippers in mosques are now praying without distancing, while the requirement to wear masks in open areas has been lifted. However, wearing of masks and maintain social distancing is still in force in closed places such as shopping malls, restaurants and cafes.

Conferences and wedding parties were also allowed to be held from yesterday, provided only vaccinated people attend and participants wear masks. The Cabinet had also asked the interior ministry and the manpower authority to start issu-

ing all types of visas to people vaccinated with approved vaccines (Pfizer-BioNTech, Oxford-AstraZeneca, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson) from yesterday, but there were reports the relevant authorities are still waiting for further instructions.

The Cabinet had directed the Civil Aviation Department to operate Kuwait airport at its full capacity of around 30,000 passengers per day from yesterday. Airfares are expected to drop sharply as a result. Kuwait's land borders and sea terminals also began operations at full capacity. — Agencies

Local

Amir meets Crown Prince, Speaker, Premier, MP Wasmi



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets MP Dr Obaid Al-Wasmi.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets ministers of defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, interior Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and foreign affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and MP Dr Obaid Al-Wasmi. Furthermore, His Highness the Amir received Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr

Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and the Interior Minister Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir received Deputy Prime Minister and Justice Minister and Minister for Integrity Promotion Abdullah Yousef Al-Roumi. His Highness the Crown Prince also met with Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled and MP Wasmi. Furthermore, His Highness Sheikh Mishal received ministers Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali, Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad, Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem and Roumi. — KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is seen during his meeting with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and MP Dr Obaid Al-Wasmi.

Kuwait army chief meets Italian military official



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Armed Forces Chief of Staff Lieutenant-General Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah meets Italian Undersecretary of Defense Giorgio Mule. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Armed Forces Chief of Staff Lieutenant-General Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah met yesterday Italian Undersecretary of Defense Giorgio Mule, on the occasion of his official visit to the country. Both sides discussed bilateral ties,

cooperation, and issues of common interest, especially in the military field, the army said in a statement. Deputy Chief of Staff of the Kuwaiti Armed Forces Major General Fahad Al-Nasser attended the meeting. — KUNA

Under blockade, Gaza fishermen struggle for catch

GAZA: Crashing through the Mediterranean waves at sunset, Palestinian fisherman Mohammed Al-Nahal leads a convoy of rickety boats out for another risky night under the Zionist blockade of the Gaza Strip. Forced to stay close to shore due to Zionist restrictions on powerful engines, the men complain they must seek a catch from overfished shallow waters with declining stocks. "If we catch 200 kilos of sardines, that would be great," Nahal says. "But we can also come back emptyhanded."

High prices of fuel in the enclave means that fishing operating costs are crippling, making them stay closer inshore. "The further we go, the more we pay for fuel without guarantees about the catch," Nahal says, leading a line of five boats, the air heavy with the stench of diesel and sardines. For Gaza, fenced in by the Zionist entity and Egypt, and where Hamas Islamists took power in 2007, the open sea seems to offer the promise of freedom - but it is deceptive.

The Zionist entity's navy fully controls the waters off Gaza's 40-km long coastline, and regularly restricts or expands the size of the fishing zone in response to security conditions. After months of relative calm following an 11-day conflict

between the Zionist entity and Hamas in May, the permitted fishing zone was expanded last month to 15 nautical miles, its maximum under the blockade, including deep water with richer fish stocks.

But Nahal's crew does not venture that far. Six miles is their outer limit, good for sardines, but too close to shore for the bigger value fish such as tuna. "We fishermen do not have appropriate engines to reach a distance of 15 miles," Nahal says. "Currently, we are not allowed to enter Gaza with these modern engines." Some Palestinian fishermen are also fearful of heading out too far to sea. In the past, Zionist gunboats have opened fire and damaged nets to enforce access restrictions.

Making a living requires resourcefulness, and Nahal has repurposed a Volvo car engine to power the boat and run the powerful lights - which the fishermen shine into the night waters to attract the sardines. Due to the blockade's import restrictions, the Zionist entity also limits access to other key equipment such as sonar devices to find fish shoals. The Zionist entity restricts such items citing their "dual use", saying they could either aid Hamas weapons production, or the powerful engines could be used by smugglers.

But Yussef, 22, keeping watch on Nahal's boat, complains that with all Gaza's fishermen forced into the same small area, they struggle to catch enough to turn a profit. "There's not enough fish," he says. "I've lived off of fishing since I was 14. Every day, when the water is open, I go out. It's the only thing I know how to do in life."

For Gaza, home to some two million Palestinians

Amiri pardon panel meets...

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The statement was not signed by leading opposition former MP Faisal Al-Mislem, who is also in Turkey.

MP Wasmi, who came under fire by some of the nine opposition MPs who did not sign the appeal, said on Twitter that it was not acceptable that a "minority" spoils the pardon deal, a reference to the nine MPs. The differences cast doubts over the continuity of the opposition group, especially as a meeting of the group scheduled for yesterday night was called off by the organizer MP Fayeze Al-Jamhour after one of his relatives passed away.

It was not immediately known if the group will meet at another venue to organize for the Assembly's opening session, especially the election of panels. But MP Jowhar, who is a leading member of the group, said yesterday he is confident the group will continue and will not collapse.

Jowhar insisted in an interview that no concessions were made during the national dialogue, espe-

cially with regards to the constitution and grillings. He expected that the government will resign after the pardon is issued, adding that the pardon is the gateway for a host of reforms and for opening a new page in Kuwait's history.

Ghanem has sent invitations to lawmakers to attend the inaugural session of the second term of the Assembly tomorrow. His Highness the Amir will address the Assembly, in addition to the speaker and prime minister. This will be followed by the election of around a dozen permanent committees, which will study proposals and legislation before sending them to the house for voting.

Meanwhile, the Assembly committee on stateless people or bedoons yesterday unanimously approved legislation granting thousands of bedoons basic civil rights, head of the committee MP Marzouq Al-Khalifa said. Under the bill, bedoons will be issued civil IDs granting them free education and medical care and allowing them to seek jobs like others in the country.

Around 120,000 bedoons, who have been living in Kuwait for decades, claim they are citizens and deserve to get Kuwaiti citizenship. But authorities say a majority of them or their forefathers came to Kuwait from neighboring countries and destroyed their identification documents in order to get Kuwaiti nationality.



GAZA: Palestinian fishermen unload their catch from a boat upon their return to the coastline of Gaza City on Sept 22, 2021. — AFP

- roughly half of whom are unemployed - fish from the sea offer a critical source of protein. But as well as overfishing, the industry faces multiple challenges. They include poorly treated sewage pumped into the sea from the tightly packed city, "affecting the entire marine environment and public health", according to a 2020 World Bank report. "Many of the fish that people depend on are already overexploited," the World Bank adds.

This time, for Nahal, there is moderate success.

After hours shining bright lights into the waters, the boats encircle the area and cast their nets. "Here are the fish, catch them, for it is my fish that I love," the men sing as the catch is hauled up. Exhausted and back in port, the fishermen sell the catch in the busy port, where auctioneers shout prices to waiting wholesalers. For Nahal, the half-ton sells within 90 seconds for 3,000 shekels (\$935). It is more than he had hoped for, but is barely a profitable night once his costs and crew's wages are deducted. — AFP

Local

Al-Kharafi: Young entrepreneurs invited to design Capital entrance renovation project

Zain participates in inauguration of 'visionary landmark'

KUWAIT: Zain took part in the official inauguration of the greening and renovation project of the Capital's main entrance (islet between Abdullah Al-Salem and Al-Shamiya areas). The event witnessed the attendance of Al-Asimah Governor Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi in the presence of government dignitaries and other VIPs.

Zain, the national operator in Kuwait, was selected to renovate and maintain the main entrance of the Capital, a step that reflects the role of private sector companies in achieving social sustainability projects in partnership with the public sector.

The project is the fruitful result of a joint collaboration between the public and private sectors and will contribute to renovating the capital's entrance as a first step into beautifying all of the district's areas. Zain also explored the final design of a monument that the company



Asimah Governor announced start of renovations

the work on this project, as the company strongly believes in the capabilities of national talents and entrepreneurs.

It is worth noting that the nation's various entities view the private sector as a success partner in pushing sustainability efforts forward. The private sector has a pivotal role in shouldering local developmental plans, as companies support elevating the nation's infrastructures. The belief in the private sector's role and capabilities is a crucial factor in achieving economic growth and sustainability.

neurial youth participate in the design of this project as their visionary approaches will be a differentiator in making this a landmark in Kuwait."

Kharafi added: "We will support the efforts exerted by government entities to work on this project and other similar ones, which carry with them a real image of our legacy and culture as a society and country."

Kharafi explained: "We look forward to this being the beginning of more similar initiatives to renovate more Kuwaiti areas and increase the number of green spaces. This, of course, requires joint efforts between the private and public sectors and a shared vision to put sustainability at the heart of every business."

Capital Governor Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said, "Working on a beautification project and developing one of the main entrances to the capital, in partnership between the governorate and Zain Group executing



Bader Al-Kharafi and Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled in a chat during the visit.

the efforts they made in crowning their work by launching the national project in development and beautification on this day. It reaffirms the role of the private sector in the desired sustainable development and the role of Zain Group in social responsibility and its embodiment of the pioneering national role in beautifying and developing the capital and pushing our ambitions to achieve them and translate them on the ground.

He added that this project, which the governorate has achieved in cooperation and coordination with Zain Group since the project's initiative last May, indicates the implementation of cosmetic projects with parallel companies that submitted their initiatives on time for the governorate's vision of beautification and development.

At the conclusion of his speech, the Governor of the capital, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, expressed his thanks and appreciation to the Director General of the Public Authority for Agriculture and Fish Resources Sheikh Muhammad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, the Director General of Kuwait Municipality Ahmad Al-Manfouhi for their efforts that helped ease procedures related to the beautification and development of the capital.

Kuwait believes in the important role played by the private sector in supporting and shouldering the nation's various

developmental goals. This partnership makes this strategic vision a reality.

Zain has a long list of initiatives and programs as part of its sustainability strategy, especially within environmental areas. The company partnered with "A Green Dream" initiative on the occasion of Earth Day, which aimed at strengthening environmental awareness in Kuwait by focusing on the importance of replacing imported plantations with local ones, as well as introducing the various kinds of local plantations and their benefits to the community.

Zain executes an ambitious strategy in sustainability areas by exerting more efforts into reducing the environmental footprint of its operations, including preserving local resources, reducing energy consumption, using less power, recycling waste, implementing green solutions for electricity and water management, monitoring the company's impact on climate change, and more. Zain also recently sponsored Project UCON, an environmental initiative that sheds light on recycling.

Zain's support to this initiative comes in line with its core objectives that aim at shouldering the advancement of the community as a whole on all levels, where the company reaffirms the principal of partnership through similar efforts with the aim of contributing to the further progress of national goals and serve the country's developmental efforts.



Bader Al-Kharafi and Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled with Zain and the Governorate's officials.

will build in the location, and the company has decided to go with a unique design that reflects Kuwait's authentic heritage and culture.

Zain will take the responsibility of renovation and greening works for the islet's entire zone and has selected a national company that features young Kuwaiti engineers and designers to lead

Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi said: "At Zain, we embody the spirit of responsibility and partnership, as we take great care into supporting local initiatives and communities and exert more efforts into transforming them to green areas that reflect an elegant image of the nation. We are keen to have Kuwaiti entrepre-

the project, is the first beautification projects implemented by the private sector in the Capital Governorate."

On the sidelines of his attendance to announce the launch of the project, Al-Khaled said, "We thank the Vice Chairman and CEO of Zain Group, brother Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, the company's officials, and all its cadres for

work on increasing green areas and contribute to decreasing carbon footprint in the country," he added. This will be done by carrying out projects to get carbon and inject it in the soil and by installing filters on factories and electricity power plants, he noted. Describing the initiative as "very wonderful, proactive and big", Sheikh Abdullah said "we are confident that the Kingdom, through its potentials, can play its role and reduce emissions in the country. He pointed to the huge project launched today that aims to plant about ten billion trees and will certainly contribute to reducing the carbon footprint in the Saudi Arabia and the neighboring region. He highlighted the difficult climate in Kuwait and the Gulf states and that the aim is to obtain the quantities of water needed to plant trees and select suitable plants for this region. "We saw other projects today like alternative energy transition," he stated.

Supporting Saudi

Earlier on Saturday, Minister Fares said that Kuwait would support Saudi Arabia and the GCC as a partner in the efforts to transition to more environment-friendly energy resources. In his participation at a discussion over sustainable economic growth on the sideline of the Saudi Green Initiative Forum, Minister Fares affirmed that it was important to implement efforts for energy transition. He said that it was important for GCC countries to strike a balance in seeking renewable energy resources in addition to benefiting from regular resources such as oil and natural gas.

Kuwait, he indicated, had suffered immensely in the last few years from the impact of climate change with the weather shifting from extreme heat to shivering cold as well as a noticeable increase in sandstorm activity and heavy rain. He stressed that it was imperative for the world to abide by the Paris Agreement on climate change for a better future. He added that Kuwait had focus on introducing the concept of renewable energy and its production to the oil sector, mentioning that in the era of late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, a goal was set to introduce 15 percent of Kuwait's need of electrical energy through renewable energy resources.

Kuwait took part in the SGI Forum with a delegation including Fares, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah, Oil Ministry Undersecretary Sheikh Dr Nimr Fahad Al-Sabah and CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation Hashem Hashem. — KUNA

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait eye joint ventures; minister

RIYADH: Kuwait's oil minister said on Saturday that his country and larger neighbor Saudi Arabia are planning a number of joint endeavors, including common efforts to slash methane emissions, as he commended Riyadh for its Green Initiative. "We have similar ideas on a number of

ing decade as part of efforts to reduce carbon emissions, the minister said such initiatives were a "source of pride." Major oil-producing nations have a pivotal role to play towards curbing climate-warming gases, subsequently ensuring a "clean environment," added the minister.

Climate change

The Saudi Green Initiative (SGI) will work on combating and curbing climate change, Director General of Kuwait's Public Authority for Environment and Chairman of Board of Directors Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Humoud Al-Sabah



RIYADH: Kuwait's Oil Minister Dr Mohammad Al-Fares speaks during his participation in the Saudi Green Initiative forum. — KUNA

projects covering areas such as the marine environment, in addition to mutual concerns over matters like climate change and desertification," Dr Mohammad Al-Fares said on the sidelines of the Saudi Green Initiative forum in Riyadh. On the kingdom's tree-planting drive that envisages planting some 10 billion trees in the com-

said on Saturday. Speaking to the press on the sidelines of the SGI Forum, Sheikh Abdullah said "we saw a big project launched today to increase trees in the region, and other projects seeking to reduce carbon emissions and use environment friendly energy."

"Our role in Kuwait is to integrate with Saudi Arabia in this regard, and we will



KUWAIT: Kuwait University facilities welcomed yesterday around 36,000 enrolled students who returned to campus after a year and half break due to COVID-19 precautionary measures. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Communications ministry warns of scam messages

By Nawara Fattahwa

KUWAIT: Many citizens and expatriates have been scammed after paying to receive their shipments. This new scam is widespread in Kuwait, even as the ministry of communications emphasized that it never sends messages or emails to people to ask them to pay to receive their shipments. The scammers use the name of the ministry of communications with its official logo to appear authentic and gain people's trust. The message reads: "You have a parcel, and you need to pay KD 2 in postal fees through the attached link." After paying online with your credit card, it says you will receive your parcel the next morning. The link is only valid for 24 hours. The ministry of communications has warned people not to open the link or pay the fees, even if they are actually expecting a parcel. By entering the card information, the scammer will get your bank data to clear your account.

Kuwait's Foreign Minister attends UN Day ceremony

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah sponsored and attended yesterday a ceremony celebrating the United Nations Day (October 24), a day when the UN Charter entered into force. The ceremony was also attended by UN Secretary-General's Representative and Resident Coordinator in Kuwait, Dr Tareq Al-Sheikh. The ceremony was held in Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's building, the United Nations House in Kuwait.

The Foreign Minister gave a speech in which he expressed pride at having participated in such an event, as the UN serves as a reference for Kuwait's diplomatic work by promoting tolerance, peace, and striving towards a better world. In his speech, the minister thanked Dr Sheikh and all those who work in the UN House in Kuwait for their considerable organization efforts and continuous hard work in representing Kuwait's strategic relations with the UN. Sheikh Dr Ahmad talked of Kuwait's long-standing history with the UN beginning in Kuwait joining the organization in 1963, and cited Kuwait's ongoing efforts in limiting human suf-

fering. He also noted the UN's role in helping Kuwait regain its independence in 1991, and stated that it is a prime example of the organization's work in keeping peace and maintaining security.

The minister stated that this comes as a continuation of the late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's humanitarian efforts, which will doubtlessly be continued by His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He also mentioned the toll the coronavirus pandemic took on all aspects of life, and highlighted how it required the international community to join efforts and collaborate to face such challenges and eradicate the pandemic.

The Foreign Minister talked about the UN's considerable efforts in coming up with strategies to combat climate change and supporting countries' labors in that regard. He also highlighted the integral role of youth in facing climate change, shedding light on the Late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's efforts in supporting the youth and providing them with opportu-



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah attends a ceremony celebrating the United Nations Day yesterday. — KUNA

Technicalities delay reopening visas to Kuwait

KUWAIT: Interior ministry officials are expected to hold meetings this week to discuss the mechanism of implementing the Cabinet's decision to reopen visas for foreigners to enter Kuwait. While reopening visas was supposed to take effect on October 24, it will likely be delayed for one or two weeks until the interior ministry can agree on the proper mechanism to resume visa issuing, according to multiple reports.

The Cabinet's decisions to restore normal life in Kuwait had gone into effect from yesterday, but the decisions related to issuing visas and full operations at Kuwait International Airport need one or two weeks for actual implementation, Al-Rai Arabic daily reported yesterday, quoting sources.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation said it was ready for full airport operation on a gradual basis as per an organized plan, through coordination with con-

cerned authorities working at the airport, ground services and airlines as well as communicating with various airports in this regard. Deputy Director General for Airport Affairs Saleh Al-Fadaghi said that airport operation traffic will be as is this week as the DGCA waits for the monthly operating schedules from airlines starting November. The number of flights and new destinations are expected to increase then, he added.

Meanwhile, security sources said the decision to resume the issuance of entry visas for vaccinated individuals requires several steps which could come into effect "within days" or by the beginning of November at the earliest, adding that "there will be a meeting for senior leadership of the ministry to decide the decision's implementation mechanism in coordination with Public Authority for Manpower." The sources said that following the success of Interior Ministry in moving to digital processing of transactions during the COVID-19 crisis, it wants to continue doing the same and issue new visas online.

60+ visas

In the meantime, the Public Authority for Manpower is expected to hold a meeting this week chaired by Minister of Commerce and Industry Dr Abdullah Al-Salman to finalize the issue pertaining to

ities as a part of Kuwait's vision 2035, as they are a key instrument for change and development. Concluding his speech, the Foreign Minister expressed hope in reaching global harmony and ensuring a better future. Participating in the ceremony were ambassadors, heads of diplomatic delegations, heads of representative offices, and state officials. — KUNA

suspension of visas of residents aged 60 and older who do not have a university degree. An official decision to cancel the suspension is expected to be announced following the meeting, Al-Rai reported yesterday.

"The Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Manpower will hold a meeting on Wednesday under the chairmanship of Commerce and Industry Minister Dr Abdallah Al-Salman to make a decision regarding the suspension of visas of residents aged 60 years and above," said sources quoted in the report.

It is expected that the board will cancel the decision to ban issuing work permits for residents who reach 60 years of age and who have high school and below academic qualification - a decision that was overruled by the Fatwa and Legislation Department, said the sources.

Furthermore, the sources indicated that there is some agreement among the authority's board members to cancel the decision during Wednesday's expected meeting, and instruct concerned authorities to start issuing permits for this group of people as the case was before the decision. On the other hand, the sources noted that the board members still mull a proposal to impose a renewal fee of KD 250 and private health insurance.

Boursa Kuwait rings the bell for climate action on UN Day 2021

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait virtually rang the bell for climate action during United Nations Day 2021 in collaboration with the United Nations and their Representative of the Secretary General and Resident Coordinator Office in the State of Kuwait.

The initiative forms part of Boursa Kuwait's efforts to create a lasting meaningful impact on the communities where it operates as part of its Corporate Sustainability strategy, and is in line with Goal 13 - Climate Action - and Goal 17 - Partnership for the Goals - of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the National Development Plan for the State of Kuwait, "New Kuwait 2035".

In commemoration of UN Day 2021, the United Nations is organizing the "Youth4Climate Action" Exhibition at the United Nations House located in West Mishref. The theme of this exhibition is based around SDG 13 on Climate Action, under the title "Youth for Climate Action - Inspiration, Action, Transformation - and will shed light on Kuwaiti youth initiatives that contribute to climate action and encourage the wider society to follow in their footsteps. Additionally, several buildings in Kuwait and around the world, including the Boursa Kuwait building, were lit up in blue to celebrate this event.

Commenting on the initiative, Boursa Kuwait's Marketing and Communication Director, Naser M Al-Sanousi, said, "Today on United Nations Day, we ring the bell for climate action in collaboration with the United Nations and the Resident Coordinator of the State of Kuwait. Boursa Kuwait is keen to adopt and promote sustainable standards and practices, endorsing the efforts of market participants to enhance performance on environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) issues."

Al-Sanousi added, "Since 2017, Boursa Kuwait has been a member of the United Nations' Sustainable Stock Exchange initiative, making a formal commitment to the sustainability of listed companies and their operations. The exchange has sponsored a variety of green initiatives to preserve our natural environment, acting as a catalyst for positive, environmental change by seeking strategic partnerships and launching initiatives that limit environmental impact, as part of our Corporate Sustainability strategy, which is in line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals."

Dr Tareq El-Sheikh, the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Designated Official, also spoke on this occasion, saying, "Kuwait is confronted with a series of climate challenges that require us to take action and cooperate in shedding light on climate change, encouraging our communities to work together towards changing behaviors that pose a threat to our planet. We applaud Boursa Kuwait's role as a strategic partner in achieving the United



Naser Al-Sanousi

Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and being a role model in Kuwait."

El-Sheikh added, "We celebrate United Nations Day this year by highlighting the efforts of youth toward climate action in Kuwait. We are honored to see many young people from Kuwait playing an active role in climate action and encouraging their communities to save our planet."

In 2020, Boursa Kuwait collaborated with the UN Environment Programme and the Kuwait Dive Team - under the umbrella of the Environmental Voluntary Foundation (EVF), for the preservation of marine life in and around the Kuwait Bay, one of the richest, most diverse ecosystems in the Gulf and a key contributor to the Kuwaiti economy.

The company's activities with the Kuwait Dive Team resulted in the removal of around 63 tons of various waste from the Bay by the Company-sponsored Boursa Boat. These trips included a two-ton clearing of hazardous waste from beaches and islands, in collaboration with government institutions; eight trips to clear 4.8 tons of fishing nets; and six operations to remove wrecked ships and boats, with the combined weight of 56 tons.

The bourse also rang the bell for World Earth Day, one of the most important environmental initiatives around the world, in collaboration with the UN Environment Programme's Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP) and the EVF. As part of the ceremony, Boursa Kuwait reinforced its partnership with the EVF and the Kuwait Dive Team in association with the UNEP, sponsoring the 2021 National Campaign to Remove Hazardous Waste from the Kuwait Bay and its Beaches and supporting the Dive Team's efforts for the preservation of Kuwait's marine environment.

In an effort to maintain and upgrade the facilities and utilities of the building, Boursa Kuwait put into effect a plan that entails the revamp of the building's facilities and utilities, including an upgrade to various utilities across the premises, such as the elevators, the escalators, and the heating ventilation and air condition systems (HVAC) and air diffusers. This upgrade will reduce energy consumption by more than 20 percent, in line with the company's CS strategy and supporting the twelfth goal of the SDGs related to responsible consumption and production.

Boursa Kuwait'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 non-governmental 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.

Marine life research vessels arrive in Kuwait

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) continues its achievements with the arrival of two scientific research vessels for oceanography, fisheries, and marine resources management. Al-Mostakshif and Bahith 1 are multipurpose vessels for conducting high quality surveys and sampling over a wide range of geographical ranges including all marine areas in the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, and the Arabian Sea. In a statement to the press, the director of the Marine Resource Management Department at (KISR) Dr Mohsen Al-Hussaini said that Al-Mostakshif has been built according to the highest and most recent scientific standards. The Marine Management Department has established this excellent research center: the National Unit for Oceanography and Marine Resources Management, with specialized laboratories in different domains of oceanography and fisheries, Hussaini noted.

Al-Mostakshif and Bahith 1 will have regional and international significance, with many objectives, including conservation of food security, biodiversity, environment resilience, and



KUWAIT: Al-Mostakshif multipurpose vessel.

assessment of marine environment dynamics. It will study the climate change and its impacts on marine ecosystems, assessment of harmful algal blooms and their impact on marine resources and coastal activities, and the formulation of management policies for marine resources' conservation and sustainability. Al-Mostakshif will contribute to evaluating fish stocks, sustainable management of renewable resources, conducting joint research projects with countries in the region and international organizations, Hussaini explained.

The construction of Al-Mostakshif took approximately two years and was built in the shipyard of the Freire Company in Spain, under the supervision of World Class Det Norske Veritas (DNV) and a United Kingdom-based consultancy office. It is considered the

most modern RV in the Middle East that includes high quality technical research capabilities and modern technologies. It contains seven laboratories with a total area of 223 square meters for chemistry, biology, acoustics, fish, fish processing, and diving to serve oceanography fisheries, and habitat surveys. It also contains eight scientific winches, three cranes, and three hydraulic frames for deployment of equipment.

This large vessel has side-scan sonar, multi beam echo sounder for fishing and topographic sea bottom surveys, and a dynamic positioning system. It can accommodate a crew of up to 15 individuals and up to 14 researchers. All facilities as well as modern navigation and communication systems are included to facilitate researchers to undertake all types of survey cruises. — KUNA

Indian Embassy, Doctors Forum launch breast cancer campaign

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: Indian Embassy, Kuwait, in collaboration with Indian Doctors Forum, Kuwait launched a week-long breast cancer awareness campaign with a free medical screening camp and a moderated roundtable discussion. The free medical screening camp is being held on the embassy premises from October 21 to 27 from 3pm to 5pm.

During a function held at the embassy, Indian Ambassador Sibi George, accompanied by his spouse Joice Sibi and healthcare professionals, formally inaugurated the breast cancer screening camp. Several female visitors who attended the function availed of the screening facility. On the sidelines, the embassy, in association with the Indian Doctors Forum and the Indian Women's Network (IWN), Kuwait, organized an event titled 'India: The Global Healthcare Destination.' The event marked the celebration of the historic milestone of India administering one billion COVID-19 vaccine doses.

On the occasion, the ambassador

emphasized India's prowess in the healthcare domain, showcased India's journey to scale the one billion COVID-19 vaccine landmark and shared relevant excerpts from India's experiences in the global fight against the pandemic.

A roundtable discussion focusing on breast cancer awareness was also held as part of the event. October is breast cancer awareness month, an annual campaign to raise awareness about the impact of breast cancer. Dr

Madhu Gupta, consultant gynecologist, Farwaniya Hospital (chairperson and moderator); Dr Susovana Sujit Nair, medical oncologist, Kuwait Cancer Control Centre (KCCC); Dr Rifat Jehan, medical oncologist, KCCC, Thasneem Amir, specialist pathologist, KCCC; and Dr Tasneem Jasvi, senior obstetrician and gynecologist, Ministry of Health, were the panelists who led the roundtable discussion. All aspects related to breast cancer were explained in simple language by the experts with emphasis on leading a healthy lifestyle, paying attention to preventive healthcare and of undergoing periodic medical screening.



KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador Sibi George with members of the Indian Doctors Forum during the launch of the breast cancer awareness campaign.



Iran's Khamenei urges reversal of Arab-Zionist normalizations

France launches state-of-art military communications satellite

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BOGOTA: Handout picture shows members of the Colombian Army escorting Colombia's most-wanted drug lord and head of the Gulf Clan, Dairo Antonio Usuga (center) - alias 'Otoniel' -, after his capture in Bogota. — AFP

Most-wanted drug lord captured

A major victory for the Colombian government

BOGOTA: Colombia's most-wanted drug trafficker "Otoniel" has been captured, officials said Saturday, a major victory for the government of the world's top cocaine exporter. Dairo Antonio Usuga, who headed the country's largest narco-trafficking gang known as the Gulf Clan, was captured near one of his main outposts in Necocli, near the border with Panama. Images released by the government showed the 50-year-old Otoniel in handcuffs and surrounded by soldiers. "This is the hardest strike to drug trafficking in our country this century," president Ivan Duque said in a message, adding that the arrest was "only comparable to the fall of Pablo Escobar," the notorious Colombian narco-trafficking kingpin.

Some 500 soldiers backed by 22 helicopters were deployed in the Necocli municipality to carry out the operation, which left one police officer dead. It was "the biggest penetration of the jungle ever seen in

the military history of our country", Duque said. A live broadcast by the police later showed a handcuffed Otoniel landing in Bogota before being taken into custody under heavy security.

Colombia's police chief Jorge Vargas said during a press conference that authorities carried out "an important satellite operation with agencies of the United States and the United Kingdom." According to police, Otoniel was hiding in the jungle in the Uraba region, where he is from, and did not use a telephone, relying on couriers to communicate. Fearful of authorities, he "slept there in the rain, never approaching inhabited areas," Vargas said. The United States had offered a \$5 million bounty for information leading to the arrest of Otoniel, one of the most feared men in Colombia.

He was indicted in the United States in 2009, and faces extradition proceedings to the country, where

he would appear in the Southern District of New York federal court. The Colombian government blames the group-financed mainly through drug trafficking, illegal mining and extortion-for being one of the main drivers of the worst bout of nationwide violence since the signing of a peace pact with FARC guerrillas in 2016. The Gulf Clan is present in almost 300 municipalities in the country, according to the independent think tank Indepaz. However, recent government efforts have seen the organization decimated.

Life of violence

Although Otoniel announced in 2017 he intended to reach an agreement to participate with the Colombian justice system, the government responded by deploying at least 1,000 soldiers to hunt him down. He took over the leadership of the Gulf Clan- previously known as the Usuga Clan- from his brother

er Juan de Dios, who was killed by police in 2012. Born to a poor family, Otoniel joined the Popular Liberation Army (EPL), a Marxist guerrilla group that demobilized in 1991. After laying down his arms, he later returned to fighting, joining far-right paramilitary groups.

Many of these were demobilized in 2006 at the initiative of former right-wing president Alvaro Uribe's administration, but Otoniel decided to remain in the fight. Colombia is the world's top producer of cocaine, with the United States as its principal market, despite half a century of efforts to clamp down on the drug trade. In remote areas where there is little government presence, criminal groups like the Gulf Clan, dissident FARC guerrillas and leftist ELN rebels fight bloody turf battles to control drug trafficking corridors and illegal mining operations. — AFP

'Otoniel': From peasant to most feared drug lord

BOGOTA: The chief of the biggest drug gang in the world's top cocaine producer, Dairo Usuga - known as Otoniel - was captured by authorities in Colombia, the government said Saturday. The announcement marked the fall of a man who emerged from a poor peasant family to become Colombia's most-wanted man. At the helm since 2012, Otoniel has been able to evade capture despite a \$5 million US bounty on his head and massive manhunts involving more than 1,000 men.

Offering the reward in 2009, the US State Department described the gang as "a heavily armed, extremely violent criminal organization." It "uses violence and intimidation to control the narcotics trafficking routes, cocaine processing laboratories, speedboat departure points and clandestine landing strips," its website says. President Ivan Duque compared Otoniel's arrest to the fall of Pablo Escobar, the

great cocaine baron killed by Colombian police in 1993

Dairo Antonio Usuga was born on September 15, 1971 in Necocli, northwestern Colombia, the seventh of nine children in a family that lived off the sale of cattle, pigs and poultry. At 18 he joined the Popular Liberation Army (EPL), a Marxist guerrilla group that demobilized in 1991. "He was not revolutionary," his mother said in an interview with the daily El Tiempo in 2015. "That was all there was and he went with them." In 1993-1994 Otoniel stood with the far-right paramilitary Peasant Self-Defenders of Cordoba and Uraba (ACCU), which was created to protect farmers against left-wing guerrillas and was linked to drug trafficking.

It became part of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia group of paramilitaries that fought leftist armed groups during the country's long conflict and were involved in the drug trade. The paramilitaries were officially disbanded in 2006, after negotiations with the government, but some continued in what became the Gulf Clan gang. Otoniel had no particular ideology but he felt "betrayed" by the demobilization process and chose to remain underground, security analyst Ariel

Avila told AFP in 2017.

He took over the leadership of the Gulf Clan, previously known as the Usuga Clan, from his brother Juan de Dios, who was killed by police in 2012. The brothers together built a criminal network active in almost 300 of Colombia's 1,102 municipalities, concentrated mainly on the Pacific coast from where most drugs leave the country. The Gulf Clan's portfolio of illicit activities also includes illegal mining and human trafficking. It works with street gangs that handle micro-trafficking, extortion and assassinations, says the InSight Crime foundation that studies organized crime in Latin America.

Otoniel "became leader by inspiring fear, and it is out of fear that he is respected," police anti-narcotics division chief Jose Angel Mendoza said in 2017. He avoided capture over the years using guerrilla tactics, including only travelling by foot or donkey and never sleeping two straight nights in the same place, according to Colombian authorities. In June 2017 police choppers scoured lush banana fields of the north for him, certain they came close. "He has had to run for it at the last second more than once," Mendoza said at the time. — AFP

Man asks police to jail him to escape wife at home

ROME: For some people, going to prison can feel like escaping to freedom. A man under house arrest in Italy showed up at a police barracks asking to be put behind bars because life with his wife at home was unbearable, police said yesterday. The 30-year-old Albanian citizen living in Guidonia Montecelio, outside Rome,

"was no longer able to cope with the forced cohabitation with his wife," Carabinieri police from nearby Tivoli said in a statement. "Exasperated by the situation, he preferred to escape, spontaneously presenting himself to the Carabinieri to ask to serve his sentence behind bars," they wrote.

The man had been under house arrest for drug crimes for several months and had a few years left to serve, Captain Francesco Giacomo Ferrante of the Tivoli Carabinieri told AFP. "He lived at home with his wife and family. It wasn't going well anymore," Ferrante said. "He said, 'Listen, my domestic life has become hell, I can't do it anymore, I want to go to jail.'" The man was promptly arrested for violating his house arrest and judicial authorities ordered his transfer to prison. — AFP

264 Houthi rebels killed



MARIB: A fighter loyal to Yemen's Saudi-backed government mans a position at the frontline facing Iran-backed Houthi rebels in the country's northeastern province of Marib. — AFP

RIYADH: The Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen said yesterday it had killed more than 260 Houthi rebels in the past three days near the strategic city of Marib. "Thirty-six military vehicles were destroyed and more than 264" rebel fighters were killed in strikes in the past 72 hours in Al-Jawba, some 50 kilometers south of Marib, and Al-Kassara, 30 kilometers to the northwest, the coalition said, quoted by the Saudi Press Agency. The Iran-backed Houthis rarely comment on losses, and AFP could not independently verify the toll. The coalition has for the past two weeks reported almost daily strikes around Marib, the

internationally recognized government's last bastion in oil-rich northern Yemen.

It says it has killed hundreds of Houthi rebels in the fighting. The Houthis began a major push to seize Marib in February, and have renewed their offensive since September after a lull. The Yemeni civil war began in 2014 when the Houthis seized the capital Sanaa, 120 kilometers west of Marib, prompting Saudi-led forces to intervene to prop up the government the following year. Tens of thousands of people have died and millions have been displaced, in what the United Nations has called the world's worst humanitarian crisis. — AFP

International

Deadly explosion rocks Uganda; president calls it 'terrorist act'

Ugandan President vows to hunt down terror suspects

News in brief

Man shot dead in Kashmir

SRINAGAR: Indian paramilitaries shot dead a civilian in Kashmir yesterday, residents said, as authorities tightened security across the disputed territory for a visit by a top Indian minister. The victim, a milk seller in the southern Kashmir Valley, is the 12th civilian killed by militants or security forces this month as attacks increase in the Muslim-majority region. New Delhi has about 500,000 troops and paramilitaries in Kashmir seeking to contain a rebel movement agitating for independence or the region's merger with Pakistan. Police said the man was hit in "crossfire" during "militant action" near a police paramilitary camp in the village of Zainapora and that the incident was being investigated. Villagers told AFP the man had been fatally shot without provocation. Amit Shah, India's home minister and effective deputy to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been in Kashmir since Saturday, adding to security concerns. — AFP

Contaminated Chinese fertilizer

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka has barred a Chinese ship carrying desperately needed organic fertilizer that experts have found to be tainted with harmful bacteria, officials said yesterday. The action comes as Sri Lanka battles food shortages caused by a currency crisis while farmers have said a government ban on chemical fertilizer could ruin their crops this year. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's office said the National Plant Quarantine Services had tested a sample from the unnamed Chinese vessel and "confirmed the presence of organisms, including certain types of harmful bacteria". A Commercial High Court has banned any payment to Qingdao Seawin Biotech Group Co., Ltd for the 96,000 tons of fertilizer, an official statement added. Authorities halted the \$42 million deal last month, but reports said the cargo had still been shipped and was due in Colombo. The location of the ship has not been revealed. — AFP

Cargo ship spewing toxic gas

WASHINGTON: A container ship has caught fire and is expelling toxic gas off Canada's Pacific coast, authorities said yesterday. The Zim Kingston ship had been bound for Vancouver when the flames erupted, with the fire reported to the coast guard at around 11 pm local time, CBC News reported. "The ship is on fire and expelling toxic gas," the Canadian Coast Guard said in a statement on its website, adding that the vessel remains anchored off the coast of British Columbia. "An emergency zone has been established at Constance Bank within 1 mile of the anchored container ship Zim Kingston," the agency said. It is unclear what caused the blaze. The coast guard said the ship is carrying more than 52,000 kg of chemicals located in two of the containers that are on fire, CBC News said. At least ten crew members have been evacuated, according to media reports. — AFP

Namibia halts Sputnik jabs

JOHANNESBURG: Namibia has discontinued the use of Russia's Sputnik V Covid-19 vaccine following concerns raised by neighboring South Africa, the health ministry said on Saturday. Neighboring South Africa earlier this week said it would not approve Sputnik V due to concerns it could increase the risk of HIV infection among men, a claim the vaccine's developer says is unfounded. The Namibian health ministry said in a statement that following South Africa's decision it was suspending, with immediate effect, use of the shots until the formula is listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization. "The reason for discontinuation of the administration of the vaccine is being done out of abundance of caution that men who received Sputnik V may be at higher risk of contracting HIV when exposed to it," said the ministry. Namibia had taken delivery of a Serbian donation of 30,000 Sputnik doses - out of which less than 120 have been administered so far. — AFP

Nigeria gunmen free inmates

LAGOS: Heavily armed men have stormed a prison in southwestern Nigeria using grenades, the facility said on Saturday, with unconfirmed media reports saying that nearly a thousand inmates had escaped. "Gunmen that came in large numbers" attacked the Abonlogo correctional facility with grenades on Friday evening, Olanrewaju Anjorin, an administration spokesman for the prison in Oyo State, told AFP. "A lot of inmates were re-arrested after the attack, and it is still ongoing," he said, without specifying how many prisoners had escaped, or confirming whether there had been any casualties. The police will issue a statement with more details about the attack soon, he added. Several local media outlets reported that almost 1,000 inmates were released during the attack. — AFP

KAMPALA: Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni said yesterday an explosion in the capital Kampala that killed one person and injured five was "a terrorist act", vowing to hunt down those responsible. Police said a "serious blast" occurred at around 9 pm on Saturday at a grilled pork joint in Komamboga, a northern Kampala suburb popular with roadside diners. Museveni said he had been briefed that three people left a plastic shopping bag at the scene that later exploded, killing one person and injuring five others.

"It seems to be a terrorist act but we shall get the perpetrators," Museveni said on Twitter. He said investigators were still combing the bomb site and more details would be released later, including advice for the public about "dealing with these pos-



Blast kills 1, injures five

sible terrorists". "The public should not fear, we shall defeat this criminality like we have defeated all the other criminality committed by the pigs who don't respect life," Museveni said.

Masked anti-terrorism police dressed in black fatigues held journalists and members of the public several hundred meters back from the blast site yesterday. Police forensic officers in white overalls could be seen examining areas close to the scene. The explosion occurred about two hours after the start of a nationwide dusk-to-dawn coronavirus

Mexico hunts for missing children of 'Dirty War'

MEXICO CITY: Decades after his sister disappeared during the political repression of Mexico's "Dirty War," Roberto Martinez hopes to finally meet the child he believes she gave birth to while held captive. The creation of a government commission to search for at least 14 children thought to have been born to alleged victims of forced disappearance has given relatives newfound optimism.

The alleged perpetrators were now-defunct police and military groups accused of serious human rights violations. Martinez's sister Lourdes was detained at the age of 23 in Culiacan in north-west Mexico in 1974, during a dark chapter in Mexican history. She was a member of the September 23 Communist League, a guerrilla group that fought the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which ruled the country as a one-party state for seven decades.

"I hope my nephew or niece was born and is out there," Martinez told AFP by telephone from Culiacan. "Two people from our family disappeared," the 65-year-old retired teacher said, fighting back tears. It is the first time that the Mexican government has searched for people thought to have been given up for adoption after the forced disappearance of their mothers. A specialized search unit was formed in mid-2019, but its work is just beginning.

Around 500 political dissidents and students were subjected to forced disappearance from the 1960s to the 1980s, according to the National Human Rights Commission. "I hope with all my soul

France launches state-of-the-art military satellite

KOUROU: France has successfully launched a state-of-the-art satellite into orbit, designed to allow all of France's armed forces across the globe to communicate swiftly and securely. Paris created a space force command in July 2019, amongst concerns that rival countries were heavily investing in space technology, seen as a new military frontier. The satellite "is designed to resist military aggression from the ground and in space, as well as interference," French air and space force spokesman Colonel Stephane Spet told AFP.

The Ariane 5 rocket carrying the Syracuse 4A satellite took off from Kourou, in French Guiana late Saturday, with the mission accomplished 38 minutes and 41 seconds after takeoff. The satellite can survey its close surroundings and move itself to escape an attack. "Thanks to its state-of-the-art equipment (anti-jamming antenna and digital transparent processor on board), Syracuse 4A will guarantee a high resistance to extreme jamming methods," launch provider Arianespace wrote in its mission description.

Marc Finaud, an expert in weapons proliferation at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, told AFP the satellite was also protected against the electromagnetic pulses which would result from a nuclear explosion. "This is the final warning scenario, if deterrence fails," he added. In March France began its first military exercises in space to test its ability



KAMPALA: Ugandan police officers investigate at a crime scene following a bomb blast last night in Kampala yesterday. Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni said that an explosion in the capital Kampala was 'a terrorist act' and vowed to hunt down those responsible. — AFP

curfew. Security forces rushed to the scene in Komamboga, a fast-growing suburb about eight kilometers north of Kampala city centre.

Roadside eateries with plastic furniture cater to local residents there, particularly young professionals moving into newly-constructed apartment buildings in the once-rural area. Local mayor Emmanuel Sserunjogi said the bombing took place in an area popular with revellers looking for roasted meat and drinks on a night out. "The community are frightened. It was such a terrible act. People were woken up by the sound of the bomb," he told AFP.

Terror warnings

It is the first such deadly attack in many years in Kampala, a bustling city on the shores of Lake Victoria. But it followed an uptick in recent weeks

that the authorities help me to find my nephew or niece and their mother," Martinez said. "I'd like to tell everyone who was possibly born in the same circumstances how much their mothers gave for this country," he added.

'One of cruelest things'

The commission will review official files and testimonies of survivors in an attempt to locate the missing. Forcing women to undergo "clandestine births, possibly to take away the children, must be one of the cruelest things that one human can do to another," said the search unit's head, Javier Yankelevich. He urged anyone with doubts about their origins to "explore the possibility that the story they were told is not theirs and approach the institutions to go through the process to discover their identity."

According to Camilo Vicente, who wrote a book on forced disappearances, there are indications that irregular adoptions did happen in Mexico, though not as many as in some other countries like Argentina and Chile. "Even if there are one or two cases, it's the state's obligation to look for them," Vicente said. The authorities must reveal "how many children have died in military operations or suffered torture, another of the hidden stories of that long-denied counterinsurgency in Mexico," he said.

'Losing my mind'

Roberto Antonio Gallangos and his wife Carmen Vargas, also members of the Communist League, were detained in separate operations in 1975 and then disappeared. Their four-year-old son Lucio Antonio and two-year-old daughter Aleida were separated and looked after by friends of the couple. The boy was abducted by agents during another operation in which he was injured.

Aleida was given to a family by the man who was



REIMS: Stanislas Maximin, the 22-year-old CEO of Venture Orbital Systems, a start-up with the ambition to produce micro-satellite launchers, poses with a 1/4 scale model of the ZEPHYR launcher. — AFP

to defend its satellites, calling them "a first for the French army and even a first in Europe".

The French government accuses Russia of having brought its intelligence-gathering satellite Olymp-K, also known as Louch, into close proximity of the French-Italian military satellite Athena-Fidus in 2017, in what Defense Minister Florence Parly called "an act of espionage". Last year, the US claimed that Russia had conducted a non-destructive anti-satellite weapons test from space. In March French President Emmanuel Macron's office said there had been other similar incidents since, but gave no details. Investments in France's space program are set to reach 4.3 billion euros (\$5 billion) over the 2019-2025 budget period - although that is a fraction of the amount spent by the United States or China. — AFP

of signs and warnings that a strike could be imminent. On October 8, the Islamic State group claimed its first attack in Uganda, an alleged bombing of a police post in the Kawempe area, near where Saturday's explosion occurred.

In a statement issued through its communication channels, the group claimed a unit from its Central Africa operation had detonated an improvised explosive device that resulted in injuries and damage to police infrastructure. No explosion or any injuries were reported by authorities or local media at the time, though police later confirmed a minor incident had occurred without providing further details. However in the following days, both the UK and France updated their travel advice for Uganda, urging vigilance in crowded areas and public places like restaurants, bars and hotels. — AFP



CULIACAN: Roberto Martinez holding the portrait of his sister Lourdes, who disappeared in 1974, in Culiacan, state of Sinaloa, Mexico. Roberto has renewed hopes of finding a nephew presumed to have been born during his mother's captivity, a victim of Mexico's repression of political opponents between the 1960s and 1980s. — AFP

taking care of her and who died without revealing her history. Lucio Antonio was sent to an orphanage. He was later adopted and baptized Juan Carlos Hernandez. With support from her adoptive father, Aleida discovered her true identity in 2001. A few years later, after overcoming obstacles thrown up by authorities who refused to open official files, she managed to locate her brother in Washington, where they both now live.

"People said that I seemed to be losing my mind," Aleida said. The siblings hope that the Inter-American Court of Human Rights will compel Mexico to locate their parents, incorporate the Dirty War into the official history books and compensate them. "I'm a victim twice over. I'm a relative of a disappeared person and a disappeared person myself," Hernandez said. — AFP

Cuban street protester sentenced to 10 years

HAVANA: A Cuban man who took part in unprecedented nationwide street protests in July has been sentenced to 10 years in jail, the stiffest punishment yet of anyone who defied the communist government in those rallies, his family and a human rights group said Saturday. The sentence against Roberto Perez Fonseca, age 38, was handed down by a court in San Jose de las Lajas, a town 35 kilometers from Havana. On July 11 and 12 thousands of Cubans screaming "freedom" and "we are hungry" took to the streets in some 50 cities and towns to protest harsh living conditions and government repression.

The rallies, which had no precedent since the Cuban revolution of 1959, left at least one person dead and dozens injured as security forces cracked down. Around 1,130 people were arrested, and more than half of them remain in jail, says the Miami-based human rights group Cubalex. The court said Perez Fonseca was guilty of contempt, public disorder and instigation to commit a crime. The sentence, dated October 6, was seen by AFP after Perez Fonseca's family was notified this week. Three judges at the court heard from a sole witness, Jorge Luis Garcia Montero, a policeman in San Jose de las Lajas. Two people who wanted to testify for the defense - a relative and a friend of Fonseca's - were barred as being partial. The police officer stated that Perez Fonseca incited other people to throw rocks and bottles on the day of the protests. — AFP

International

Uzbek leader set to win with no real opposition

Uzbekistan holds polls with reform-touting strongman a shoo-in

TASHKENT: Voters across Uzbekistan in Central Asia took to the polls yesterday in a presidential election where incumbent Shavkat Mirziyoyev faces no real opposition as he champions reforms in the ex-Soviet country while maintaining its authoritarian foundations. Mirziyoyev has been credited for launching what he calls a "New Uzbekistan", ending a decades-old system of forced labor and introducing limited media freedoms.



Mirziyoyev credited for launching a 'New Uzbekistan'

The former prime minister came to power in 2016 after the death of his mentor, dictator Islam Karimov, who ruled Uzbekistan for 27 years. Mirziyoyev presided over an unprecedented boom in foreign tourism in the country that borders Taliban-controlled Afghanistan and counts China and Russia among its partners. But as his first term ends, the 64-year-old president is struggling to counter impressions that his government is sliding back toward the habits of his long-reigning predecessor. The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have also blunted his initial economic achievements, with unemployment rife amid sharp rises in living costs.

Bangkok bars battle to beat booze ban battering

BANGKOK: As gin bottles gather dust, a Bangkok bar owner is trying to keep his joint going through a COVID booze ban with fruitily mocktails seasoned with kratom, a recently decriminalized tropical herb. The Thai capital's once-legendary nightlife has been hammered by a seven-month ban on alcohol service imposed to curb the coronavirus, leaving pub and bar owners with a major headache.

Thailand has registered around 1.7 million infections, the lion's share since April when the government called last orders after an outbreak traced to a cluster of high-end nightclubs. With no government support, bar owners have been left with the choice of struggling to survive, flouting the prohibition rules or getting creative. Before the pandemic hit, bar-hopping gin lovers flocked to Teens of Thailand, a lively cocktail bar on the fringe of Bangkok's Chinatown.

Now Teens has reopened at 60 percent capacity serving mocktails made with kratom, a leaf from the coffee family long used in parts of Southeast Asia as a mild stimulant. Kratom, which stimulates the same brain receptors as morphine but with much milder effects, came off the Thai government's banned list in August. The move threw Teens owner Niks Anuman-Rajadon a lifeline, though kratom mocktails sell for just \$4 compared with regular gin and tonics at \$11. "We don't have any choice, 15-20 percent of income is enough to pay the team, pay the rent. That's it," Niks said.

Industry collapse

Draconian travel curbs imposed to fight the coronavirus have battered the economy in Thailand, where tourism accounted for nearly 20 percent of national income pre-pandemic. Visitor numbers have collapsed from nearly 40 million a year to a trickle, leaving the hospitality industry struggling to survive.



BANGKOK: This general view shows the Bangkok skyline, taken from the King Power Mahanakhon skyscraper in Bangkok. — AFP

Two children among six killed by leftover mine in Senegal

DAKAR: Six young people were killed when their horse-drawn vehicle hit an old land mine unearthed up by rain in Senegal's southern Casamance region, the local mayor said on Saturday. Casamance is

Taleban next door

The last two years have also seen a crackdown on dissent, rights groups said, particularly in internet freedoms that bloomed after 2016. And Mirziyoyev has side-stepped reforms that would allow competition to his rule. He faces four regime-loyal opponents plucked from parties in the rubber-stamp parliament in his bid to secure a second five-year term. A would-be independent challenger, academic Khidmazar Allakulov, fell at the first hurdle after failing to register a party that could nominate him. Human Rights Watch said this month that officials "harassed (Allakulov's) party supporters and interfered in their efforts to collect signatures for registration". Uzbek political analyst Alisher Samigzhanov said the vote was a mere show.

"The word opponent is contradictory here. None of the (other four) candidates honestly think they can become president," he said. But for many in Tashkent, poverty rather than rights is the issue of the day. "There are a lot of poor and homeless people. We need to find housing for people," said Sardor, a 26-year-old money-changer at the city's Chorsu market who is voting for Mirziyoyev. "I hope he will help solve these problems." Uzbekistan's electoral authority claimed a turnout of more than 50 percent at 1:00 pm local time after just five hours of voting, which will conclude at 8:00 pm.

Taleban next door

Mirziyoyev cast his own vote at a polling station on Tashkent's outskirts where he appeared alongside wife Ziroatkhon Hoshimova and their three children. He smiled as he posed for photographs before dropping his

Thanakorn Kuptajit, the head of the Thai Alcohol Beverage Business Association, told local media he expects a 50 percent drop in the value of the \$9 billion sector as a result of the ban. Denied government support and forbidden to serve drinks in-house, bars and pubs are also banned from selling alcohol online. As a result, some landlords in Bangkok have resorted to flouting the ban, serving booze discreetly in plain coffee mugs or soft drink cans. But for those who have played by the rules, it has been a tough year.

In the upmarket expat hotspot of Thonglor, the co-owner of WTF Gallery Cafe, Chris Wise, says his business has been boarded up since April. A handyman, two bar staff and an assistant have lost work or been at reduced pay. WTF, which marked its 10th birthday earlier this year, is gearing up to reopen this week (October 21) with the launch of a new Thai art exhibition and tapas menu. Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha gave the industry some hope last week, announcing that as part of reopening the kingdom to tourism, the government plans to lift the alcohol ban in December.

Bitter taste

But Wise warned that with customer numbers reduced and less disposable income, the road to recovery will be long. "I can't imagine it going back to what it was like pre-COVID," he said. "The sanook (enjoy), mai pen rai (no worries), sa bai dee (relaxed) life that Thais have is not coming back for a long time." And the relaxation will be too little too late for many businesses, Teens owner Niks said. "It's a disaster. We have lost craftsmanship, we lost industry manpower. We lost good bars, good restaurants because of mismanagement from the government," he said, adding his best bartenders are now working in other industries.

Now as the clock ticks down to the reopening, customers at Teens sample the experimental kratom drinks menu. One sips a mango and lime concoction served in a cup made of beeswax with honey foam - the slightly bitter tang of the kratom balanced out by the fruitily sweetness. Down the bar, Pord, 40, tries his first kratom drink, the "Tiger Ear", which features garlic brine lime and soda. "It tastes like a sour plum. It's refreshing," he told AFP. — AFP

home to one of Africa's oldest ongoing conflicts, which has claimed thousands of lives since 1982, and the mine was believed to be a remnant from earlier fighting. It exploded on Friday afternoon in the village of Kandiadou, near the Gambian border, the mayor of Sindian sub-prefecture Yankouba Sagna told AFP. "A cart hit a mine," he said, referring to a horse-drawn transport commonly used in Senegal. "It was carrying young people returning from Friday prayers," he added. "The mine that exploded was not laid recently. Old mines remain in the crop fields. When it rains, they appear. We have always asked for the area to be de-mined." Casamance is one of Senegal's rainiest regions and is in the last days of its rainy season.



TASHKENT: People queue at a polling station to vote during Uzbekistan's presidential election in Tashkent yesterday. — AFP

vote in the ballot box. He did not address the press. Prolonged isolation under Karimov meant that commodity-rich Uzbekistan fell well short of its economic potential for most of independence.

It is against the founding president's brutal rule that the successes of Mirziyoyev's reforms have been judged. His public disavowal of torture and campaign to clean up mass forced labor in cotton fields - where thousands of schoolchildren once toiled alongside their teachers - gained international praise. Zera, a 55-year-old woman who cast her vote at a high school in the capital Tashkent yesterday, said she backed Mirziyoyev.

But she was worried about the situation over the border in Afghanistan, where the president has taken a pragmatic, trade-first approach to the Taliban takeover. "The whole world warred with them and nothing good came of it. Can we be their friends? I am not sure," she told AFP, only giving her first name. Other voters in the capital Tashkent wanted authorities to do more to develop the country's rural regions. "In the capital, people have water, gas, electricity. In the provinces, unfortunately, there is a lack of this," Alexander Rakhmonov, a 28-year-old energy sector employee who also backed Mirziyoyev said. — AFP

Strong earthquake hits north Taiwan

TAIPEI: A strong earthquake struck northeastern Taiwan yesterday, with residents reporting violent shaking in the capital Taipei but there were no immediate reports of widespread damage. Taiwan's central weather bureau said the quake was of magnitude 6.5, the biggest on the island this year, while the US Geological Survey gave a lower figure of 6.2. It hit northeastern Yilan county at 1:11 pm at a depth of 67 kilometers.

An AFP reporter who lives in Yilan said the shaking seemed to last about 30 seconds. "The walls of the house were shaking, both sideways and up and down, it felt quite strong," the reporter said. There was no damage in his neighborhood. The main quake was followed by a 5.4-magnitude aftershock and Taipei's MRT metro system shut down as a precaution for a little under an hour before service resumed.

Tom Parker, a British illustrator who lives in Taipei, said he was riding the subway when the quake hit. "First time I've felt a quake on the MRT. Like a tame rollercoaster," he tweeted, adding he and other commuters were told to shelter in place in the station. Many others reported the tremor on social media. "I was scared to death, I screamed in my room," Facebook user Yu Ting wrote. "This earthquake is really big, glass has shattered in my living room."

Some grocery stores reported food and other goods were thrown from shelves by the shaking. Authorities said they did not expect widespread damage because the quake was not a shallow one. "The public don't have to be too worried," said Chen Kuo-chang, head of the central weather bureau's seismological centre. "The quake is deep and its intensity is not as big... it could have caused unpredictable damage if it were a shallow one," he added.

Taiwan's emergency operations centre reported one injury, a woman hit by falling rocks. Her friends were carrying her down a mountain in eastern Hualien county. Taiwan is regularly hit by earthquakes as the island lies near the junction of two tectonic plates. Some earthquakes of this magnitude can prove deadly, although much depends on where the quake strikes and at what depth.

Hualien, a scenic tourist hotspot, was struck by a 6.4-magnitude earthquake in 2018 that killed 17 people and injured nearly 300. In September 1999, a 7.6-magnitude quake killed around 2,400 people in the deadliest natural disaster in the island's history. However, a 6.2-magnitude earthquake struck in December 2020 in Yilan with no major damage or injuries reported. — AFP



TEHRAN: A handout picture provided by the official website of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, shows him during a meeting with participants in the Islamic Unity Conference in the capital Tehran yesterday. — AFP

Iran's Khamenei urges reversal of Arab-Zionist normalizations

TEHRAN: Arab nations that normalized ties with Zionists last year have "sinned" and should reverse such moves, Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei said yesterday. The United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco all said in 2020 they would normalize ties with Zionist entity, as Washington under the administration of then US president Donald Trump made Arab-Zionists rapprochement a foreign policy priority.

"Some governments have unfortunately made errors-have made big errors and have sinned in normalizing (their relations) with the usurping and oppressive Zionist regime," Khamenei said, referring to Zionist entity. "It is an act against Islamic unity, they must return from this path and make up for this big mistake," Khamenei said, in a speech marking a public holiday honoring the birth of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH).

Iran has in the four decades since the 1979 Islamic revolution positioned itself as a strong defender of the Palestinian cause. Egypt and Jordan were until last year the only two Arab countries to normalize relations with Zionist entity. "If the unity of Muslims is achieved, the Palestinian question would definitely be resolved in the best fashion," Khamenei said. In May, Khamenei characterized Zionist entity as a "terrorist base" and "not a country". — AFP

President Macky Sall expressed his sorrow and offered his condolences to the families of the victims, in a statement posted on Twitter. Mohamed Moustapha Diagne, a spokesman for the education minister, said two of the victims had been primary school age. The army did not respond to requests for comment from AFP on Saturday.

History of conflict

Home to 1.9 million people, Casamance was once among Portugal's colonies in West Africa along with what is today Guinea-Bissau. But the region is now within the former French colony of Senegal - although it is separated from most of the rest of the country by the nation of The

Gambia. The remoteness of Casamance has fed into perceptions of discrimination by the government in the far-off capital Dakar and helped fuel an independence movement.

In December 1982, independence fighters took to the streets after government forces cracked down on a protest. The conflict has persisted with occasional flare-ups since, claiming thousands of lives and ravaging the economy. Despite efforts to remove mines buried by both the military and the rebels throughout the conflict, they continue to claim civilian lives. The region had returned to an uneasy calm in recent years until the army launched a major new offensive in January, claiming to have captured rebel bases in remote forests on the southern border. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2021

NIC wins 'Fastest Growing Investment Company Award' in Kuwait for 2021

Recognition by International Finance is culmination of NIC's outstanding performance

KUWAIT: National Investments Company (NIC) bagged the "Fastest Growing Investment Company Award" in Kuwait for the year 2021 from the International Finance Awards. This award was the culmination of the company's remarkable efforts and outstanding performance.

It is worth noting that the UK-based International Finance Awards is one of the leading international specialized magazines. The selection for the award was based on a wide range of investment criteria set by financial and business experts, the most important of which is the number and size of deals, services and investment advisory provided, and efforts to cope with the market, in addition to the advanced innovation and the outstanding performance locally and internationally.

"Winning this prestigious award confirms the company's flagship position in the local market, its steadily continuing success, and its prudent management. It also reflects the great efforts of the team whose members enjoy a long track record of extensive experience and achievements and professionalism of working in accordance with a strategic policy based on accurate technical standards in capturing investment opportunities that keep pace with the aspirations and goals of customers. The company is moving forward in gaining global and regional awards in recognition of its growth and development over the last years", NIC said in a press release.

Chief Executive Officer, Fahad Al-Mukhaizim pointed out that this international award from a reputable and reliable global institution is yet another testimony of the prominent position of NIC in the local and regional markets, the professional team, and the outstanding and extraordinary performance in providing high-quality, advanced and innovative investment services and products that cope with the market conditions and challenges.

Al-Mukhaizim added that the NIC succeeded in bagging many awards and certificates in recognition of its achievements over the last years, which witnessed an expansion in its business and activities despite the global, regional, and

local difficulties of the economy due to the repercussions of the pandemic, indicating the prudent and balanced policy of the NIC was recognized by the international and regional institutions.

Products and services

Al-Mukhaizim underlined the recently launched products and services, indicating NIC has launched the electronic portal service for customers through the company's website. This is part of the company's digital transformation efforts. He added that the new electronic portal service "Client Portal" will enable customers to access all services and products in the easiest way, not to mention save time and raise the level of automation, while achieving the company's strategic goals in offering high quality services.

Al-Mukhaizim revealed that NIC is in process of rolling out NICTRADE digital platform for trading in Boursa Kuwait, GCC and USA markets in addition to 80 global markets. This adds value to customer experience when utilizing advanced technology through the website or the mobile trading apps.

Moreover, he emphasized that NIC is keen to provide investment products that keep pace with the ambitions and aspirations of customers away from traditional ways, as the company succeeded on August 22, 2021 in launching the Market Maker service, pointing out that the market maker is responsible for providing liquidity to the company that benefits from the service through purchase and sell orders. The stock of Boursa Kuwait Company was chosen to be the first company that will benefit from the service, in addition to Gulf Cables Company. He expected that more other companies will be added over the next few weeks.

New investments

On the other hand, Al-Mukhaizim illustrated that the company's Banking Investment Sector succeeded in attracting many new investments in the infrastructure, credit and information technology sectors. The company started the year 2021 with a strong set of mandates, which included several mergers and acquisitions in favor of its customers,



Fahad Al-Mukhaizim

sales and restructuring operations, as well as contracts to provide general advisory services.

Al-Mukhaizim explained that as part of NIC's expanded investment strategy of eyeing the technology sector, the company has recently succeeded in investing in the US-based (Pipe Technologies) company, which specializes in fast-growing fintech, clarifying it is the first trading platform in the world for recurring revenues with an estimated value of roughly \$2 billion.

Seizing opportunities

Al-Mukhaizim added that NIC succeeded in strengthening its position, seizing unique opportunities in the market, and providing good investments to customers, saying that NIC has been working on building capabilities and developing a proven track record of implementing operations with the highest quality and focus on medium-sized customers, confirming that this strategy provided an excellent platform during 2020 and 2021. He noted that NIC has succeeded in executing many pioneering deals, explaining that the company is building specialized teams in capital markets, mergers and acquisitions, and venture capital, which the company has identified as key growth areas.

He reiterated that during 2021, NIC succeeded in coping with the pandemic and its effects, while focusing on digital transformation that creates more resilience to the company in both the operational side and the customer service. This also contributes to focusing on investing in sectors that demonstrated different performance during the pandemic. The company puts forth an extra effort towards increasing the diversity of its products to its existing customers while attracting more new customers.

"Our efforts paid off. NIC has reported significant growth in the size of fiduciary assets under management (AUM) during the first half of 2021, which



amounted to KDI.1 billion, an increase of 6.4 percent. The company has been seeking to provide above-average returns to the company's portfolio customers while preserving capital and successfully managing several diversified investment services," Al-Mukhaizim mentioned.

He indicated that NIC has a proven track record of distinguished relations with customers and long-term partnerships built on confidence and prudence in wealth management, while providing integrated products, solutions and plans, and adopting novel approaches of investment in wealth management. During 2021, the company succeeded in attracting new capital from funds and investment portfolios customers approximating \$75 million.

Al-Mukhaizim said that the Wealth Management Sector launched the electronic portal system (Client Portal), which helped clients follow up on their investments while giving them the ability to execute orders in a direct and effective manner, not to mention with other features such as comprehensive analysis of their investments from portfolios and funds in an innovative way among other comprehensive solutions to achieve customers' investment goals and meet their aspirations.

2021 awards

Al-Mukhaizim pointed out that the year 2021 is one of the distinguished years for NIC during which the company

won four prestigious international awards from well-known international institutions and magazines. This confirms its pioneering role locally and regionally, where winning such awards is a testimony of the pioneering position of NIC and reflects its ability to compete and gain the investment community confidence. He went on to say that the awards confirm that the company is on track and is working in accordance with transparency and governance practices that ensure customer satisfaction, especially in light of the professionalism that the company follows in all its activities and with the different supervisory and regulatory authorities. He added that NIC is one of the few companies that can meet the ambitions of customers in the local and regional markets thanks to its efficiency and competency in assuming responsibility in an optimal manner.

Al-Mukhaizim expressed his thanks and appreciation to NIC's team for their efforts to achieve this outstanding performance and the growth, which is in line with the set strategy and the commitment to achieving the best results for customers by supporting investment decisions with accurate research and investing in quality assets, in addition to the absolute support of the Board of Directors and the Executive Management. He said that this approach will efficiently continue to optimally meet customers' ambitions at all local and regional levels.

AUB reports net profit of KD 27.1m for 9 months of 2021

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank K.S.C.P. (AUBK) announced its results for the nine months of current year. Accordingly, the Bank has recorded a net profit for the nine months of 2021 amounting to KD 27.1 million with an increase of 17.1 percent than the KD 23.1 million of net profits recorded for the same period last year.

The total assets have grown up to reach KD 4.48 billion at the end of the Q3 2021 higher by 3.9 percent over the assets recorded at the end of Sep 2020 with KD 4.31 billion. (total assets KD 4.37 billion at the end of December 2020)

The financing receivables and customer deposits portfolios have grown to reach KD 3.26 billion and KD 3.13 billion respectively at the end of Sep 2021 higher than KD 3.12 billion and KD 2.77 billion recorded respectively at the end of Q3 2020 representing a growth of 4.5 percent in financing receivables and 13 percent in customer deposits (financing receivables KD 3.11 billion and customers deposits KD 3.01 billion respectively at the end of December 2020).

Commenting on the results, Dr Anwar Al-Mudhaf, Chairman of Ahli United Bank said, "Despite the positive outlook posting returning of life and economic activities to normal, AUB is still maintaining precautionary measures including adequate provision to upkeep good levels of the Bank assets quality which proves the efficiency of the Bank's prudent risk management plans, in line with the instructions of the Central Bank of Kuwait in this regard.

Dr Al-Mudhaf stressed that this outstanding financial performance reflects the success of the Bank's endeavors to enhance customer experience by investing resources and efforts to continue improving our products and services, with a focus on developing new innovative solutions that boost customer confidence and satisfaction. Dr Al-Mudhaf said that the pandemic period has taught a lesson and doubled up the importance of the requirements for enhancing the resilience of the financial sector through optimal preparation for any unexpected cri-



Dr Anwar Al-Mudhaf

Jehad Al-Humaidhi

sis. It also highlighted the need to develop the business model of financial and banking institutions, as well as the importance of Corporate Governance and sustainability, which is an integral part of achieving more value for the Bank and the banking sector as a whole. Redesigning technology to add more support to customers and employees, digital transformation and fintech are no longer an option and luxury but rather they have become a safe haven for the continuity of banking business with the flexibility and resilience under various circumstances.

Dr Al-Mudhaf expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation to the bank's shareholders and customers for their support and assistance to the Bank under these exceptional circumstances. He also extended sincere thanks to the Central Bank of Kuwait and all the regulatory, health and security authorities, Executive Management, and all the bank's staff that enabled the bank to manage this crisis, and deal with its consequences.

Jehad Al-Humaidhi, AUB Chief Executive Officer said, "With the grace of God, the economic sectors in Kuwait have significantly returned to operate normally, and we are optimistic about our capabilities to be among the first institutions to capture the market, which will enable us to conclude the current year with positive financial results. In this regard, I would like to appreciate the great efforts made by the competent authorities in Kuwait to contain the impact of the crisis. I am also pleased to reiterate that the success achieved by AUB in managing the repercussions of COVID-19 pandemic, is attributable to the quality of the bank assets, the success of its efforts in digital transformation, and the strength of the Bank IT infrastructure, that have helped us meet the aspirations of different customer segments, which once again underline the ability of this great

banking institution to face challenges and operate successfully in various circumstances.

These efforts were crowned by the many awards the Bank received during this period, including The Bank was also awarded "Best Bank in Private Banking, Kuwait 2021" by International Business Magazine. AUB was conferred this Award in recognition of its success in creating an effective model that has been achieved on the ground for its services provided to clients of Private Banking and Wealth Management, and the "Best Banking CIO of the Year Kuwait 2021" award by Global Banking and Finance Review conferred to Abdullah Yousef Jaragh, the General Manager of Information Technology at AUB. This award is a recognition of the Bank's ability to provide an advanced IT infrastructure and the outstanding contribution of Jaragh in supporting the industry.

Further, the bank was also awarded for Best Liquidity Management in Kuwait for 2021 by International Finance Magazine (IFM), Best Integrated Corporate Banking Site award by Global Finance, Best Business IT innovation - Banking - Kuwait 2021 by International Finance Magazine (IFM).

Al-Humaidhi added, "we continue to maintain the interests of our shareholders, and to provide the best services and products to our customers, as well as our role in supporting our community through our initiatives and contributions that target all segments of society and assert the Bank's commitment to its community-based role from a comprehensive and clear vision. Al-Humaidhi emphasized that Ahli United Bank continues to encourage and enhance the capabilities of our staff, in various departments and administrative levels, based on the Bank Management's belief that the human element is the main axis of success, and that the Bank investment in its human wealth is the best investment to advance performance and efficiency at work in various fields, due to its direct reflection on excellence in customer satisfaction and the achievement of a high level of performance that enhances the Bank unique position. In conclusion, Al-Humaidhi expressed her thanks and appreciation to the AUB's management and employees for their cooperation and dedication, which had the greatest credit for the bank's success in attaining these good financial results. We would also like to reassure our valued clients of the bank's readiness and its solid financial position.

US businesses struggle to hire

NEW YORK: To keep the taps at his recently opened beer tasting room flowing, Peter Chekjian had no choice but to ask his main employees to come in seven days per-week. The staffing shortage has also kept Chekjian from realizing his goal of brewing beer on site, since he can't find contractors to finish installing tanks he requires.

"That's been a big issue of getting people to actually finish up the job," said Chekjian, who co-founded the small Twin Fork Beer Company in New York state. Even as millions of Americans who lost their jobs to the Covid-19 pandemic have returned to work, companies nationwide report they're still struggling to hire employees in recent months.

More than 10 million jobs were unfilled as of the end of August, according to government data. The labor force participation rate, which measures the US economy's active workforce, was 61.6 percent in September, compared to 63.3 percent before the pandemic.

The causes of the short staffing are myriad, from continued fears of contracting COVID-19, particularly among people who live with elderly family or children, to early retirements and objections over work-life balance and low wages. And while the government throughout the pandemic offered generous unemployment benefits to keep people who lost their job financially sound, their expiration last month hasn't yet caused hiring to increase.

The employee shortages come as restaurants and entertainment venues reopen amid as more Americans get vaccinated, and ahead of the uptick in business around the holiday season. With "so many employers trying to hire so many people at the same time, it creates that imbalance," said Aaron Sojourner, an economist at the University of Minnesota.

Employers who spoke to AFP told of mad scrambles to attract applicants by offering higher wages and other perks. —AFP

Business

KIB assets grew by 7% as of 30 Sept 2021

KIB achieved KD 50 million operating income during 9 months of 2021

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced its financial results for the nine months ended 30 September 2021, achieving around KD 3.8 million of profit attributable to the shareholders, compared to KD 568,000 recorded at the same period last year, a growth of 567 percent. This was reflected positively on the earnings per share (EPS) to reach 1.21 fils, after the bank paid profits on perpetual Tier 1 Sukuk during the period.

Commenting on the bank's financial results, the bank's Chairman, Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah, stated that KIB's financial results have shown that the bank's operating income grew by two percent, to reach KD 50 million, compared to KD 49 million for the same period last year, mainly from the increases in investment income by 75 percent and fees and commission income by 46 percent.

KIB's financial position have shown that the bank's assets grew by around KD 192 million, and by 7 percent, to reach around KD 2.88 billion compared to KD 2.68 billion for the last year. This growth was the result of an increase in the size of the financing portfolio by almost KD 88 million to reach around KD 2.1 billion, compared to KD 2 billion in the last year, achieving a growth of 4 percent. Additionally, KIB's investment securities portfolio, which comprises mainly of high quality Sukuk, grew by around KD 89 million, by 46 percent. On the other hand, depositors' accounts grew by KD 307 million, a growth of 19 percent, to reach nearly KD 1.88 billion compared to KD 1.57 billion at the end of September last year, with shareholders' equity reaching almost KD 260 million.

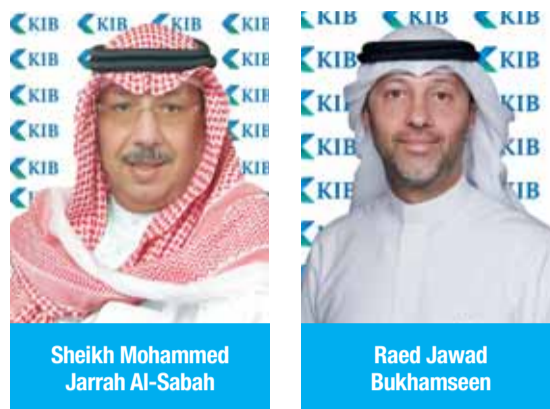
"We are quite optimistic about the coming period, now that both the national economy overall, and the banking sector specifically, are starting to recover from the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our perceptive and prudent strategic vision continues to be the main foundation on which we establish our plans, as we seek to achieve the necessary balance between managing risk and seizing opportunities across our entire operation in

order to drive sustainable growth. This has reflected positively on the Bank's financial performance, as KIB was able to mitigate the economic ramifications resulting from pandemic-related recessions, focusing on being more active in certain areas - most notably, investments," said Al-Jarrah.

On his part Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) at KIB, Raed Jawad Bukhamseen, pointed out that the bank's continued profitability during this recent period was the result of its success in attracting many companies known for their financial and economic solvency, while adhering to the high standards of creditworthiness, and studying and diversifying risks. He also noted that the Bank was able to seize several financing opportunities during the past nine months of the current year, as well as participating as Joint Lead Manager in the issuance of Ahli United Bank's \$600 Sukuk.

In accordance with the Central Bank of Kuwait's regulations concerning Basel III, KIB continued to report high levels of capital adequacy ratio, as it reached 20.32 percent. The financial leverage ratio was 9.98 percent at the end of the third quarter of 2021.

Bukhamseen also noted that Fitch Ratings assigned KIB Sukuk a long-term credit rating of



Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah

Raed Jawad Bukhamseen

"A-", as well as a long/short-term credit rating of "A+/F1" for its Sukuk program. Adding that the agency, in its most recent report, had also affirmed KIB's Long-term Issuer Default Rating (IDR) at 'A+' and viability rating (VR) at "bb-", with a negative outlook. According to Bukhamseen, KIB's customer-centric approach continues to prioritize the interests of its clients, as the Bank actively pursues focused and innovation-focused digitization across its operations; developing and elevating its fintech infrastructure to deliver an enriched, digitally opti-

Al-Jarrah:

- Optimistic about the coming period as recovery continues in the financial and economic sectors
- A solid financial position that supports the business growth

Bukhamseen:

- Taking part in several financing deals and high-quality sukuk issuances underscores the economic sector's trust in KIB's performance, both locally and internationally
- High levels of capital adequacy ratio (CAR) of more than 20 percent

CBK honors Gulf Bank in recognition of Diraya campaign

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait honored Gulf Bank with the prestigious 'Outstanding Awareness and Education Award,' in recognition of the Bank's role in supporting the Diraya awareness campaign. The award was presented to Gulf Bank by the Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait, Dr Mohammad Yousif Al-Hashel, with the award ceremony taking place in the presence of the Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Banking Association, Sheikh Ahmad Duaij Jaber Al-Sabah, as well as the Deputy CEO of Consumer Banking and Investments, Walid Mandani, and the Assistant General Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, Ahmad Al-Amir.

During the award ceremony, the Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait praised Gulf Bank's continuous efforts in support of the "Diraya" campaign, an awareness campaign initiated by the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Banking Association, aimed at raising financial literacy and educating customers about their financial rights.

On this honor, the Assistant General Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, Ahmad Al-Amir, said: "We would like to thank the Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait, Dr Mohammad Yousif Al-Hashel, for honoring Gulf Bank with the Outstanding Awareness and Education Award in recognition of the Bank's role in supporting the Diraya campaign. At Gulf Bank, we have spared no



KUWAIT: (From left) Sheikh Ahmad Duaij Al-Sabah, Walid Mandani, Mohammad Al-Hashel and Ahmad Al-Amir

effort in training and raising awareness on various critical topics over the last year, from social and economic sustainability to financial inclusion and more. Our goal is to educate the general public on the various services that banks provide to customers, in hopes of keeping them informed and granting them the ability to better manage their financial and banking affairs."

The Diraya campaign spans several topics, including the borrowing process, bank cards, cybersecurity, security tips, and services for customers with special needs. The campaign also aims to clarify the mechanisms for raising official complaints in an effort to protect customers' rights, and also aims to highlight the banking sector's tasks and roles in stimulating and developing the economy.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti

Bank of the Future. The bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining a robust sustainability program at the community, economic, and environmental levels through sustainability initiatives that are strategically selected to benefit both the country and the Bank. Moreover, Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait," working with various parties and stakeholders to achieve it.

Burgan Bank reveals winners of Yawmi account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners are:

- Ahmad Majeed Al-Baqsumi
- Juzar Mohammed Bankodawala
- Alsheikh Mubarak Faisal Al-Sabah
- Yaser Abdein Mandour

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a quarterly draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers daily and quarterly draws, wherein the quarterly draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win.

Celebrate all-round back-to-school solutions from Nissan Al-Babtain

KUWAIT: In celebration of the Back-to-School season, Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co (AABC), the sole authorized dealer of Nissan in Kuwait, is pleased to announce its latest offers on its models. This year's back-to-school campaign unveils a series of special packages on different vehicles to own or lease so customers can explore and enjoy every dynamic aspect of the brand.

Expanding its value offering to fit everyone's lifestyle, Nissan Al-Babtain offers up to 5 years peace of mind package where in customers receive a 5-year warranty, 5-year roadside assistance and 5-year service provisions on the Nissan Altima, Nissan X-Terra, Nissan X-Trail and Nissan Patrol V8 or 0 percent interest and 0 down-payment on Nissan X-Terra, Nissan X-Trail as well as the Nissan Altima which also comes under the leasing offer for 0 down-payment to choose from.

Equipped with a variety of safety features, new technology, spacious seating and innovative designs

built to tackle any adventure, explore the Nissan lineup of SUVs and Crossovers with the latest offer and the sixth generation of Nissan's best-selling sedan.

The Hero of all Terrain, Nissan Patrol V8 is backed by a power of 400 HP, and torque of 560 NM comes with the direct fuel injection system and the variable valve shift control technology, Patrol will give you maximum power with the lowest percentage of emissions. Poised to create a strong presence anywhere it goes, a fresh and modern design approach inspired the creation of the impressive exterior.

Effortlessly combining the impressive strength with bold new design and built-for-comfort roominess, powering the Nissan X-Terra is a 2.5-liter four-cylinder petrol engine with a seven-speed automatic transmission. The petrol engines deliver 124kW /165 hp and 241Nm of torque that ensures an exciting drive of speed and acceleration. The Nissan X-Trail remains a popular family vehicle equipped with 169 horsepower, gives young families and adventure-seekers more premium style options such as the choice between the five or seven-seat version as well as five new vibrant exterior vehicle shades, unrivalled space and comfort. Nissan Altima features expressive styling, an uplifting interior, two new powertrains, and Nissan's advanced Repilot technology, which eases driver workload by reducing the amount of driver acceleration, steering and braking input under certain driving conditions, such as single-lane highway driving.



New Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition keeps your children safe, entertained, educated

KUWAIT: Times have changed and everything is mostly now driven by technology starting from communication to entertainment and even education, that's why Huawei has launched a unique and safe kids tablet - the Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition with children's creative and educational needs at the heart of it. Children and parents alike are set to be thrilled by the new tablet that comes with a sleek and minimal design, portable and child-friendly case, Kids corner with rich educational content, eye protection, secure parental assistant and more

The Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition

Available in two different sizes of 8 and 9.7-inch, the Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition is now up for grabs in Kuwait starting on 21 October.

A sleek child-friendly design

The Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition come with a Kids Case and stylus pen. The former is a tablet case made of environmentally safe silicone, protecting the tablet. There is also a handle for the kids to easily carry around the tablet, so they can lug it around anywhere they so please.

Kids Corner

In addition to Kids Painting, Recorder and Camera features, Huawei has also partnered with Azoomee and BabyBus, two of the leading educational developers creating apps for children. The Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition therefore comes



with a free three-month membership to Baby Panda World, and a free one-year membership to Azoomee. With a constant stream of updated content, these apps allow children to keep learning, and have fun while doing it.

BabyBus is an internet company providing children with creative and educational content. The company has served 500 million families worldwide, and released over 200 apps and 2,500 episodes of animations, as well as over 5,000 audio stories. Their products are available in 12 languages in 160 countries and regions worldwide.

Protect your little ones' eyesight

Children have sensitive, developing eyes that's why the Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition was designed with multi-layered eye protection. As expected, blue light filter comes as standard - turning cold tones into warm color tones to protect the eyes. Utilizing the tablet's gravity sensor and algorithms, children are prompted to change position if they try to lie down whilst using it. A similar notification will appear if a child uses the tablet whilst walking or in a car, which can lead to eye muscle strain. Moreover, if your child is a keen reader? There is an eBook mode that makes the display grayscale to make reading easy on the eye.

Business

NBK is reaping the fruits of its conservative strategy: Al-Sager

NBK Group CEO speaks on the sidelines of the analyst conference for 9M2021

KUWAIT: Isam Al-Sager, the CEO of National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) Group, said: "Our profitability for 9M2021 was mainly driven by increased business volumes, growth of operating income, as well as the decrease in cost of risk." On the sidelines of the analyst conference for the results of 9M2021, Al-Sager added: "The improvement in the operating environment reflected positively on the bank's quarterly results, as we posted a net profit of KD 94.1 million for Q3, increasing by 63.3 percent YoY."

Al-Sager mentioned that NBK reported a net profit of KD 255 million for the nine-month period of 2021, growing by 51 percent year-on-year, as compared to the same period of last year, adding that the bank is reaping the fruits of its conservative strategy adopted since the beginning of the pandemic.

Digitization agenda

Al-Sager stated that NBK Group's strategy remains focused on digitization and on diversifying our operations, through our geographic footprint and breadth of services. Our drive towards digital excellence is ongoing and on track; with constant investments on the front as well as back end of our operations.



Isam Al-Sager

we have seen in other GCC countries, he added.

Conservative performance

Commenting on the dropping of NPLs in the third quarter, Al-Sager explained that it is a mix of improvement in some exposures as well as write offs. Throughout the pandemic, NBK took a very conservative approach to NPL recognition especially considering the amount of uncertainty prevailing at that time.

Al-Sager mentioned that the bank built a provisioning buffers over the past quarters in an effort to capture any expected losses resulting from the impact of the pandemic on businesses, noting that as the operating environment improves and some of these previously categorized exposures remained performing and accordingly were removed from the NPL portfolio.

Public debt law

Al-Sager stressed that despite the latest oil price increases and its positive impact on the budget deficit; we still see a dire necessity to approve the debt law. The liquidity in General Reserve Fund is depleting; manoeuvring with asset swaps or drawdowns from Future Generation Fund is economically unfeasible and unsustainable. So we are hopeful that the national dialogue can cool off the tensions between the government and parliament and lead to approving the debt law as there are very limited solutions if it is not passed.

On his part, Sujit Ronghe, Acting Group CFO said that the increase in the bank's net profit by 51.1 percent year on year reflects a solid recovery by the Group, driven by continued growth in business volumes, increased operating income and lower credit provisions and impairment losses.

"The cost of risk significantly improved compared to 2020, which makes us cautiously optimistic that the cost of risk will continue to decline during the fourth quarter of 2021," Ronghe explained. The cost of risk has been lowering year on year during the last few quarters and we have seen improvement in the operating drivers in Kuwait. Moreover, the credit quality of some of the exposures has also improved, he added. On NIM outlook, Ronghe mentioned that any uptick would depend on the growth that comes in the next quarter or in the coming few quarters. This is where we can see a slight improvement in yields and NIMs overall. I would give a directional indication that the NIMs are expected to be broadly stable at the level of this quarter.

Strong loan growth

Ronghe noted that loan growth for the nine months has been very strong and the bank does have a strong pipeline into the next quarter and the next year as well. On retail loan growth and the expectation of the trend post the deferral program, Ronghe said that there were 2 loan deferral programs last year and in the current year, wherein banks did not collect instalments for a period of six months. Hence, current growth levels on the retail side are not expected to continue into 2022, noting that it is probable go back to loan growth levels it had witnessed in the years preceding to COVID.

Ronghe emphasized that NBK has been investing in digital technologies even through COVID-19 times, noting that this is a medium-term goal for the Bank in the journey of digitization, and it is expected that the bank will be able to harness some of the benefits from our investments on the cost front.



NBK Group Deputy CEO Shaikha Al-Bahar during the interview with Bloomberg TV

Al-Bahar: We are optimistic about Kuwait's economic growth, driving banking sector performance

KUWAIT: Shaikha Al-Bahar, NBK Group Deputy CEO said the strong growth in the bank's profitability for 9M2021 is attributed to many factors, mainly the growth of total loans and advances by 8.3 percent YTD to reach KD 19 billion by end of September.

In an interview with Bloomberg TV, Al-Bahar indicated that the growth in the loan portfolio during the period reflects NBK's focus on core banking activities, and its well-diversified strategy. Loan growth was from both Islamic and conventional banking with business volumes increasing in Kuwaiti as well as from our international operations. "Despite the low interest rate environment, we managed to marginally improve net interest margin during the 9-month period, in addition to a strong growth in our fee and commission income by 12.8 percent YoY," she added.

Al-Bahar noted that the strong growth trends in most business sectors reflect the significant improvement in the operating environment, supported by the high vaccination rates in Kuwait, the easing of restrictions and the return to normalcy.

Historically conservative

Commenting on the improving NPL ratio and lower provisions, Al-Bahar said: "At the peak of the pandemic in 2020, we opted for the most conservative scenarios in line with our historically conservative approach and risk management strategy, which was reflected in the classification of some of our weaker exposures as NPLs."

"Today, with the noticeable improvement in the operating environment and the gradual return to normalcy, we have decreased provisioning, and some loans were reclassified to regular, in addition to writing off some exposures during Q3, which was reflected positively on the improved NPL ratio," she continued. Al-Bahar stated: "We maintained strong asset quality metrics, as NPL ratio decreased from 1.72 percent by end of 2020 to 1.43 percent by end of September 2021, and loan coverage ratio increased from 220 percent by end of 2020 to 230 percent at the end of September 2021."

New financing mechanism

Al-Bahar stressed the importance of passing the mortgage law, as Kuwait is one of the few countries that does not have a mortgage law. The existing subsidized structure to finance housing by Kuwait Credit Bank has worked historically but is becoming a bottleneck in today's efforts to resolve the growing residential housing demand in Kuwait, she noted.

"With the growing size of the young population and as the government continues to develop new housing cities to clear the backlog of eligible applicants, a proper financing mechanism should be in place," she explained. Al-Bahar affirmed that the banks will be a major beneficiary of passing the law, which is on the government's agenda for the new legislative term.

Economic indicators

US economic indicators for the week began with the month-over-month industrial production witnessing a drop of 1.3 percent versus an expected gain of 0.3 percent. Such a drop in production shows the heavy impact of high commodity prices on producers, pushing the cost on the consumer, which translates to higher inflation. Additionally, a report published by the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia shows slowed manufacturing at 23.8 points, remaining well above the 0.0 mark indicating improved economic conditions. Furthermore, the manufacturing purchasing manager's index (PMI) fell short of expectations at 59.2 versus the forecasted 60.5 points. The slowdown in manufacturing is partly due to hurricane Ida disrupting production and the rise of commodity prices. On the other hand, the services PMI came in at 58.2 points, exceeding the expected 55.3 points.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30155.

expecting that there will be a large demand in the Kuwaiti market for new banking products that the banking sector will offer, once the law gets passed similar to what we have seen in other GCC countries.

Optimistic outlook

On her expectations for the performance of the Kuwaiti economy and its impacts on the banking sector, Al-Bahar said: "We are optimistic about the growth of the Kuwaiti economy during the coming period."

- Strong loan growth reflects our diversification strategy and reliance on core banking activities
- We managed to improve net interest margin during 9M2021 despite the low interest rate environment
- At the peak of the pandemic, we opted for the most conservative scenarios in classifying NPLs and building provisions
- Proposed Mortgage law should be approved to meet the increasing demand of Kuwaiti young people for residential housing
- Egypt is a strategic market for us and we are focusing on digital banking services for retail and SME customers as key drivers of the growth

IMF expects the Kuwait's economy to expand with a real GDP growth of 4.3 percent for 2022. So, this will necessarily be reflected on all business sectors, Al-Bahar noted. Al-Bahar expected that the last quarter of the year will witness an improvement in the performance of the banking sector, especially with regard to individuals' regular payment of loan installments after the end of the second 6-month deferral program, whose cost will be fully borne by the government.

International expansion

Regarding the expansion of NBK's international operations, especially in the Egyptian market, Al-Bahar indicated that Egypt is our second home market and we are doing great. "In Egypt, the focus is basically to expand and promote our digital banking services focusing on retail and SMEs, in line with the Central Bank of Egypt's directions towards digital transformation," she mentioned.

"We are growing our Global Wealth Management business across the group and it brings private banking and NBK Capital under one leadership to better serve our private banking customer needs. This proposition will serve our customer in Egypt as well as other location and will be one of the key growth drivers for the group," she concluded.

Al-Tijari announces winners of Al-Najma draws

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait conducted the weekly draws on Al-Najma Account and salary transfer campaign yesterday. The draws were conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Ahmed Al-Basman.

The results of the draws were as follows:

- 1) Al-Najma weekly account - the prize of KD 5,000 went to the winner Awadh Barakat Mutairi
 - 2) Salary account campaign - the prize of up to KD 1,000 went to the winner Badreyah Abdullah Al-Harbi
- The bank stated that the salary campaign is aimed at customers who transfer their salaries of KD 500 or more to the bank, especially Kuwaiti employees and residents working in the government, oil sectors and companies listed with the Bank as well as retirees, and take advantage of the benefits of this campaign and get an instant cash gift from KD 400 to KD 500 or an interest-free loan for a period of up to 4 years and up to KD 70,000, Kuwaiti pensioner, along with expatriate customers who transfer their debt to the bank will receive an instant cash gift of 2 percent from their transferred debt up to KD 1,000.

- Our profits for 9M2021 reflect the growth in business volume, increase in operating income, as well as the decrease in the cost of risk
- We are making steady strides to enhance our digital excellence by investing in digital platforms
- The drop in NPLs is due to the improvement in some exposures
- NBK's digitization agenda focuses on improving customer experience, increasing operational efficiency, and growing business in its international markets
- We strive to embed ESG initiatives into all our business strategies

Our digital agenda is group-wide and focuses on improving customer experience and satisfaction, increasing operational efficiencies and growing our business through higher market penetration in key geographies, he added.

Sustainability

Al-Sager highlighted that NBK's alignment to ESG principles remains core to the way of conducting its business and how it operates and delivers on its social and economic responsibilities. As a Group, we continue to integrate ESG principles across the business strategies, and we are beginning to identify and quantify risks and opportunities vis-a-vis climate change and social trends, he added.

Our environmental commitment is ongoing, with initiatives to further reduce energy use and water consumption being rolled out, as well as looking after the health and development of our staff, he affirmed.

Mortgage law

NBK Group CEO stated that the mortgage law is becoming a must. The existing housing finance mechanism by Kuwait Credit Bank will delay the efforts to resolve the growing residential housing demand, especially considering the young Kuwaiti population. If a mortgage law is passed, the banks will definitely benefit a lot, as they will offer a new product that is expected to have large demand in the Kuwaiti market similar to what



NBK Money Market Report

Global inflation pressures continue

KUWAIT: Inflation concerns continue to take center-stage as the Fed and other major central banks struggle to maintain a balanced approach. Although most central banks continue to hold the stance that inflationary pressures will be transitory, the market seems to be pricing in a longer period of higher prices. Evidently, the 10-year US treasury yield, traditionally a gauge of inflation expectations, jumped another 12 basis points the past week. Nevertheless, the Fed seems set to start tapering its bond purchases program as soon as November, and as mentioned expects higher prices to be transitory despite the recent surge in commodity prices amid supply chain bottlenecks and the rising cost of energy.

Market movement

The yield on the benchmark 10-year Treasury note has risen by 6 basis points in the course of the week to 1.63 percent after reaching a high of 1.70

percent, on fears that this year's surge in inflation is likely to last longer than initially expected. Despite the increase in yields, the dollar dropped against most of its major counterparts last week amid profit taking and market consolidation. Furthermore, news from China that Evergrande was able to make a last minute payment to avoid default has lifted sentiments and pressured the dollar lower. The dollar index, which tracks the performance of the greenback against a basket of major developed economy currencies was down 0.37 percent on the week and closed at 93.61. The euro closed the week higher against the dollar at 1.1645 after reaching a high of 1.1669. Similarly, the pound found strength against the greenback as expectations that the Bank of England would raise rates surged. Meanwhile sterling's upward momentum was capped by data showing another decline in retail sales in September, marking the fifth straight month they have fallen. While earlier declines were seen as a shift in spending away from goods toward services as the economy reopened, the most recent data was also affected by weakening consumer sentiment as the government ended its labor market support schemes and the shortage of truck drivers led to widespread shortages of various products, notably

fuel. The pound managed to reach a high of 1.3834 and closed the week at 1.3756.

Lifestyle | Features

Inquiry into Baldwin shooting focuses on gun protocol

The police investigation into a fatal shooting with a prop gun fired by actor Alec Baldwin on a film set was focusing Saturday on the specialist in charge of the weapon and the assistant director who handed it to Baldwin. Ukraine-born cinematographer Halyna Hutchins, 42, was struck in the chest and died shortly after the incident Thursday in New Mexico, while director Joel Souza, 48, who was crouching behind her as they lined up a shot, was wounded and hospitalized, then released. Police interviewed a visibly distraught Baldwin, who willingly cooperated. They have pressed no charges.

Souza said in a statement Saturday that he was "gutted" by the loss of his friend and colleague. "She was kind, vibrant, incredibly talented, fought for every inch, and always pushed me to be better," he told Deadline, an entertainment news outlet. The incident sparked intense speculation on social media about how such an accident could have occurred despite detailed and long-established gun-safety protocols for film sets.

Accidental discharges

The accident took place roughly midway through the filming of a low-budget



In this file photo actor Alec Baldwin attends the 'Exploring the Arts' 20th anniversary Gala at Hammerstein Ballroom in New York City. — AFP

Western called "Rust," starring Baldwin. The Los Angeles Times, citing anonymous sources, described an unhappy film crew and roiling labor problems on the film set. The incident came only hours after a walk-out by film crew members concerned about working conditions, according to the Times. Among their complaints were two or three accidental prop-gun discharges.

According to the paper, one camera operator had messaged a production manager, saying, "We've now had 3 accidental discharges. This is super unsafe." Rust Movie Productions said in a statement that it had not been made aware of

any "official complaints" but would "continue to cooperate with the Santa Fe authorities" while also conducting its own review.

Some details emerged in an affidavit submitted by the Santa Fe County sheriff's office to obtain a search warrant. The affidavit was viewed by AFP. It said Assistant Director Dave Halls, the Hollywood veteran who handed the gun to Baldwin during a rehearsal, called out "cold gun" as he did so-industry code for a weapon with no live ammunition. "The Assistant Director (Dave Halls) did not know live rounds were in the prop-gun," the affidavit said.

Checking the film

It said police wanted to determine whether any video footage or cell phone images from the set would shed light on the incident; to check the "Western style" outfit worn by Baldwin, which bore apparent blood stains; and to examine all firearms, ammunition and casings on the scene. The affidavit stated that Baldwin handed the gun to 24-year-old Hannah Gutierrez-Reed the movie's weapons master, or armorer-immediately after the shooting, and that she removed a spent casing and handed it, and the gun, to

deputies when they arrived. The affidavit did not specify what type of charge the gun might have carried.

A 911 call to police immediately afterward conveyed the shock and anger felt on the set. "We've had two people accidentally shot by a prop gun, we need help immediately," the caller tells a police dispatcher. "Was it loaded with a real bullet?" the dispatcher asks. "I don't-I can't tell you that," the caller replies. "And this (expletive) AD ... this mother (expletive) — he's supposed to check the guns, he's responsible for what happens on the set."

'Test fire it yourself'

Gun safety guidelines from the Actors' Equity Association specify that "all loading of firearms must be done by the property master, armorer or experienced persons working under their direct supervision." The guidelines also state: "Before each use, make sure the gun has been test-fired off stage and then ask to test fire it yourself. Watch the prop master check the cylinders and barrel to be sure no foreign object or dummy bullet has become lodged inside."

Baldwin, one of Hollywood's best-known actors, said he was heartbroken and was cooperating fully with the inquiry.

He retweeted a story from trade journal Variety headlined "Alec Baldwin Was Told Prop Gun Was Safe Before Fatal Shooting, Affidavit Says."

Gutierrez-Reed is the daughter of longtime film-industry armorer Thell Reed. In a September podcast, she said she had some trepidation about her first stint as a lead armorer during the recent filming of "The Old Way," another Western. "I almost didn't take the job 'cause I wasn't sure if I was ready," she said on the "Voices of the West" podcast. Loading blanks, she added, made her particularly nervous. Halls and Gutierrez-Reed could not be reached for comment.

District Attorney Mary Carmack-Altwies said in a statement Friday that the case is in its preliminary stages, adding, "At this time, we do not know if charges will be filed." "Rust" was being filmed on sprawling Bonanza Creek Ranch, the setting for scores of movies over several decades. Baldwin stars as Harland Rust, an outlaw who goes on the run with his grandson after the latter is convicted of murder following an accidental killing.—AFP

Adele wants Idris Elba to be the next 007



Craig hurt by trolls when first cast as Bond

Daniel Craig was hurt by negative comments on social media when he was first cast as James Bond. The 'No Time To Die' actor - who has ended his tenure as 007 in the latest installment of the blockbuster franchise - read some of the unfavorable posts about himself online when he was confirmed to



star in 2006's 'Casino Royale', but doesn't regret doing so despite finding it a "painful" read. The 53-year-old star told SiriusXM's 'The Jess Cagle Podcast with Julie Cunningham': "I'm glad I did it. It was painful to do but I kind of read everything, and just thought, 'Well, there's not much I could do about that.'" The 'Layer Cake' star also admitted he struggled to get to grips with having a "public persona", even though he chased fame. He said: "The whole concept of fame, and you know, being public and having a public persona and all of these things were just so alien to me. I didn't understand it. 'I suppose I acted because I wanted to be famous but I acted because I loved acting.'" Reflecting on the extent of fame it brought him, he continued: "With Bond, I knew it was going to explode. 'I wasn't completely naive, I knew that it would change things.'" However, the 'Spectre' star was not ready for the sheer volume of it and insisted there is no way to prepare for superstardom. The 'Knives Out' star recently recalled feeling "physically and mentally under siege" when he shot to a new level of fame in the movies. He said: "I used to lock myself in and close the curtains, I was in cloud cuckoo land. I was physically and mentally under siege." And Daniel added how fellow Hollywood star Hugh Jackman, also 53 - who he worked with on Broadway in the 2009 run of 'Steady Rain' - "helped me to come to terms with it and appreciate it."

Adele wants Idris Elba to play the next James Bond. The 33-year-old Grammy-winner has revealed she actually would like to see 'Loki' actor Jonathan Majors replace Daniel Craig as 007, but because he's American, her second choice is the 'Luther' star, who has previously been tipped to take on the iconic role as the fictional suave spy in the blockbuster franchise. Speaking to Vogue for their '73 Questions' series, the 'Easy On Me' hitmaker said: "I mean it's a tough one there have been lots of different choices and stuff. But I would like Jonathan Majors to be the next Bond. But I don't know if that's allowed because he's American. But I think Idris Elba." Idris sent fans into a frenzy back in 2018 when he tweeted a selfie with the caption 'My name's Elba, Idris Elba', which sparked speculation he was being lined up for the part. However, he quickly quashed the rumors. He wrote: "Don't believe the HYPE..." Meanwhile, an expert recently claimed that Bond was originally supposed to be a woman. Steven Jay Rubin, the author of 'The James Bond Movie Encyclopedia', suggested that Ian Fleming's spy was earmarked for the

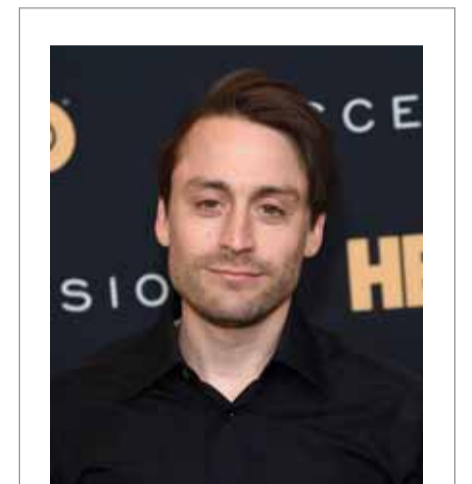
Oscar-winning actress Susan Hayward in the 1950s before the late Sir Sean Connery took the part. Steven said: "Writer Lorenzo Semple and producer Gregory Ratoff were in the process centering on Bond as a woman. "Considering it was the mid-1950s it was very controversial but Susan Hayward was a real commodity." The Bond historian added: "Bond would be a natural move for her. But for whatever reason it just didn't happen. "There are a million reasons why a studio may consider something and then change their mind." Daniel, 53, took his Aston Martin for a spin for the final time in 'No Time To Die' but recently shot down suggestions that a woman should take over from his as 007, as he believes "better parts" should be created for actresses instead. When asked if he would support a more "diverse" appointment as his replacement, he replied: "The answer to that is very simple. "There should simply be better parts for women and actors of color. "Why should a woman play James Bond when there should be a part just as good as James Bond, but for a woman?"



McCartney and Peterson tie the knot

Jesse McCartney and Katie Peterson have tied the knot. The 'Beautiful Soul' singer and the actress got married at the Santa Lucia Preserve in Carmel, California on Saturday. The couple, who were married by Katie's uncle, were joined by their beloved pet pooch Bailey at the ceremony. Katie walked down an aisle of white rose petals to a string quartet playing Eric Clapton's 'Wonderful Tonight', while the 'Jurassic Park' theme song played as the rest of the wedding party arrived. Jesse confessed to People ahead of his big day: "I cry watching a Subaru commercial. That kind of sums it up for you. "So I don't know how I'm going to get through this ...

I get dewy, as they say." The 'Alvin and the Chipmunks' voice actor also said: "I think that moment of settling in at the altar and just watching her come down is going to be pretty special and having our families there and witnessing all of it. "It's hard not to be romantic about that portion of the night." After the pair said their "I do's", they headed to a "rustic barn-like structure" to celebrate with their 147 guests. The loved-up pair got engaged in 2019 after seven years of dating. The pair were enjoying a meal with friends at CUT by Wolfgang Puck at the Beverly Wilshire hotel in Los Angeles when Jesse popped the question. A source said at the time: "The couple was with a group of friends as McCartney got down on one knee. "The whole restaurant fell silent as he asked her to marry him and went into a loud applause and cheered when she said yes! "Chef Wolfgang Puck himself was also at the restaurant making his rounds when it happened. The couple celebrated with drinks as the night went on."



Kieran Culkin to host 'Saturday Night Live'

Kieran Culkin is set to host 'Saturday Night Live' next month. The 'Succession' actor will guest present the late-night sketch show on November 6 and will be joined by musical guest Ed Sheeran. It will mark the 30-year-old pop megastar's third performance on the entertainment program. Meanwhile, Keiran just revealed he and his pregnant wife were forced to sleep on the floor in their apartment after their daughter took over their bedroom. The 39-year-old star and his spouse Jazz Charton gave the one bedroom they had to their daughter Kinsey, two, meaning that the couple had to get their slumber on a mattress in their living room. Kieran admitted that his other half - who was expecting their now two-month-old son Wilder at the time - questioned why the star of a hit HBO show didn't have a house that had enough rooms for his family. He said: "We live in New York City apartments, I'm sure it's similar to this [in London], like, the corner of our bedroom is the nursery. So we weren't really prepared for all that. And then eventually friends kept telling us 'you know you're going to have to give that kid its own room'. We have a one-bedroom apartment, there's, what, the kitchen? I don't know, where does it go? "So eventually the kid took our bedroom and then my wife - who was pregnant the second time while we were shooting through the pandemic - we're sleeping on a mattress on the living room floor because the baby has the bedroom and she at one point turns to me and she goes, 'You see how we live, right? You know you're on a hit TV show, right?' I'm like, 'Yeah alright we'll move, we'll move!'" Kieran and Jazz have since purchased a three-bedroom property but "it's being renovated" so they have not yet moved.



Corden jokes Adele is 'difficult to buy for'

James Corden has joked Adele is a "difficult person" to buy gifts for. The chart-topping singer recently revealed that James gave her a piece of Celine Dion's used chewing gum as a gift and the TV star has now revealed the story behind the unusual present. He shared: "The weekend before we had shot ['Carpool Karaoke'], we went on a little weekend away to Mexico, my family, [Adele], her son and we spent a weekend

together. "And the following Friday I was shooting the 'Carpool' with Celine Dion and Adele just loves Celine Dion." James joked that Celine thought he lost his mind when he asked to keep her gum. The TV star also explained that he ripped a piece of paper in order to keep it safe. He said on 'The Late Late Show': "I ripped off a piece and she put it in and I said, 'Don't. I'll do it,' because, you know, she was about to do the fold. "I said, 'I got it, I got

it, I got it.' I then had to give it to [show producer Diana Miller] and I was like, 'I need to keep this super safe!' And she took it and looked at me like, 'I think this is the day he's lost his mind.' "And I said, 'Please keep it safe.' And then I gave it to [Adele] for her birthday. She's a difficult person to buy for. A candle doesn't cut it!" Adele previously revealed that she has Celine's gum in a frame at home. The 33-year-old star made the confession

after being asked what her "proudest possession" was in Vogue's '73 Questions' video series, which was filmed at her home in California. She said: "James Corden, who's a friend of mine, but also does 'Carpool Karaoke', which I did - he did it with her and knew how much a fan of her I was. "So he made her spit her gum into a piece of paper and he framed it for me!"

Lifestyle | Features



A guest takes a personal photograph of Spanish artist Pablo Picasso's 'Pierrot,' (left) near 'Homme et enfant' before the start of a Sotheby's auction of 11 works by Pablo Picasso from the MGM Resorts Fine Art Collection in Las Vegas.

Spanish artist Pablo Picasso's 'La Fenetre de l'atelier La Californie,' (left) 'Buste d'homme,' (center) and 'Nature morte aux fleurs et au compotier' (right) are shown before the start of a Sotheby's auction.



Staff position Spanish artist Pablo Picasso's 'Femme au beret rouge-orange' before the start of a Sotheby's auction. —AFP photos

Picasso masterpieces fetch \$108.9 million at Sotheby's auction

Eleven masterpieces by Pablo Picasso fetched \$108.9 million at a Sotheby's auction in Las Vegas on Saturday. The works went under the hammer at the Bellagio hotel and casino, known for its extensive art collection, ahead of what would have been the Spanish painter's 140th birthday. The jewel in the crown of MGM Resort's auctioned collection was "Femme au beret rouge-orange" ("Woman with a red-orange cap"), one of the last portraits by the artist of Marie-Therese Walter, who he began an affair with when she was 17 years old, and inspired many of his most celebrated works.

It sold for nearly \$40.5 million after a starting price was estimated at \$20-30 million. "Painted in January 1938, the portrait of his beloved muse Marie-

Therese Walter stands as a crowning achievement amid one of Picasso's most inspired and productive periods," Sotheby's said in a Tweet. Two iconic portraits from the last years of the painter's life were also sold: "Homme et enfant" ("Man and child") — for \$24.4 million and "Buste d'homme" ("Bust of Man") — at \$9.5 million which sold below its estimated starting price of 10 million. Other works sold include ceramics, several works on paper and a number of still lifes. — AFP

Sotheby's auctioneer Oliver Barker interacts with the audience during the Sotheby's "Picasso: Masterworks From The MGM Resorts Fine Art Collection" auction at Bellagio Resort & Casino.



Jordanian company dives into Arabic mobile games market

Its logo is a tomato, not an apple, but in just eight years Jordanian company Tamatem has already bitten a chunk out of the lucrative market for Arabic mobile games. "Less than one percent of internet content is in Arabic, even though there are 400 million Arab users," said the company's founder and CEO Hussam Hammo. "There is a very big gap in this market that we are trying to fill," added the 38-year-old entrepreneur, sitting in his elegant Amman



Hussam Hammo, founder and CEO of Tamatem, speaks during an interview at his office in the capital Amman. —AFP photos

offices. Hamo founded Tamatem—which means tomato-in 2013 and it was the first Arab company to win investment from the "500 Startups" program based in Silicon Valley, California. Eight years on the company has grown to about 80 staff who convert mobile phone games into Arabic, also adapting content to fit Arab culture.

"Language was a barrier to mobile games growth" in the region, said Nour Khrais, founder and chief executive of games developer Maysalward. "The Arabic language connects (the player) emotionally." With offices now in the United Arab



A developer is pictured at the offices of Tamatem.

Emirates and Saudi Arabia, Tamatem has published more than 50 mobile games, which have been downloaded more than 100 million times on Apple and Google Play stores. "Seventy percent of smartphone users in the Arab world have set their phones in Arabic, which means they like to use content in their mother language," said Hammo. "Sadly when you search in English for a game in app stores you will find millions of games, but when you search in Arabic there are only a few thousand," he added.

'Billion-dollar industry'

But competition is fierce, and Khrais said the Middle East and North Africa region was "the largest growth region in the world in the field of electronic games". Market analysts Mordor Intelligence said the global gaming market in 2020 was valued at \$174 billion, and was expected to

reach \$314 billion in 2026. Tamatem, which has partnerships with companies in the US, China, France, South Korea, Bulgaria and Croatia, converts games by replacing characters' voices and names, adapting music and clothing, adding Muslim holidays like Ramadan and even changing car licence plates.

"We don't only do translation, we do the most important thing which is educating by making the content relevant to the Arab culture," said chief operating officer Eyad Al Basheer. "Hollywood Story" from Nanobit.com, in which players can become movie stars, strut the red carpet, hang out with fans and even shoot blockbusters, was renamed "Malekat Al-Moda"—or "Queen of Fashion". Instead of locations in New York and Los Angeles, the avatars travel between Dubai, Beirut and Cairo, in an Arabic game which has now been downloaded more than 15 million times.



Developers are pictured at the office of Tamatem, a Jordanian mobile game developer and publisher, in the capital Amman.

Strategy multiplayer and civilisation-building game "Clash of Empire" from developer Leme Games launched its Arabic version "Tahadi Al-Molouk" or "Challenge of Kings" this year.

'Next industrial revolution'

To fit Arab audiences, the figure of the notorious crusader Richard the Lionheart has been replaced by legendary dynastic Muslim leader, Salah al-Din Al-Ayubi. One of the company's biggest hits is "Shake the Metal" which taps into the popular sport of drifting. Featuring car models beloved in the Arab world, it has now been downloaded five million times. The most popular of Tamatem's Arabic mobile games however, is "VIP Belote", which is based on the French card game and has been downloaded more than 20 million times. In a 2019 report by the World Economic Forum, Tamatem was chosen as one of

the best 100 Arabic companies "shaping the fourth industrial revolution".

And the COVID-19 pandemic has proved a boon, with the number of mobile gamers soaring by 150 percent, Hammo said. "Tamatem made games easier, and we understand things that we didn't understand before, because it was in English," said player Khader Hamid, a 28-year-old civil engineer. Mona Rummaneh, a 30-year-old working in e-marketing, said Arabic games left her "confident that all the content is appropriate for our culture and morals".

She recalled how after the Beirut port explosion in August 2020, she and other gamers voiced their solidarity with Lebanese players. "So it is more than just a game," she said. — AFP



A developer is pictured at his desk at the offices of Tamatem.



A developer is pictured at her desk at the offices of Tamatem.



Developers are pictured at the office of Tamatem.

Sports

Braves oust defending champion Dodgers to reach World Series

Atlanta sets date with Houston Astros in Fall Classic

LOS ANGELES: The Atlanta Braves punched their ticket to their first World Series in over two decades Saturday, toppling the defending champion Los Angeles Dodgers 4-2 to wrap up the National League Championship Series in six games.

The Braves, who will face the Houston Astros in Major League Baseball's Fall Classic, rolled over the Dodgers by jumping on their starting pitcher Walker Buehler in the first inning. The win ended a string of heartbreaking potential elimination losses for the Braves who had four previous chances in the last two years to book a trip to the World Series but failed.

Atlanta advanced to their sixth World Series all-time and their first since 1999. "It is amazing. This organization has been around a long time and it has been a long time since we got to the World Series," said first baseman Freddie Freeman. "We took it to another level with what we did in the second half (regular season) and postseason."

The World Series starts tomorrow in Houston, which will host the first two games before they switch to Atlanta. The turning point Saturday was a three-run fourth inning that featured a 361-foot home run to right field by slugger Eddie Rosario, who scored teammates Travis d'Arnaud and Ehire

Adrianza. Rosario's blast landed just inside the right outfield pole.

"I'm at a loss for words to be honest," Rosario said. "I gave everything I had for the team, for a World Series. I just left it all out there. I'm extremely proud of myself and the team for getting to the World Series."

Last season the Dodgers defeated the Tampa Bay Rays to win the World Series in six games for their first championship since 1988. Braves shortstop Dansby Swanson got the final out, snagging a ground ball and throwing to first to get Dodgers AJ Pollock out, sparking a wild celebration on the field around Braves closer Will Smith.

Last season, the Braves took a commanding 3-1 series lead in the NLCS over the Dodgers, giving them three chances to advance to the World Series. But Los Angeles

brushed aside all of those Atlanta opportunities, doing it in the neutral-site stadium in Arlington, Texas.

Saturday's loss snapped the Dodgers' run of winning seven consecutive playoff elimination games. The Dodgers pitching staff were in trouble before Saturday's game even began. Los Angeles was expected to start Max Scherzer, but the ace right-hander was scratched from the start.

First World Series since 1999



ATLANTA: Members of the Atlanta Braves celebrate after defeating the Los Angeles Dodgers in Game Six of the National League Championship Series at Truist Park on Saturday in Atlanta, Georgia. — AFP

Scherzer gave up two runs over four innings of game two last week and said that his arm was too sore to pitch in game six. The Dodgers instead had to turn to Buehler on short rest. Buehler was initially scheduled to start a potential game seven yesterday.

The Braves made a couple of clutch defensive plays in the top of the sixth inning, including a one-hop snag at first base by dual American-Canadian citizen Freeman to get Dodgers baserunner Trea Turner out. — AFP

Bucks bounce back to beat Spurs in Texas

LOS ANGELES: Khris Middleton scored 28 points and all five Milwaukee starters finished in double figures as the injury-hit Bucks beat the San Antonio Spurs 121-111 on Saturday night.

Giannis Antetokounmpo chipped in 21 points for the defending NBA champion Bucks, who used a strong fourth quarter run to seize control against the Spurs after suffering through a blowout loss to Miami two nights earlier. "Just find a way to bounce back," Middleton said. "It's just how you adjust, how you respond to that. I think tonight, for the most part, the effort was in the right place."

Jrue Holiday and Pat Connaughton each scored 16 points, reserve George Hill scored 15 and Grayson Allen added 10 points for Milwaukee. The banged-up Bucks played without starting center Brook Lopez and Donte DiVincenzo and Bobby Portis, who usually contribute scoring off the bench.

Milwaukee built a 101-91 lead at the 8:40 mark of the fourth to take command of the contest in front of a crowd of 18,300 at the AT&T Center in Texas. The game was the second of a road-home back-to-back for the Spurs, who flew back to San Antonio Saturday morning after a

loss in Denver on Friday.

Elsewhere, the Cleveland Cavaliers posted their first win of the new season, with a 101-95 win over the Atlanta Hawks thanks largely to a 23-point performance from Ricky Rubio. Rubio shot nine-of-15 from the floor and added eight assists as Cleveland halted a two-game losing skid.

Rookie Evan Mobley finished with 17 points and 11 rebounds and Jarrett Allen had 11 points and 14 rebounds for the Cavaliers. Collin Sexton, Kevin Love and Lauri Markkanen each scored 12. "We're definitely really happy about our first win, it felt great," Mobley said. "But we don't want to just settle on it. We want to keep winning and growing from here."

Trae Young led the Hawks with 24 points, including 15 in the first half. Cam Reddish came off the bench to score 19 but Cleveland struggled shooting the ball, making just 10 of 34 from the three-point line. The Cavs have won six of their last seven against the Hawks in Cleveland.

"As Evan kept making plays, we kept giving him the ball," Cavaliers coach JB Bickerstaff said. "He's got that straight face, but his skill set is diverse and versatile. Evan has earned our trust because of how quickly he's picked things up."

In Toronto, Luka Doncic compiled 27 points, 12 assists and nine rebounds as the visiting Dallas Mavericks defeated the Toronto Raptors 103-95. Tim Hardaway added 25 points for the Mavericks, who won for the first time this season after losing their opener Thursday in Atlanta. —AFP



SAN ANTONIO: Khris Middleton #22 of the Milwaukee Bucks passes in the game against the San Antonio Spurs on Saturday at AT&T Center in San Antonio, Texas. —AFP

Kuwait hosts jet ski world championship

KUWAIT: Chairman of Water Sports Club Mohammad Al-Zanki said the club will organize the jet ski world championship from Nov 11 to 13 at Marina Beach for the second time, sponsored by the Public Authority for Sport (PAS). Zanki said the jet ski championship will be held with local, Gulf and international participants from more than 30 countries around the world, which will strengthen Kuwait's return to its usual place in the field of sports. It is also a motivation for athletes to win more championships, in addition to gaining more experience.

Zanki said the presence of athletes from more than 30 countries conforms with Kuwait's 2030 vision for sport. He said there will be many surprises organized by the Water Sports Club during the tournament, which will add to the competition for the top places. He said the club was established in March 2019 by PAS in order to prepare future plans to develop watersports, following the distinguished results of this sport in Kuwait and abroad.

Zanki said the club has organized several local jet ski and moto surf championships, in addition to participating in many championships, during which the club's athletes had respectable finishes. He said Water Sports Club hosted the world jet ski championship from Feb 13-15, 2020 under the patronage of HH the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Marina Beach for the first time in Kuwait with the participation of athletes from 27 countries, which was considered a historic event in Kuwait due to the wide interest of world youth worldwide in this sport. Zanki wished all participants success and a pleasant stay in Kuwait.



Mohammad Al-Zanki

Kuwait Crown Prince Championship to open shooting season

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Duajj Khalaf Al-Otaibi said the local shooting season will open on Nov 4 with HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Championship in pistol, rifle, trap, skeet and Olympic archery for both genders. Otaibi said those with special needs will have a place in this tournament, which will see shooters from the club, national guard, military and police sports federation. He said shooters from the GCC



KUWAIT: President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Duajj Khalaf Al-Otaibi (left) speaks during a press conference yesterday.

are welcome in this tournament.

Otaibi said during a press conference held yesterday that the tournament was delayed until

November to give shooters time to train and prepare after a long period away due to the coronavirus pandemic. He said Kuwait Shooting Federation appreciates HH the Crown Prince's sponsorship of the tournament, as this reflects his support and interest in Kuwait shooting. The sport is always making achievements around the world, the latest of which is Olympian Abdullah Al-Rashidi's second place win during the ISSF President's Cup held in Cyprus.

Meanwhile, Secretary General of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federation Obaid Manahi Al-Osaimi said the juniors' preliminaries for this tournament will take place at the Shooting Sport Club's branch in Jahra. Osaimi said this tournament will see strong competition due to having the best shooters from Kuwait and the Gulf. He said prizes for this tournament are worthwhile due to its importance. Both Otaibi and Osaimi thanked the political leadership and the Public Authority for Sport for their support of shooting.

Kuwait Open Bowling Tournament concludes

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Jassem Al-Saqer was crowned the champion of Kuwait Open Bowling Tournament that was organized by Kuwait Bowling Club with participation from GCC countries. Mustafa Al-Mousawi took second place while Bahrain's Yousuf Salah came third. The tournament's closing ceremony was attended by President of International and Asian Bowling Federations Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, President of Saudi Federation Abdelmalek Al-Shithri and Bowling Club Secretary Mohammad Al-Faresi.

Sheikh Talal handed the prizes to the winners of all categories, including the under-18 and under-15. Hassan Al-Zaid played on a wheelchair following tough competition. The tournament was the best preparation for Gulf teams before the world championship to be held in Dubai in mid-November.

Sheikh Talal said this tournament was the best preparation for the upcoming international event, and was good for the Gulf teams, due to the difficul-



KUWAIT: A group photo of the winners at the conclusion of the tournament.

ty in organizing training camps abroad due to the coronavirus pandemic, which postponed championships. "We were keen on the Gulf gathering as soon as possible, and that is why this tournament was held and was well-timed," he added. Sheikh

Talal said the tournament achieved its goals of exchanging experiences and providing a strong competitive atmosphere among participants.

Shithri said the tournament was a success at all levels, technically, organizationally and media-wise,

adding: "We are proud to be in Kuwait along with GCC athletes." Shithri appreciated the Kuwait Bowling Club facilities, which are among the best in the world, and lauded Sheikh Talal's efforts to enhance and develop the game regionally and around the world.

Sports

Quartararo wins first MotoGP title after Bagnaia crashes out at Misano

Ten podiums in 16 races, including five victories

MISANO ADRIATICO, Italy: Fabio Quartararo won his first MotoGP world title yesterday after his closest rival Francesco Bagnaia crashed out of the Emilia-Romagna Grand Prix. Bagnaia, who was 52 points behind Quartararo with three GPs including this race remaining, was comfortably leading when he fell with just four laps left to hand the Frenchman his country's first ever MotoGP championship.

Yamaha rider Quartararo, 22, now leads Bagnaia by 65 points meaning he can no longer be caught by his Ducati rival and guarantees a first riders' title for his team since 2015. "I still can't believe it," a tearful Quartararo told Sky Sports Italia. "It feels good to also have my family with me, we will enjoy a lot tonight and until the end of the season."

Quartararo's win comes in his third season in MotoGP, the first with Yamaha's factory team after two years with the SRT satellite outfit. Of the 16 MotoGPs he has contested this season, he has claimed 10 podiums, including five victories.

Quartararo surged from 15th on the starting grid to finish fourth on Sunday behind race winner Marc

Marquez, who had been pursuing Bagnaia for almost the entire race. Marquez's Honda teammate Pol Espargaro was second and Italian rider Enea Bastianini of Ducati came third. "Today is not my day but Fabio's," said Marquez. "I want to congratulate him. He deserves it as he has done an incredible job this season."

Italian rider Bagnaia's job was made harder just three laps into the race when his teammate Jack Miller, who started from second on the grid, skidded off the track. The Australian was protecting Bagnaia from attacks from six-time MotoGP champion Marquez, who also won the Grand Prix of the Americas in the last round.

However after starting the race in pole position he had the win, and the chance to extend the title tussle by another race, in his sights before flying off the track to hand the title to Quartararo and a second win of the season to Marquez. Yesterday's race was also Valentino Rossi's last MotoGP in Italy ahead of retirement at the end of the season, and he placed a creditable 10th on his final bow at his home rack of Misano. — AFP



In first year with Yamaha



MISANO ADRIATICO, Italy: Yamaha French rider Fabio Quartararo (center) celebrates his world champion title on the podium yesterday after the Emilia-Romagna MotoGP Grand Prix at the Misano World Circuit Marco Simoncelli in Misano Adriatico, Italy. — AFP

Self-driving race cars make history in Indianapolis

INDIANAPOLIS: The winner was not a driver but an algorithm on Saturday at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, where the top car clocked an average speed of 218 km/h (135 mph), ushering autonomous vehicles into a new era.

Setting the record pace over two laps, a team from the Technical University of Munich (TUM) won a \$1 million prize in the first Indy Autonomous Challenge, an event dedicated to self-driving cars. Their car beat EuroRacing, another European team who fell to a coding mistake by one of their student engineers despite securing the fastest lap time ever recorded for an autonomous car, at 139 miles per hour (223 km/h).

EuroRacing's Dallara IL-15 had been programmed to run five laps instead of the six scheduled for every competitor and therefore slowed down during its final drive around the oval, bringing down the average speed. "I have a bitter taste in my mouth," said Marko Bertogna, professor at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia in Italy and EuroRacing team head.

A third European team also had a shot at victory but GPS trackers for PoliMOVE shut down during the race, which made their car "totally blind", according to Sergio Matteo Savaresi, professor at the Polytechnic University of Milan and team manager. Each autonomous car relies on sensors, cameras, radar, but above all GPS, without which no controlled motion is possible, to the point that some have two onboard.

'Part of history'

The Dallara IL-15, used by every team, resembles a Formula One car but is smaller and comes with a price tag of \$230,000. However, the technology on board makes each car worth more than \$1 million, according to event organizers.

Among the tech installed in the vehicles are sensors supplied by industry trailblazer Luminar that can map out surfaces from 250 meters away. The



INDIANAPOLIS: Team members of the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) stand before their car prior to the Indy Autonomous Challenge race at the Indianapolis Speedway in Indianapolis on Saturday. — AFP

TUM team's average speed of 218 km/h "is not far away from what human drivers do" with the same car, said Alexander Wischniewski, a member of the winning team.

Considering the cool, wet weather in Indianapolis on Saturday, with no proper warm-up time for tires, "I'm really proud of what we showed today," Wischniewski said. "Nobody knew that these (self-driving cars) could go so fast in competition," added Stefano dePonti, Dallara USA's CEO, who said he had witnessed "a part of history."

Bertogna said he believed the autonomous Dallara could reach 280 km/h, "but with these conditions, it was impossible." For two years, the nine competing college student teams had been preparing for an event in which all the cars would race at the same time side by side. But organizers had a last-minute change of heart and decided to go for a time trial competition instead, with the cars taking turns on the track.

However, a side session took place a few days earlier on another Indianapolis track, Lucas Oil Raceway, during which TUM, PoliMOVE and EuroRacing all had their Dallaras running simultaneously, and even overtaking each other. Talk is now rife about a proper multi-car autonomous race involving the same cars at Las Vegas tech show CES scheduled for early January, but the rematch has yet to be confirmed.

The commercial autonomous vehicle industry has been following the Indianapolis race closely, with contributions to the event topping \$120 million. Many of the teams plan to publish some or all of the algorithms used to run the cars for use in the wider sector. Saturday's event was also enjoyed by a handful of fans, whom the organizers capped at a low number. Patti Aarons, 59, said she had been visiting the Motor Speedway for more than 50 years but was ecstatic about the self-driving race. "It just gets my blood pumping. I love it," Aarons said. — AFP

Lewandowski scores to keep Bayern Munich top of Bundesliga

BERLIN: Robert Lewandowski stated his case for the Ballon d'Or by scoring his 10th Bundesliga goal in nine games this season for leaders Bayern Munich in a 4-0 romp at home to Hoffenheim on Saturday. Having claimed a record 41 Bundesliga goals last season, Lewandowski has picked up where he left off.

The Poland striker is among the favorites to win the Ballon d'Or on November 29 having been named FIFA's best male player of 2020. Lewandowski showed his class with a stunning strike after Serge Gnabry gave the hosts a first-half lead in front of 60,000 fans at the Allianz Arena, the biggest home crowd since the pandemic hit Germany in March 2020.

Replacements Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting and Kingsley Coman grabbed late goals to seal the win which keeps Bayern a point clear at the top of the table ahead of Borussia Dortmund, who won 3-1 at Arminia Bielefeld. Bayern dominated even though head coach Julian Nagelsmann is quarantining at home after testing positive for COVID-19.

"It was a deserved victory. The team played very strong football for 30 minutes," said Nagelsmann's assistant coach Dino Toppmoller. "After going 2-0 up, there was a lack of sharpness in

defense. In the end, we stepped up a gear. We'll all be happy if Julian comes back as soon as possible."

Gnabry's opening goal came after he had already had one disallowed. Lewandowski had also chipped Hoffenheim goalkeeper Oliver Baumann only to watch the ball fly agonizingly wide of the post. Bayern finally made their domination count on 16 minutes when Jamal Musiala played the ball in to Gnabry, who fired between Baumann's legs for his sixth league goal this season. Lewandowski made it 2-0 with a superb finish from the edge of the area. The floodgates opened with eight minutes left as Choupo-Moting and then Coman fired home to complete the rout.

Dortmund respond to Ajax rout

Borussia Dortmund bounced back from their midweek Champions League drubbing at Ajax against Arminia Bielefeld. Enre Can and Mats Hummels claimed first-half goals before England midfielder Jude Bellingham dribbled past defenders, then chipped the ball in from a tight angle.

"We wanted to give an answer here to the game on Tuesday, which was unfortunately, a step backwards," admitted Hummels. With regular penalty-taker Erling Braut Haaland sidelined with a hip injury, Can stepped up to



MUNICH: Bayern Munich's Polish striker Robert Lewandowski plays the ball during his team's first division Bundesliga football match against Hoffenheim in Munich, southern Germany, on Saturday. — AFP

convert an early spot-kick.

Hummels produced a spectacular volley from the edge of the area to make it 2-0 at half-time before Bellingham grabbed the third 18 minutes from time. Striker Fabian Klos converted a late Bielefeld penalty.

Freiburg remain the only unbeaten team in Germany's top flight and rose to third with a 2-0 win at Wolfsburg, thanks to goals by Philipp Lienhart and Lucas Hoeler. Wolfsburg won their first four league games under Mark van Bommel to lead the table in mid-September, but four straight defeats leave them eighth.

Second-half goals by Emil Forsberg, Yussuf Poulsen, Dominik Szoboszlai, who set up the fourth for 18-year-old Hugo Novoa Ramos on his league debut, saw RB Leipzig fight back to claim a 4-1 home win over bottom side Greuther Fuerth. The win eases pressure on American head coach Jesse Marsch after Leipzig lost their first three Champions League games, including Tuesday's 3-2 defeat at Paris Saint-Germain. Later Hertha Berlin built on last weekend's win at Eintracht Frankfurt with a 1-0 victory at home to Borussia Moenchengladbach thanks to Marco Richter's first-half winner. — AFP

Qatar Airways unveils special travel packages for FIFA Arab Cup

DOHA: Qatar Airways Holidays has launched extensive travel packages for the inaugural FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2021 welcoming global football fans to enjoy the finest Qatari hospitality and follow their favorite team in person. The region's showpiece tournament will take place from 30 November to 18 December, 2021.

As Privilege Club is the Official Frequent Flyer Program of the FIFA Arab Cup 2021(tm), members can earn double Qmiles when they purchase a travel package, including a hotel stay of three nights or more by October 31, 2021. New members who join Privilege Club can also enjoy a sign-up bonus of 1,500 Qmiles when using the enrolment code JOIN-MECP21.

Fans will be offered the flexibility to build their own package for the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2021 which includes flights with Qatar Airways, the Official Airline Partner of FIFA. The 'Build Your Own' feature will give them the functionality to choose their preferred travel dates, hotel accommodation and match tickets. Customers can secure access to bookings by visiting <https://www.qatarairwaysholidays.com/kw-en/fifa-arab-cup-2021/overview>.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Akbar Al-Baker said: "Not only will this tournament showcase the country's readiness for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, but it will help us unite football fans from the Middle East and North Africa. With over 140 destinations to choose from, our network will provide them seamless connectivity across the globe. It is time for us to kick off with these unique travel packages and give people a memorable taste of Qatari hospitality, and reignite the region's collective passion for football."

The tournament will take place exactly a year before the much-awaited FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 inaugurates and will serve as an opportunity to test operations and facilities ahead of the first FIFA World Cup in the Middle East. The tournament's draw was conducted after the qualifying round earlier in June 2021, grouping the 16 contesting nations which feature Group A: Qatar, Iraq, Oman and Bahrain; Group B: Tunisia, UAE, Syria and Mauritania; Group C: Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Palestine and Group D: Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon and Sudan.

The event itself will offer travelers a glimpse into the spirit of Qatar and the world-class stadiums set to host the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. The magnificent Al Bayt Stadium located in the northern city of Al Khor is scheduled to contest the tournament's inaugural and final matches. It is built in the shape of a traditional Bedouin tent as a symbol of hospitality. The other stadiums include Al-Thumama Stadium, Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium, Ras Abu Aboud Stadium, Education City Stadium and Al-Janoub Stadium. A detailed schedule of all matches and stadiums can be found online: <https://www.fifa.com/tournaments/mens/arabcup/arabcup2021>.

The airline sponsored the 2021 Concacaf Gold Cup and the UEFA Euro 2020, and has an extensive global sports partnership portfolio that includes football-governing bodies such as FIFA, CONCACAF and CONMEBOL. As FIFA's Official Partner, Qatar Airways has sponsored mega events including the 2019 and 2020 editions of the FIFA Club World Cup, and will sponsor the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. Qatar Airways also sponsors some of the world's biggest football clubs including Al-Sadd SC, Boca Juniors, FC Bayern Munchen, KAS Eupen, and Paris Saint-Germain. — AFP

Liverpool humiliate Man Utd

Salah hits hat-trick in 5-0 rout • West Ham rock Spurs



MANCHESTER: Liverpool's Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Salah celebrates after scoring their fifth goal, his third during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Liverpool, at Old Trafford yesterday. —AFP

LONDON: Liverpool swept to a stunning 5-0 win at archrivals Manchester United as Mohamed Salah's hat-trick and Paul Pogba's red card condemned the hosts to one of the darkest days in their history, while West Ham beat London rivals Tottenham yesterday. Ten years after Manchester City's infamous 6-1 victory at Old Trafford, Liverpool inflicted one of the most embarrassing losses United have ever suffered.

It was Liverpool's biggest win against United since 1925 and moved them seven points clear of Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side in the Premier League table. Second-placed Liverpool are just one point behind leaders Chelsea as they chase the title - an ambition which looks completely beyond hapless United after this wretched afternoon. In a telling indictment of United's capitulation, thousands of fans left Old Trafford well before full-time.

Many supporters even fled before half-time, with those that remained loudly booing Solskjaer and his players. United are languishing in seventh place after a fourth successive league game without a win, a

dismal streak that includes three defeats. The pressure on Solskjaer will be intense in the coming days as the beleaguered Norwegian faces a fight to cling onto his job. Liverpool fans rubbed salt into United's wounds by gleefully chanting "Ole must stay".

United had ridden their luck several times this season after snatching wins from the jaws of defeat. But Liverpool were far too accomplished to let United's flaws at the back go unpunished and they were ahead after less than five minutes. Harry Maguire and Victor Lindelof were out of position and Salah played through Naby Keita, who slotted home in front of the shell-shocked Stretford End. Liverpool smelt blood and grabbed a second in the 13th minute when Maguire and Luke Shaw got in tangle, allowing Trent Alexander-Arnold to cross for Diogo Jota to convert from close range.

Rampant Liverpool

Jurgen Klopp's side were rampant and Salah finished off Keita's cross in the 38th minute. With

United in disarray, Maguire was pulled out of position and Salah struck at the far post in stoppage-time. Salah was not finished yet and he ran clear to complete his treble in the 50th minute, making him Africa's all-time leading scorer in the Premier League with 106 goals.

The Egypt forward had netted for the 10th successive game in all competitions and was the first away player to score a hat-trick at Old Trafford since Brazil legend Ronaldo in 2003. Summing up United's plight, France midfielder Pogba, sent on at half-time, lasted just 15 minutes before being dismissed for a reckless studs-up lunge on Keita. Liverpool are now unbeaten in their last 22 matches in all competitions, the kind of consistency that United can only dream about.

Antonio fires Hammers past Spurs

At the London Stadium, a second-half strike from Michail Antonio gave West Ham their second successive league win and condemned Tottenham to a

second consecutive 1-0 loss this week. Beaten by Vitesse Arnhem in the Europa Conference League on Thursday, Tottenham once again failed to produce a cohesive display as West Ham climbed above them into fourth place. West Ham made the breakthrough in the 72nd minute as Antonio evaded Kane and poked home from Aaron Cresswell's corner, making it 10 goals in 10 games against Tottenham for the striker.

In yesterday's other match, Leicester won 2-1 at Brentford to extend their unbeaten league run to four games. Youri Tielemans' 25-yard rocket put Leicester ahead in the 14th minute. Mathias Jorgensen rose above two markers to head Brentford's equalizer past Kasper Schmeichel from a near-post corner in the 60th minute. James Maddison had the perfect response to his critics after a troubled spell as the Leicester midfielder netted in the 73rd minute, tapping into an empty from Patson Daka's pass for his first goal since February. —AFP

Madrid beat struggling rivals Barca

MADRID: Real Madrid piled renewed pressure on Barcelona coach Ronald Koeman as David Alaba scored a scintillating goal to help seal a 2-1 victory in the Clasico at Camp Nou yesterday. Alaba's bending shot had Madrid in front for the majority of an end-to-end contest, with Lucas Vazquez making it two in injury-time before Sergio Aguero tapped in his first goal for Barcelona with seconds left.

Barca have now lost a fourth consecutive Clasico for the first time since 1965 and stay a lowly eighth in La Liga, five points behind Madrid, who surge back to the top of the table. After beating Valencia and winning a crucial Champions League game against Dynamo Kiev this week, it is a fresh set-back for Barca and Koeman, whose future will again come under scrutiny.

Madrid, meanwhile, see their own recovery bolstered, after backing up a thumping win over Shakhtar Donetsk to leave a rocky run in the rear-view mirror. "These games are always close," said Koeman. "They have their game, we have ours and the details decide the result. It's a shame because we had the opportunities to score."

Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said: "We played against a great team, we have suffered, but we were able to cope." This was the first league meeting between these clubs without either Lionel Messi or Sergio Ramos since 2005 and while there were still veter-

ans on show - Luka Modric, Toni Kroos, Karim Benzema, Gerard Pique and Sergio Busquets among them - it was a Clasico more about the future.

For the first time in 65 years, six players younger than 22 began the game while Gavi, Barcelona's 17-year-old midfielder, was the youngest Barca starter in a Clasico in almost a century. The promotion of a duel between Ansu Fati and Vinicius Junior perhaps felt a little forced, but both players have become symbols of hope.

Fati endured one of those games to be expected sometimes of an 18-year-old, with the occasional threat dotted across a quieter display than he would have liked. Vinicius, though, was electric from the start, a constant thorn in Barcelona's side, especially in the first half, and instrumental in Alaba's superb, counter-attacking opener.

Barcelona were the more purposeful early on, setting their stall out by dominating the ball but Madrid were happy to sit deep and posed the greater problems on the break. Vinicius beat Oscar Mingueza with a superb turn through his opponent's legs and as Mingueza scuttled back to recover, Vinicius cut across him and tumbled in the box. The contact was there but minimal.

Not long after, Vinicius was in again and while replays showed he was just offside, Marc-Andre ter Stegen did brilliantly to take him wide and force a finish with defenders back to block. In between, Barca were controlling the ball, their more patient approach yielding a golden opportunity for Sergino Dest, the American more accustomed to right back than right wing, who blazed over from six yards after Memphis Depay slid across. —AFP

Pakistan break India jinx; Lanka hammer home title hopes

DUBAI: Captain Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan smashed unbeaten half-centuries as Pakistan crushed India by 10 wickets to register their first win over their archrivals in a Twenty20 World Cup yesterday. Chasing 152 for victory, Babar (68) and Rizwan (79) took apart the Indian bowling as they steered their team home with 13 balls to spare in Dubai.

Left-arm quick Shaheen Shah Afridi set up victory - their first over their neighbors in six attempts in the tournament - with figures of 3-31 that kept down India to 151-7 despite a valiant 57 from skipper Virat Kohli. Babar and Rizwan went on the attack from the start with boundaries inside the powerplay - the first six overs when only two fielders are allowed outside the inner circle - to set the tone for their chase. The batting pair kept up the charge as Babar reached his fifty with a six off spinner Varun Chakravarty to get the Pakistan crowd dancing with joy. Rizwan raised his fifty with a boundary off pace bowler Jasprit Bumrah and then raced past his captain, hitting six fours and three sixes in his 55-ball knock. Babar hit the winning runs to turn a new page in Pakistan-India rivalry.

Earlier Afridi returned figures of 3-31 after a lethal first spell to hurt India who elected to field first in the Super 12s encounter watched by 20,000 in the stadium and a global TV audience of hundreds of millions of fans across the globe. Kohli scored his 29th T20 fifty to help the team rebuild before being caught behind off Afridi as Pakistan dismissed the star batsman for the first time in a T20 World Cup game.

Afridi struck the first blow with an express delivery that swung in to trap Rohit Sharma lbw for a first ball duck and the bowler cele-



DUBAI: Pakistan's Mohammad Rizwan plays a shot during the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup cricket match between India and Pakistan at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium yesterday. —AFP

brated with his trademark open-arm gesture. Kohli walked in amid raucous applause from the Indian fans who were soon silenced by another ripper from Afridi in his second over.

Earlier, Sri Lanka defeated Bangladesh by five wickets in a feisty T20 World Cup clash yesterday, hammering home their status as surprise title contenders. Chasing an imposing target of 172, the 2014 champions saw Charith Asalanka (80 not out) and Bhanuka Rajapaksa (53) lead them to victory for a fourth successive win after three triumphs in the qualifying round. Earlier, Mushfiqur Rahim, with an undefeated 57 and opener Mohammad Naim, who hit 62, starred for Bangladesh in the Super 12 game after being put into bat. Asalanka made his runs from 49 balls, hitting five fours and five sixes as he and Rajapaksa put on 86 for the fourth wicket. Both men were dropped by Liton Das with Rajapaksa reprieved after he had made only 14.

The lone bright spot for Bangladesh in the field was the two wickets in four balls by Shakib Al Hasan to dismiss Pathum Nissanka

and Avishka Fernando. That allowed the veteran all-rounder go to 41 wickets, surpassing Pakistan's Shahid Afridi for most victims in T20 World Cups. Bangladesh had made 40 by the sixth over before they lost their first wicket and the sparks flew.

Liton Das (16) was caught by Sri Lanka skipper Dasun Shanaka at mid-off trying to hoist Lahiru Kumara into the outfield. However, Liton and Kumara then exchanged angry words with fellow Bangladesh opener Naim pushing away Kumara. Both umpires had to intervene before the game continued. Kumara went on to bowl a "beamer", clocked at over 140kmh, at Mushfiqur in the penultimate over, forcing the Bangladesh player to take evasive action. Naim made 62 from 52 balls before he was eventually dismissed in the 17th over, caught and bowled by Binura Fernando. Naim and Mushfiqur Rahim put on 73 for the third wicket as Bangladesh upped the pace. The classy Mushfiqur reached his sixth T20 international half century off 32 balls with four fours and two sixes. —AFP