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Kuwait fully supports Saudi in tackling climate change

Riyadh pledges more than \$1bn in new environmental initiatives



RIYADH: Heads of state and senior officials attending the Middle East Green Initiative Summit (MGI), including HH the Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani and Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, pose for a group photo yesterday. — AFP

Amir to open new Assembly term

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem yesterday said HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah will open the new Assembly term today, hoping it will achieve good results. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah will also attend. In a brief statement, Ghanem expressed hope that

the term will be "fruitful", unlike the past term which was marred by bitter disputes between the government and opposition lawmakers.

Opposition lawmakers boycotted or obstructed a majority of the sessions in protest against a decision to delay grillings of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah until the end of next year. They insisted the decision, taken by pro-government MPs and Cabinet members, breaches the constitution. In today's session, HH the Amir will deliver the inaugural speech. The speaker and prime minister will also address the session.

Lawmakers will then elect the new

Assembly secretary and observer, in addition to over a dozen committees that will study and prepare draft laws before sending them to the house for debate and approval. The new term starts just days after a national dialogue called by HH the Amir between the government and opposition lawmakers.

The dialogue has resulted in some 40 MPs sending an appeal to HH the Amir calling on him to pardon opposition figures and activists who have been convicted for crimes of opinion. The Amir has set up a committee comprising of the speaker, prime minister and head of the

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RIYADH: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said Kuwait fully supports the efforts of Saudi Arabia and the package of initiatives it has put forward to protect the environment and tackle the challenges of climate change. This came during HH the Crown Prince's speech at Riyadh's Middle East Green Initiative Summit. He affirmed Kuwait's commitments to tackle climate change challenges by signing and ratifying regional and international agreements and protocols and participating in relevant conferences.

Kuwait is at the forefront of countries seeking to achieve human and environmental sustainability and is a supportive partner for regional and

international efforts to combat climate change challenges, HH the Crown Prince said. Locally, Kuwait launched its environmental strategy within the (2035 New Kuwait) vision, in addition to legislations concerned with environment protection laws, rationalizing the consumption of natural resources, reducing pollution, preserving the integrity of the environment, rehabilitating its systems, protecting biodiversity and improving the efficiency of waste management, Sheikh Mishal added.

Moreover, HH the Crown Prince affirmed that Kuwait has a vision that believes that the future of humanity lies in green solutions, wise management

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News in brief

UK petrol price hits record

LONDON: The price of petrol in Britain hit a record high of 149.94 pence (\$2.05) per liter, the RAC motoring organization said yesterday. The previous record at the pumps, set in April 2012, was broken on Sunday as global oil prices rise dramatically, doubling from around \$40 a barrel a year ago to \$85 now. — AFP

105 Houthi rebels killed

RIYADH: The Saudi-led military coalition backing the government in Yemen said yesterday it had killed 105 Houthi rebels in air strikes near the strategic city of Marib. "Thirteen military vehicles were destroyed and 105 insurgents were killed in strikes in the past 24 hours," the coalition said. The strikes were carried out in Al-Jawba, about 50 km south of Marib, and Al-Kassara, 30 km to the northwest. — AFP

Iran reopens to vaccinated tourists

TEHRAN: Iran has reopened its doors to tourists vaccinated against COVID-19 after almost 20 months of closure due to the pandemic. "Tourists who have received two doses of anti-COVID vaccines and who can present a certificate for a negative PCR test conducted within 96 hours can obtain a visa," ISNA news agency said. — AFP

Sudan general dissolves govt after 'coup'

KHARTOUM: Sudan's top general declared a state of emergency and dissolved the authorities leading the country's democratic transition yesterday, after soldiers detained civilian leaders in what the UN condemned as a "coup". General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan's announcement in a televised address came after armed forces detained government leaders in charge of heading the transition to full civilian rule, following the April 2019 ouster of

autocrat Omar Al-Bashir.

"To rectify the revolution's course, we have decided to declare a state of emergency nationwide... dissolve the transitional sovereign council, and dissolve the cabinet," said Burhan, who announced the formation of a new government. His statement came as clashes erupted in the capital Khartoum, with soldiers firing live rounds at people who took to the streets to protest against the military. "Civilian rule is the people's choice," demonstrators chanted. "No to military rule".

Medics said soldiers killed two people and wounded more than 80 others. "Two people were killed in gunfire by forces of the military council coup," said the Central Committee

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KHARTOUM: A Sudanese protester draped with the national flag flashes the victory sign next to burning tires during a demonstration yesterday. — AFP

Facebook failing to contain hate speech: Reports

NEW YORK: Facebook was well aware that hate speech was spreading on its site in India which could exacerbate ethnic violence, and did not deploy resources to curb the phenomenon, US media

reported, citing internal documents. The so-called Facebook Papers, leaked by whistleblower Frances Haugen, have already revealed the impact of Facebook - as well as of WhatsApp and Instagram, both of which it owns - on the deep polarization of politics in the United States and on the mental health of some teenagers.

But there have long been concerns over the social network's impact in spreading hate speech fueling violence in the developing world, such as the massacre targeting the Rohingya minority in Myanmar. On the weekend, the Wall Street Journal, the New

York Times and the Washington Post, among others, focused on Facebook's presence in India, the biggest market for the US-based company and its messaging service WhatsApp in terms of users.

A report by the company's own researchers from July 2020 showed that the share of inflammatory content skyrocketed starting in Dec 2019. "Rumors and calls to violence spread particularly on Facebook's WhatsApp messaging service in late February 2020," when clashes between the Hindu majority and Muslim minority left dozens dead, the Wall Street Journal reported. — AFP

Local

Kuwait Crown Prince meets several leaders, officials during Saudi visit

Sheikh Mishal's second visit to Saudi Arabia solidifies ties



RIYADH: This handout photo released by the Saudi Press Agency shows His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (left) shaking hands with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud yesterday.



This handout photo released by the Saudi Press Agency shows His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (right) with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud (center) and Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani (left).



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Bahrain's Crown Prince and Prime Minister Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Tunisian Prime Minister Najla Bouden.

RIYADH: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah met several leaders and officials yesterday during his visit to Saudi Arabia, where he attended the Riyadh Middle East Green Initiative Summit. His Highness the Crown Prince met Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani and conveyed to him His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's greetings, wishing Qatar and its people further prosperity. Sheikh Tamim also conveyed his greetings to His Highness the Amir. During the meeting, bilateral ties between the two countries were discussed.

His Highness the Crown Prince held similar discussions as well in separate meetings with Bahrain's Crown Prince and Prime Minister Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifah, UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Deputy Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Maktoum bin Mohammed Al-Maktoum and Tunisian Prime Minister Najla Bouden. Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and other senior officials accompanied His Highness the Crown Prince in the meetings.

Historic ties

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's visit to Saudi Arabia yesterday, the second for His Highness, was another milestone that solidifies the historic and brotherly ties between the two nations. His Highness the Crown Prince visited Saudi Arabia yesterday to partake in the Middle East Green Initiative Summit, an event bolstering regional environmental commitment against the effects of climate change. The summit also aims at gathering scientific knowledge, capital, and political influence to help reinforce the protection of environment and seeking a reasonable transfer to renewable energy resources.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud announced last March the Saudi and Middle East Green Initiatives, paving the way for a greener and more sustainable future for generations

to come. In the summit, Saudi Arabia will share its experience in environment protection, aiding countries in the region to decrease carbon emissions from oil production by more than 60 percent, which will in turn contribute to the world's aim of decreasing emission by 10 percent.



Kuwait, Saudi share 130 years of strong relations

His Highness the Crown Prince first visited Saudi Arabia in his current capacity last June, after he assumed his post on October 7, 2020. This visit came upon an invitation from Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman. In the first visit, Sheikh Mishal delivered a written letter from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz concerning bilateral ties and ways to develop them. The letter also touched on recent happenings in the region and the world and also included an invitation for the Saudi King to visit Kuwait.

Over 130 years

Relations between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia have been deeply rooted for more than 130 years, with cooperation and integration setting an example at many fronts specially preserving sustainability and quality of environment and climate. This was further reflected with His Highness Sheikh Mishal's participation in the Middle East Green Initiative summit, out of the importance of environmental issues to leaderships in both countries.

Kuwait Ministry of Oil Dr Mohammad Al-Fares had earlier said his country would contribute to SGI and all green initiatives or use of renewable energy resources and the use of hydrogen energy. Fares said Kuwait and Saudi Arabia have many environment-related initiatives and ideas like marine life, climate change and desertification. Aspirations of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz to strengthen relations and cooperation are relentless, including the establishment of the coordination council for Kuwait's 2035 Vision and Saudi Arabia's 2030 Vision which aimed at promoting economy, security, culture, sport, social and oil. The two countries see eye-to-eye regional, Arab, Islamic and international issues as well. — KUNA

Kuwait fully supports Saudi...

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of environmental assets and the importance of linking individual efforts with regional and international initiatives. Kuwait also has environmental sustainability plans that aim to enhance carbon-neutral pathways, increase afforestation, establish terrestrial and marine reserves, rehabilitate oil sector facilities, reduce emissions, improve energy efficiency, introduce renewable energies and sustain energy supplies for future generations.

Based on Kuwait's vision, it fully supports the initiative of Saudi Arabia to implement the goals of this summit and for the benefit of the Middle East region and its environment, HH the Crown Prince said. He stressed the great interest that Kuwait attaches to the directives of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to address the environment and the challenges it faces by taking measures that reduce emissions and working with the international community to achieve the goals of sustainable development.

HH the Crown Prince thanked the kingdom for this initiative and for holding this summit, expressing gratitude to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman for their warm hospitality.

Meanwhile, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman pledged more than \$1 billion for new environmental initiatives yesterday, taking further steps to bolster the environmental credentials of the

world's top oil exporter. Two days after targeting carbon neutrality by 2060, and ahead of next week's COP26 global climate change summit, Prince Mohammed promised to contribute 15 percent of \$10.4 billion to fund the "circular carbon economy" and provide "clean fuel" to help feed 750 million people worldwide.

"Today we are initiating a green era for the area, believing that these changes are not only for the environment but also for the economy and security," he told heads of state and other senior officials at the Middle East Green Initiative Summit. "We will work on establishing an investment fund in solutions with circular carbon technology in the region and a global initiative which will supply solutions for clean fuel to provide food for more than 750 million people globally."

The "circular carbon economy" is a concept promoted by the Saudis which aims to remove and store carbon for reuse in other products. The summit, which also featured the leaders of Qatar and Pakistan, among others, and US presidential climate envoy John Kerry, follows Saturday's Saudi Green Initiative where Prince Mohammed announced a target of net zero carbon emissions by 2060.

The desert kingdom, population 34 million, is estimated to belch about 600 million tons of carbon dioxide per year - more than France (population 67 million) and slightly less than Germany (population 83 million). Carbon neutrality is a balance between emitting carbon and absorbing carbon from the atmosphere. According to the United Nations, the circular economy is essential to achieving the world's climate goals. It involves avoiding excessive consumption, waste and use of fossil fuels by leasing, reusing, repairing and recycling existing materials and products. — Agencies

Sudan general dissolves govt...

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of Sudan Doctors, an independent union of medics. The union said doctors have also counted "more than 80 wounded". The violence, largely centered outside the army headquarters in the capital, came hours after soldiers detained Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, ministers in his government and civilian members of Sudan's ruling council, the information ministry said. They were taken away after "refusing to support the coup",

Amir to open new Assembly term

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judiciary to set out conditions for the planned amnesty. Ghanem said on Sunday the committee plans to send its first report to HH the Amir within two weeks.

The Amiri pardon is highly expected to include a number of former opposition MPs and activists who have been living in exile in Turkey for over three years to avoid jail terms passed against them for taking part in storming the Assembly building in 2011. But the appeal has exposed differences within the opposition bloc in the Assembly, comprising 31

it said on Facebook.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres denounced the military takeover and called for leaders to be freed. "I condemn the ongoing military coup in Sudan," Guterres said on Twitter. "Prime Minister Hamdok and all other officials must be released immediately."

Internet services were cut across the country around dawn and the main roads and bridges into Khartoum shut, before soldiers stormed the headquarters of Sudan's state broadcaster in the capital's twin city of Omdurman, the information ministry said. People took to the streets soon after, setting tires ablaze and piling rows of bricks across roads in protest against the military move, an AFP correspondent reported. — AFP

MPs, when nine of them refused to sign the appeal to HH the Amir, although they supported the pardon.

Only 19 MPs attended a meeting late Sunday out of the group of 31 to coordinate over the election of Assembly panels, but several members insisted the group is not dead and internal differences will be overcome. Host of the meeting, MP Farz Al-Mutairi, said MPs discussed arrangements for the Assembly elections only, adding that "the group remains cohesive and strong". MP Muhannad Al-Sayer said after the meeting that "there is no division among the group of 31 and the issue is over differences in viewpoints".

Meanwhile, MP Ahmad Al-Azemi submitted a proposal calling on health authorities to stop requiring PCR tests for vaccinated citizens while leaving the country or returning. He said this will reduce unnecessary costs to the government and citizens.

Local

As Kuwait cautiously goes back to normal, some remain reluctant to take off masks

Wearing a facemask before leaving home has become a habit for many

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: As Kuwait enters the fifth and final phase to ease restrictions and return to normalcy, several people are still deliberating whether to stop wearing facemasks in open spaces. "I don't want to get rid of my facemask yet - we need it for our safety. I will only take my mask off when the government declares that we are free from the coronavirus, as we still have cases registered on a daily basis," said Mariel, a Filipina visiting the old souq in Salmiya, otherwise known as the 'Barayeh Salem', with her husband and daughter. "It is better to be safe than sorry," she added.

Indian resident Julius said he wasn't aware about the new rule of not wearing masks in open areas. "It's become a habit for us to wear a mask before leaving our homes," he said. Amid a decline in COVID-19 infections, Kuwait returned to normalcy from Sunday, with various sectors returning to full capacity. Kuwait airport resumed operations at full capacity and worshippers in mosques are now praying without distancing, although social distancing is still in force in closed places such as shopping malls, restaurants and cafes. Conferences and wedding parties are also allowed, provided attendees are fully vaccinated.

The Cabinet has also asked the ministry of interior and Public Authority for Manpower to start issuing all types of visas to people vaccinated with approved vaccines (Pfizer-BioNTech, Oxford-AstraZeneca, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson), but relevant authorities are still waiting for further instructions.

For over 20 months, Kuwait made it compulsory for people to wear masks and maintain social distancing at outdoor and indoor venues. Gatherings were prohibited and worshippers at mosques and churches had to abide by health ministry protocols of wearing facemasks and maintain social distancing.

A five-phase gradual plan to return to normalcy



A student, wearing a facemask, shows off her vaccination card after receiving her second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at the Kuwait Vaccination Center in Mishref yesterday.

was announced in April. The first phase included a partial curfew coupled with a lockdown of Farwaniya, Khaitan and Hawally because of a surge in cases. Activities that resumed operations in the first phase included restaurants' deliveries,



telecommunication companies, food retailers, transportation of employees, gas stations, private clinics and auto workshops.

The second phase saw curfew shortened to



KUWAIT: Medical workers, wearing face masks, walk at the Kuwait Vaccination Center in Mishref yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

between 9 pm and 6 am. In this phase, employees in government and private sectors were at 30 percent attendance, in addition to resumption of work in the construction sector and banks. Malls opened for eight hours, along with parks and restaurant takeaways.

The third phase saw an end to the curfew, while health authorities assessed the situation of areas under lockdown. Workplace attendance increased to 50 percent and visits to social care homes were allowed, as well as reopening of hotels, resorts and hotel apartments. Taxis were also allowed to operate with only one passenger, and mosques were allowed to hold Friday prayers.

An increase in workplace attendance and dine-in at restaurants was announced in phase four, but with restrictions, and public transportation resumed

but with distancing. All activities resumed in phase five, the government and private sectors returned to normalcy, families can get together, and weddings and graduation ceremonies are allowed.

The first confirmed coronavirus case in Kuwait was announced on Feb 24, 2020 - a 53-year-old Kuwaiti who reportedly visited Iran. Before the day ended, the government had detected five cases. The following day, another four cases were detected, and on Feb 26, the government announced 25 cases. Yesterday, Kuwait recorded only 21 cases, the lowest since the outbreak of the pandemic in the country. Kuwait has a total population of 4.2 million people, and according to government records, around 3.5 million people have been vaccinated, both citizens and residents.

Kuwait, Pakistan extend health cooperation agreement

KUWAIT: In continuation of the cooperation agreement signed between Pakistan and Kuwait on recruitment of healthcare professionals from Pakistan to Kuwait signed on July 4, 2020, the time period of the agreement has been extended through a supplement by mutual consent of both parties for a period of two years starting from July 4, 2021 to July 3, 2023.

The extension in time period has taken effect through signing of a supplement to the agreement. In this regard, a formal ceremony was organized at Kuwait's Ministry of Health premises and the supplement was signed by Dr Mustafa Ridha, Undersecretary, Ministry of Health, on behalf of the State of Kuwait and the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Syed Sajjad Haider on behalf of Overseas Employment Corporation, Government of Pakistan.



KUWAIT: Dr Mustafa Ridha, Undersecretary of Kuwait's Ministry of Health (right) and the Ambassador of Pakistan Syed Sajjad Haider sign the agreement.

The supplement to cooperation agreement would institutionalize recruitment of healthcare professionals from Pakistan for Kuwait on a regular basis as per requirements of Ministry of Health of Kuwait for the next two years. It will also cement and foster bilateral cooperation in the health sector between the two countries. The signing of the supplement to agreement is the manifestation of growing strong bilateral relations in all spheres between the two countries.

COVID-19 patients recovered better with ozone therapy: Radiologist

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Interventional radiologist, pain and spine treatment consultant and member of the European Ozone Therapy Society Dr Waleed Al-Hajji said ozone therapy is a highly advanced technology that was recently introduced in Kuwait. He said it is used as an adjuvant therapy for coronavirus patients as per studies conducted recently in Italy and Spain, which showed coronavirus patients recovered better when they received ozone therapy. It also proved that it protects patients who are not infected because it boosts immunity, adding the treatment is safe and does not have side effects. It is also totally safe for diabetes and hypertension patients.

Dr Hajji said this therapy has different methods and includes treatment of "disc" cases, adding that treatment with local injection includes injecting areas of pain. The ozone is injected in the muscles in order to remove inflammations and muscular contractions, but the main treatment is autohemotherapy - ozone treatment in blood.

He said ozone hemotherapy is done in a closed system that has a bottle with pipes at either end, one connected to the machine and the other to the patient's vein. Around 200 ml of blood is collected in the bottle, gets impregnated with oxygen or ozone, then returned to the patient. He said this method aims to improve the body's condition and enhance the functions of the liver, pancreas and kidneys. He said this method helps boost immunity, stimulate blood circulation and increase energy



Dr Waleed Al-Hajji

exchange between cells, so the patient feels immediate improvement.

As for patients who suffer from immune deficiency, or autoimmune diseases such as rheumatism, lupus or psoriasis, ozone is the ideal therapy because it does not contain any medicine or chemicals; rather, active oxygen goes in the body and increases immunity and reduces side effects. This in turn reduces symptoms, adding that this therapy is also suitable for those who suffer from asthma and colon infections.

Dr Hajji said a patient recovered from psoriasis she suffered from for eight years, and was free of the disease within a month. He said the treatment is a simple procedure that takes 10 minutes, and the patient does not need to be admitted to hospital.



KUWAIT: In this file photo, vehicles are seen at a car repair shop in Kuwait. This picture is used for illustration purposes only. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Vehicle towing prices in Kuwait out of control

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: There is no fixed price set by the ministry of commerce for transporting vehicles by tow trucks. Each operating company sets its own price. Some tow truck drivers tell customers there is a fixed price of KD 8, which is not true. Many motorists in Kuwait have fallen victim to some tow truck operators, who try to exploit their situation when they are in trouble in the middle of the road. Many, if not most of them, know they can ask for any price of the vulnerable people, who have no other choice.

After contacting five different companies, each of which has numerous tow trucks operating in various areas of Kuwait, they offered similar prices. But the rates are definitely much lower when ordering a tow truck than stopping one on the road. Prices start from KD 4, depending on the distance. For instance, from Salwa to Shuwaikh, the price ranged between KD 8 to 10 at the five companies. You can even get a lower price after bargaining. The charges for mov-

ing a vehicle with a tow truck in the same area was between KD 4 to 6 at all these five companies.

Some tow truck drivers try their best to cheat customers, especially women, assuming they don't know the market price and exploit their situation. After bargaining, the driver may drop the price a little. If you are not stranded at an isolated place, it's better to call a tow truck service rather than flag a passing truck.

Certain factors affect the price. "The price may reach KD 20 for the same distance if the vehicle has no wheels, damage to its suspension, or is seriously damaged. Also, the price will increase if the car key is not available," Omar from International Sham Company told Kuwait Times.

All those contacted agreed that the time of using the service does not affect the price. "Whether it is a weekday or weekend, day or night, the price is the same. The price can be negotiable and the customer can make a deal with the driver. There are no fare meters in a tow truck, and the price is decided in advance," said Ahmad from White Man Company.

Some companies also charge higher prices for sports vehicle, claiming that these vehicles need special care, as they have lower ground clearance and require a hydraulic tow truck. A few companies also charge higher prices for an SUV compared to a sedan, while others don't. If you have to use a tow truck but believe the price charged is much higher than the abovementioned rates, take an invoice from the tow truck driver and file a complaint at the Customer Protection Department.

Kuwait's Dashti wins gold medal at Arab swimming championship

ABU DHABI: Kuwait's swimmer Lara Dashti added a new achievement to the country by winning the gold medal in the 25 meters race at the Arab Swimming

Championship yesterday. Speaking to the press in a statement, Dashti said it was the first official participation for her, adding that the win will inspire her to make further progress in the upcoming contests. Vice President of Kuwait Swimming Federation Hamid Al-Gharib praised the honorable achievement of Dashti, expecting further accomplishments. Thirteen Kuwaiti swimmers aged 14-18 are taking part in the championship. The tourney, which concludes tomorrow, features 174 male and female swimmers from 17 Arab countries, including Jordan, Bahrain, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Lebanon, Syria, the hosts UAE, Oman, Palestine, in addition to Kuwait and others. — KUNA



ABU DHABI: Kuwait's Lara Dashti (center) stands on the podium after winning the gold medal in the 25 meters race at the Arab Swimming Championship yesterday. — KUNA

Suad Al-Sabah House announces contest winners

KUWAIT: Head of Suad Al-Sabah Publishing House Dr Suad Mohammad Al-Sabah approved the final results of the official judging committee for the Suad Al-Sabah Publishing House contests for the year 2018-2019, which were delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic. The contests were divided into two sections - the first was the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah Scientific Innovation contest that had four branches, while the second was the Dr Suad Al-Sabah Intellectual and Literature Creativity contest, which also had four branches.

The judges selected the winning works in both sections. The first place in the scientific contest was won by writer Ahmad Saad Imam from Egypt, who wrote about the "History of Public Security in Kuwait", while the second and third places were withheld. In the second scientific contest in the field of social media applications, first place was won by Abdelkarim Noufal from Syria, while Asmaa Al-Shabrawi Mohammad Ibrahim from Egypt took the second spot and Sana Abdelqader Jabbas from Syria stood third.

The winner in the field of parliamentary movement in Kuwait, which was the subject of the third scientific contest, was Dr Mohammad Ahmad Abdelsalam from Egypt, while Mohammad Suleiman Mahroos - also from Egypt - won second place. The third place prize was withheld. In the fourth scientific contest on junk food, it was unanimously decided that participants did not deserve any of the prizes.

In the second part of the contests, the first place for poetry was won by Ali Hassan Ibrahim Salman from Bahrain and Hussein bin Ali bin Abdullah stood second, while Omar Al-Rajhi from Morocco took the third place.



Suad Al-Sabah

Kuwait Music House, Art Gallery to contribute to finer taste: Minister



KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi speaks during the inauguration ceremony. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Secretary General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters Kamel Abduljalil delivers his speech.

KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi said the aim of opening Kuwait Music House and permanent Art Gallery is to elevate the artistic taste and pave the way for more creative works of art. The event will unleash the potentials of Kuwaiti youth in all kinds of art, he said in the inaugural speech at the Modern Art Museum Sunday evening. "The Music House and the gallery will act as incubator for arts and artists that fosters the talents and culture through a package of interactive projects with the public taking part," the minister pointed out.

The project will serve as a practical medium of unleashing the creative potentials of artists and a permanent platform for highlighting the civilized aspect of the state of Kuwait, Mutairi noted. "This artistic initiative translates the instructions of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to foster culture, art and letters in Kuwait," he went on.

Meanwhile, Secretary General of the National

Council for Culture, Arts and Letters Kamel Al-Abduljalil said the project to launch the Music House at the Modern Art Museum is based on an initiative by Dr Mohammad Al-Dihan, a NCCAL advisor. "The project aims to preserve the singing heritage and the various kind of folklore," he said, noting that the House will serve researchers and veteran musicians through organizing lectures and symposiums. Abduljalil added that the permanent art gallery will provide an opportunity for talented artists to display their works of art and share expertise with each other throughout the year. — KUNA

US Ambassador visits Kuwait Technical College

KUWAIT: Kuwait Technical College (KTECH) welcomed US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina L Romanowski on October, 13 2021. She was warmly welcomed by the top management team within KTECH led by the Chairman of the Board of Trustees Meshari Ayman Boodai.

During the meeting, both parties discussed subjects of mutual interest and cooperation. From KTECH's perspective, Boodai highlighted the newly signed partnership agreement between the college and an affiliation partner for education, research and academia. The partnership symbolizes how much KTECH values and recognizes the superlative quality of an American education and the benefits that can be realized through bilateral cooperation and knowledge exchange in the field of academia.

Furthermore, Boodai expressed KTECH's readiness and openness to form a partnership program with the Public Affairs Office - Cultural Affairs at the US Embassy in Kuwait for the benefit of students, researchers and the community at large. This meeting further demonstrates the extensive US-



KUWAIT: US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina L Romanowski (left) is seen during her visit to the Kuwait Technical College.

Kuwait relations and reinforces the undeniable fact that the United States and Kuwait are not merely allies but very close friends.

"Education cooperation is one of the cornerstones of the US-Kuwait relationship," Ambassador Romanowski said. "Kuwait Technical College provides a wide array of STEM fields for its students,

and I was pleased to learn that KTECH is working with both the public and private sectors to prepare the next generation for future careers, a wise investment for the future. US institutions are leaders in STEM, and we look forward to strengthening ties between educational institutions in Kuwait and in the United States."



KUWAIT: Emad Al-Ablani, GM - Head of Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait (right) and Dr Khalid Al-Begain, President of Kuwait College of Science and Technology sign the agreement.

NBK signs MoU with KCST to exchange expertise

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Kuwait College of Science and Technology (KCST) to exchange expertise and strengthen cooperation in several domains, including training and digital technologies.

The MoU was signed at NBK's headquarters in the presence of Emad Al-Ablani, GM - Head of Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait, and Dr Khalid Al-Begain, President of Kuwait College of Science and Technology, as well as several executives from NBK and KCST.

On this occasion, Ablani said: "We are delighted with this partnership with one of the reputable colleges in Kuwait. The MoU aims to build up cooperation and facilitate opportunities for KCST students to join the professional training programs provided by the bank. In addition, it will help the bank benefit from KCST's capabilities and expertise in the academic programs and scientific research in the domains of software, information security and digital technologies, which will contribute to promoting the bank's digital transformation roadmap."

NBK is committed to strengthen partnerships with active players in

Kuwait and abroad, with the purpose of supporting and developing ambitious national cadres striving for excellence, in addition to providing them with suitable job opportunities in a key sector like the banking sector, he added.

Ablani noted that NBK pays great attention to enhancing communication with educational institutions and giving special care to the youth segment, in line with its concern with the educational sector and closely identifying their interests.

The Kuwaiti youth possess talents and creative ideas that deserve all due support, the fact that prompts the bank to continue its support for this category that represents an added value to Kuwait and its future, he elaborated.

NBK pays paramount attention to developing the capabilities of its human capital, being the key driver of the bank's excellence and leadership. This is accomplished by providing top-notch specialized training programs that are on par with highest international standards, in order to qualify professional cadres to take charge as future leaders.

NBK's training initiatives reflect its profound vision regarding investing in the human capital, and, to this end, the bank provides a group of the most reputable banking experts to transfer their expertise to those promising cadres. These strong initiatives reflect the bank's strong belief in the powerful impact of these programs that serve both society and people, as well as exhibit the bank's leading role in this field over long decades.

Ooredoo Kuwait sponsors Flying Start Triathlon

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Telecom, the first to introduce innovative digital services in Kuwait, announced its strategic partnership of the Flying Start Triathlon for the fourth year in a row at a press conference held yesterday at Ooredoo Tower in Kuwait City as a testament to its support of youth, athletes and national talents which also goes in line with its core values and its year-round social responsibility strategy.

The partnership and launching of the triathlon were announced yesterday at the conference which was headed by Mijbil Al-Ayoub - Senior Director, Corporate Communications at Ooredoo Kuwait; Ahmed Al-Majed - General Manager at Suffix; and Rashid Al-Kandari - The Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Triathlon Club and Federation; who have shed light on the importance of these sporting events that encourage health and praise athletes. The role of Ooredoo Kuwait was also appraised during the conference in supporting and incubating the diverse sports talents. A number of local media representatives have also attended the press conference.

Flying Start Triathlon is an annual triathlon based in the State of Kuwait and it's one of the oldest races to take place in the region, the race includes swimming, biking and running which is divided into three categories: Super Sprint, Sprint, and Olympic.

Commenting on the partnership, Ayoub said: "We are committed to constantly support youth, hone their talents and ignite their energies in various fields particularly those related to the health of their bodies and minds. This strategic partnership goes in tandem with our belief in supporting youth initiatives and athletes. We have been witnessing a great deal of demand for such sports in Kuwait, and we are proud to sponsor the Flying Start Triathlon for



KUWAIT: (From left) Rashid Al-Kandari - The Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Triathlon Club and Federation, Mijbil Al-Ayoub - Senior Director, Corporate Communications at Ooredoo Kuwait, and Ahmed Al-Majed - General Manager at Suffix.

the fourth time. We wish all the participating athletes all the best."

Meanwhile, Majed said: "We are proud to be announcing the Flying Start Triathlon XIII on 29th and 30th October 2021 after a year break due to COVID-19, we elevated the Triathlon race experience during that time with a new location in Al-Kout, and we are excited to be seeing local and regional athletes join us again."

Majed added: "We consider the triathlon to be the biggest races in the Middle East, and our goal today is to create a new sports culture built on ethics, discipline and sportsmanship. We also consider the strategic partnership with Ooredoo Kuwait as ideal due to its leadership position in the private sector and its support towards the youth. It is a long-term partnership."

In the meantime, Kandari expressed the club's and federation's keenness on such activities that aim to

restore activity and vitality to local community and encourage them to enhance their health especially after two years of the COVID-19, which prevented them from practicing sports activities sufficiently.

The Flying Start Triathlon is an annual triathlon based in the State of Kuwait and welcomes athletes from various countries within the GCC and the world. Al-Kout will serve as the host location for the triathlon. It accepts registrations by individuals and teams. Teams can compete only in the Sprint and Olympic categories and must have a minimum of two and a maximum of three athletes.

Flying Start Junior Duathlon will also be taking place on Friday 29th October 2021 in Al-Kout, a day prior to the Flying Start Triathlon. The race includes biking and running for ages between 4 to 12 year-olds. The race has three age groups: Junior 1: 10 to 12 years, Junior 2: 7 to 9 years, and Junior 3: 4 to 6 years.



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International

German IS bride sentenced to 10 years

A rare conviction against IS jihadist

MUNICH: A Munich court yesterday sentenced a German woman who joined the Islamic State group to 10 years in prison over the war crime of letting a five-year-old Yazidi "slave" girl die of thirst in the sun. The tribunal handed down the verdict to Jennifer Wenisch, 30, in one of the first convictions anywhere in the world related to the IS jihadists' persecution of the Yazidi community. Wenisch was found guilty of "two crimes against humanity in the form of enslavement", said presiding judge Reinhold Baier of the superior regional court in Munich. She was also guilty of aiding and abetting the girl's killing by failing to offer help as well as membership of a terrorist organization.



A five-year-old Yazidi 'slave' girl dies of thirst in the sun

She and her IS husband "purchased" a Yazidi woman and child as household "slaves", whom they held captive while living in then IS-occupied Mosul, Iraq, in 2015, the court found. "After the girl fell ill and wet her mattress, the husband of the accused chained her up outside as punishment and let the child die an agonizing death of thirst in the scorching heat," prosecutors told the court. "The accused allowed her husband to do so and did nothing to save the girl."

Baier said the defendant had often complained about the girl and accepted the deadly consequences of her "punishment". "You must have known from the



MUNICH: Jennifer W (center), a German woman who joined the Islamic State jihadist group, hides her face behind a folder as she arrives at a court for the verdict of her trial in Munich yesterday. — AFP

start that a child shackled in the blazing sun would be in mortal danger," he told Wenisch. The proceedings lasted two and a half years due to delays linked to the pandemic and other factors. Wenisch's husband, Taha al-Jumaily, is also facing trial in separate proceedings in Frankfurt, where a verdict is due in late November.

Calls for life sentence

According to media reports, Wenisch converted to Islam in 2013 and travelled the following year via Turkey and Syria to Iraq where she joined IS. Recruited in mid-2015 to the group's self-styled hisbah morality police, she patrolled city parks in IS-

occupied Fallujah and Mosul.

Armed with an AK-47 assault rifle, a pistol and an explosives vest, her task was to ensure strict IS rules on dress code, public behavior and bans on alcohol and tobacco. In January 2016, she visited the German embassy in Ankara to apply for new identity papers. When she left the mission, she was arrested and extradited days later to Germany.

Federal prosecutors had called for a life sentence for Wenisch. Identified only by her first name Nora, the child's mother has repeatedly testified in both Munich and Frankfurt about the torment visited on her child. The defense had claimed the mother's testimony was

untrustworthy and said there was no proof that the girl, who was taken to hospital after the incident, actually died. Wenisch's lawyers had called for her to receive a two-year suspended sentence for supporting a terrorist organization.

'Made an example'

When asked during the trial about her failure to save the girl, Wenisch said she was "afraid" that her husband would "push her or lock her up". At the close of the trial, according to the daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung, she claimed she was being "made an example of for everything that has happened under IS". A Kurdish-speaking group hailing from northern Iraq, the Yazidis were specifically targeted and oppressed by the IS beginning in 2015.

London-based human rights lawyer Amal Clooney, who has been involved in a campaign for IS crimes against the group to be recognized as a "genocide", was part of the team representing the Yazidi girl's mother. Germany has charged several German and foreign nationals with war crimes and crimes against humanity carried out abroad, using the legal principle of universal jurisdiction which allows crimes to be prosecuted even if they were committed in a foreign country. A handful of female suspects are among those who have appeared in the dock. In November 2020, a German woman identified as Nurten J was charged with crimes against humanity allegedly committed while she was living in Syria as a member of Islamic State. In October 2020, another German court sentenced the German-Tunisian wife of a rapper-turned-jihadist to three-and-a-half years in prison for having taken part in the enslavement of a Yazidi girl in Syria. — AFP



KHARTOUM: Sudanese protesters use bricks and burning tyres to block 60th Street in the capital Khartoum, to denounce overnight detentions by the army of members of Sudan's government yesterday. — AFP

World raises alarm after Sudan 'coup'

PARIS: From the US to Germany to the Arab league, the world reacted with alarm after an apparent coup in Sudan where armed forces detained the prime minister. The chaos follows weeks of tensions between military and civilian figures that have ruled under an uneasy power-sharing agreement since former strongman Omar Al-Bashir was ousted.

United States

The United States said it was "deeply alarmed" at reports of the military takeover. "This would contravene the Constitutional Declaration (which outlines the transition) and the democratic aspirations of the Sudanese people," said US special envoy for the Horn of Africa Jeffrey Feltman in a statement on Twitter.

European Union

The EU called for the release of Sudan's civilian leaders and insisted "violence and bloodshed must be avoided". "The EU is very concerned about Sudan's military forces reportedly putting Prime Minister (Abdalla) Hamdok under house arrest, as well as detaining other members of the civilian leadership, and

we urge for their fast release," European Commission spokeswoman Nabila Massrali told journalists.

Germany

Germany condemned the reports, calling for an "immediate end" to the action. "The news of a new coup attempt in Sudan is troubling," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said in a statement. "I call on everyone in Sudan responsible for security and order to continue Sudan's transition to democracy and to respect the will of the people."

Arab League

The Arab League urged all sides to adhere to an August 2019 power-sharing deal, as it sounded alarm. "Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit expressed deep concern over the developments in Sudan," the pan-Arab bloc said in a statement.

African Union

African Union Commission chair Moussa Faki Mahamat yesterday called for the "immediate resumption" of dialogue between Sudan's military and civilians after security forces detained senior figures in the country's transitional government. "The Chairperson calls for the immediate resumption of consultations between civilians and military within the framework of the political declaration and the constitutional decree," Faki said in a statement posted on Twitter. — AFP

pending a referendum on independence in 2011. South Sudan became an independent nation in July 2011, six months after voting by 99 percent to secede. The split removed roughly a quarter of Sudan's territory. Before then it had been Africa's largest country. In early 2012, relations with South Sudan deteriorated and their armies clashed in oil-rich border zones.

Devastating Darfur

In 2003, rebels in Sudan's vast arid western region of Darfur revolted against alleged marginalization of minority ethnic groups by the Arab-dominated regime in Khartoum. Khartoum responded by unleashing the dreaded Janjaweed militia, blamed for atrocities including murder, rape, looting and burning villages. The violence resulted in one of the world's worst humanitarian catastrophes. The United Nations says about 300,000 people were killed and more than 2.5 million displaced, many still living in sprawling semi-permanent camps. The International Criminal Court in 2009 and 2010 issued arrest warrants for Bashir on charges of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in Darfur-accusations he denies. In August, Sudan and the ICC signed a cooperation deal, bringing Bashir one step closer to facing trial.

Battered economy

The 2011 secession of South Sudan hit the Sudanese economy badly as it lost around three-quarters of its oil reserves. The country also suffered under a US economic embargo imposed since 1993 over its alleged backing of radical Islamist groups, including Osama bin Laden, who lived in the country for years in the 1990s. The embargo was lifted in 2017, and in 2020 Sudan was removed from a US blacklist of alleged state sponsors of terror that had been deterring investors. Sudan is pursuing an austerity policy in exchange for the cancellation of its debt by the International Monetary Fund. Inflation is nearing 400 percent and the currency has plunged against the dollar. Sudan is also regularly affected by devastating floods. — AFP

South Sudan breaks away

Sudan endured a first civil war from 1955 to 1972, and a second that raged from 1983 to 2005. Millions died in the conflicts. In 2005, Khartoum signed a peace treaty with southern rebels, granting the south autonomy

Turkish lira surges on signs of end to West-Erdogan row

ANKARA: The Turkish lira surged yesterday on expectations that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was ready to walk back from his threat to expel 10 Western ambassadors over their statement of support for a jailed civil society leader. The United States and several of the concerned countries issued identical statements yesterday saying they respected a UN convention that required diplomats not to interfere in the host country's domestic affairs.

The Anadolu state news agency said Erdogan "welcomed" the reassurance before heading into a cabinet meeting focused on what had threatened to become the most serious diplomatic crisis of his 19-year rule. The lira pulled back from a historic low and was trading up half a percent against the dollar on expectations that Erdogan would announce a compromise solution in a television address later on.

He had originally threatened the ambassadors on Thursday and then doubled down-announcing the 10 envoys "persona non grata"-in televised comments on Saturday. Political analyst Soner Cagaptay cited sources as saying the compromise would keep the 10 embassies in Ankara fully open while Erdogan refused "the ambassadors' audition at his palace until (scheduled) replacements arrive in Ankara".

'Skipping confrontation'

The crisis started when the embassies of the United States, Germany, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden issued a unilateral statement last Monday calling for the release of jailed philanthropist Osman Kavala. The 64-year-old civil society leader and businessman has been in jail without a conviction for four years. Supporters view Kavala as an innocent symbol of the growing intoler-

ance of political dissent Erdogan developed after surviving a failed military putsch in 2016. But Erdogan accuses Kavala of financing a wave of 2013 anti-government protests and then playing a role in the coup attempt.

Kavala's case could prompt the Council of Europe human rights watchdog to launch its first disciplinary hearings against Turkey at a four-day meeting ending on December 2. But Cagaptay and other analysts pointed out that several European powers-including fellow NATO member Britain-refrained from joining the Western call for Kavala's release. "The conspicuous absence of the UK, Spain, and Italy... is telling, pointing at the emergence of a sub-group within the Western family of nations adept at skipping confrontation with Ankara," Cagaptay wrote.

'False justification'

Erdogan's rule as prime minister and president has been punctuated by a series of crises and then rapprochements with the West. But analysts felt the expulsions threatened to open up the deepest and most lasting rift to date. They would have also cast a pall over a G20 meeting in Rome this weekend at which Erdogan had expected to discuss with President Joe Biden his hopes of buying a large batch of US fighter planes.

Erdogan this month further threatened to launch a new military campaign in Syria and orchestrated changes at the central bank that infuriated investors and saw the lira accelerate its record slide. A dollar now buys about 9.6 liras. The exchange rate stood at less than 7.4 liras at the start of the year-and at 3.5 liras in 2017.

Turkey's financial problems have been accompanied by an unusual spike in dissent from the country's business community. The Turkish Industry and Business Association issued a veiled swipe at Erdogan last week by urging the government to focus on stabilizing the lira and bring the annual inflation rate-now at almost 20 percent-under control. Main opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu accused Erdogan on Saturday of trying to "create false justification" for Turkey's economic woes ahead of a general election due by June 2023. — AFP



MARDIN: Members of the Youth Union of Turkey organization (TGB) gather to support Turkish President's call to expel the ambassadors of 10 Western allies in front of the US embassy in Ankara yesterday. — AFP

Drugs, crime and protests: Ecuador stares into the abyss

QUITO: Emboldened drug traffickers, hundreds of deaths in prisons, a government dogged by scandal, and an economy ravaged by COVID have Ecuador staring into the abyss. Crime, mostly linked to drugs, has claimed almost 1,900 lives this year, just this Friday taking the life of Alex Quinonez, one of the country's most promising athletes. His death sparked an outpouring of grief in the Andean nation of 17.7 million people, wracked by political instability and which this year saw one of the worst prison massacres in Latin America's history.

After just five months in power, conservative President Guillermo Lasso is facing an investigation in Congress over "Pandora Papers" revelations that he allegedly hid millions in assets overseas-and he claims his opponents are planning impeachment. And with demonstrations planned this week against increasing fuel prices and other economic ills worsened by the pandemic, tensions are unlikely to abate anytime soon.

Narco violence

Nestled between Colombia and Peru, the world's top cocaine producers, Ecuador had managed to avoid the worst of the drug-related violence that engulfed its troubled neighbors. But a war for drug revenues has pit gangs at the service of Mexican and Colombian cartels against each other, sparking a surge in violence that has sent the homicide rate from 7.8 per 100,000 inhabitants last year to 10.6 between January and October 2021.

The violence claimed one of its most high profile victims Friday with the killing of famed Ecuadorian athlete Alex Quinonez in the port city of Guayaquil. One of the country's most successful athletes and among the world's top sprinters, his death prompted an outpouring of grief-and demands that his killers be brought to justice. Ecuador lacks "a strong response to a bigger problem, which is the penetration of transnational organized crime," said Daniel Ponton, dean of the School of Security and Defense at the Institute for Higher National Studies (IAEN). The violence has prompted President Lasso to declare a state of emergency for 60 days, sending the military into the streets in support of the police. "National sovereignty is threatened by drug trafficking," he said. Analysts say drug traffickers have their sights set on Ecuador due to its permeable borders, a dollarized economy, and major seaports for export. — AFP

International

Amnesty to shutter Hong Kong offices, blames the security law

Hong Konger convicted on secession charge in security trial

HONG KONG: Amnesty International said yesterday it will shutter its Hong Kong offices because of the threat posed to staff by a national security law that has fronted a sweeping crackdown on dissent in the business hub. The decision came the same day a court in the Chinese city convicted a former food delivery driver of inciting secession by shouting slogans in the second national security case to come to trial. China imposed the law last year in response to massive and often violent democracy protests, transforming Hong Kong's political, cultural and legal landscape and introducing mainland-style speech curbs.

Amnesty said the local office would close on October 31 while the regional office would move out "by the end of 2021". Hong Kong dubs itself "Asia's World City" and has long advertised itself as a business-friendly gateway to mainland China with its own separate legal system and speech freedoms unseen on the mainland. As a result, many international businesses, media groups and non-governmental organizations have used the city as a regional hub.

Arrests and asset freezes

But sweeping political changes in the last two years have created risks for any organization that might criticize or disagree with China's government. The national security law imposed after the 2019 democracy protests covers any offence China considers secession, subversion, collusion with foreign forces or terrorism.

More than 70 people, including many of Hong Kong's most prominent democracy activists, have since been charged with security crimes. The security law also empowers authorities to freeze the assets of any individual or entity marked as a security threat and most of those arrested are denied bail until trial. Earlier this year, Hong Kong's most outspoken pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily collapsed after its assets were frozen and its top executives were charged.

Dozens of civil society groups have disbanded in recent months in a bid to avoid a national security investigation, often after being labeled "subversive" by China's state-controlled media. Major tech companies such as Google, Facebook and Twitter have spoken publicly about their concerns about Hong Kong's security law. Last year, The New York Times cited the law when it announced it was relocating most of its Asia headquarters from Hong Kong to Seoul.

Secession charge

A Hong Kong man who chanted protest slogans was found guilty of inciting secession yesterday in the second national security case to come to trial as authorities wield a sweeping new law to snuff out dissent. Ma Chun-



HONG KONG: Amnesty International marketing leaflets are seen in their office in Hong Kong, as the Human Rights organization announces it will be closing its offices by the end of 2021 citing Beijing's enacted national security law as a reason. — AFP

man, a 31-year-old food delivery driver, was convicted by a judge of trying to separate Hong Kong from China by chanting slogans and displaying placards, as well as through interviews with reporters last year.

China imposed a national security law in response to massive and often violent democracy protests in the city two years ago, in a move that has brought mainland-style political speech curbs to the once outspoken business hub. The city's debut national security trial took place in July when a man was convicted of terrorism and secession after he rode his motorbike into police while flying a protest flag.

But Ma's prosecution was more of a legal weather vane because—much like the vast majority of upcoming national security trials—his offences did not involve a violent act and centered purely around his speech. Prosecutors said slogans Ma used that incited secession included "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times", "Hong Kong independence, the only way out", "Hong Kongers, build our own country", "One nation, one Hong

Kong" and "All shall be valiant, start armed uprising".

Ma's lawyers said their client was merely trying to prove "exercising freedom of speech is not unlawful". His slogans, they argued, were "empty words" and "a fool's ravings" that did not reflect any plan or resources. But Stanley Chan, one of the judges specially chosen by the government to try security cases, disagreed and said Ma acted like "a human recorder repeating political statements". "The defendant was constantly, unreservedly inciting others to commit acts that are explicitly banned in... the national security law," Chan said. Whether Ma had actual plans or committed acts to separate Hong Kong from China was irrelevant to convicting him of inciting others, Chan said. "In a society with rule of law, no one enjoys infinite rights and freedom, otherwise the destructive and subversive effects would go without saying," Chan said. Ma, who has been in detention for the last 10 months, pleaded not guilty and did not take the stand during his trial. He will be sentenced at a later date and faces up to seven years in jail. — AFP

Mozambique's elite on trial in \$2 billion scandal

MAPUTO: For two months, Mozambique has been captivated by live footage of a trial of some of the country's most powerful people over illicit loans that torpedoed the country's economy and plunged hundreds of thousands into poverty. The \$2 billion debt scandal has sparked legal cases across three continents and exposed corruption on a global scale, with Swiss bank Credit Suisse fined \$475 million last week for "fraudulently misleading investors" and corruption over its part in issuing the loans. Nineteen suspects have been shown on TV screens across the country in orange prison garb—among them a former president's son—denying charges ranging from fraud and embezzlement to money laundering.

The government of former president Armando Guebuza authorized the loans—equivalent to 12 percent of the gross domestic product of one of the poorest countries in the world—in 2013 and 2014 to buy a new fleet of tuna fishing and maritime security vessels. The government carried out the process in secret without scrutiny from MPs, and when the scandal was revealed by US newspaper the Wall Street Journal in 2016, international donors like the International Monetary Fund suspended financial aid. To cope with the shortfalls, the government reduced public spending, which campaigners say drove 2.6 million people into poverty.

Africa's Qatar

The trial is a "unique opportunity that Mozambicans have to hold those who have pushed them into poverty" to account, said Adriano Nuvunga, coordinator of anti-corruption umbrella group Budget Monitoring Forum (FMO). "Civil servants and politicians will know that corruption will not go unpunished. Corruption is pushing millions into poverty," Nuvunga said. When the loans were taken out, Mozambique's star was rising after two decades of democratic and market-led reforms and the discovery of huge gas reserves off its Indian Ocean coast. Some suggested Mozambique could be Africa's answer to Qatar, but the gas project has been throttled by an Islamist insurgency.

The loan scandal only added to the woes, causing a currency collapse and tipping the country into the worst economic crisis in its history. The sheer scale of the scandal sparked legal proceedings in Britain, South Africa, Switzerland and the United States. Normal courtrooms were too small to accommodate the legions of lawyers, witnesses and journalists. The hearings are instead taking place on prison grounds in a giant tent normally used for weddings, with air-conditioning units and a red carpet leading to the judges' bench. — AFP

was last year, and there wasn't much," Mullah Fateh, head of the Haji Rashid Khan village in Bala Murghab. Communities cling to life in small clusters of mud-brick homes among an endless ocean of rolling brown hills in this corner of Badkhis province - where 90 percent of the 600,000-strong population live off livestock or fields, according to humanitarian agency ACTED. "We sold sheep to buy food, others died of thirst," Fateh told AFP. When the first of two recent droughts hit in 2018, he had 300 sheep, but as the latest dry spell bites, he's down to 20. Yesterday, UN agencies said more than 22 million Afghans will suffer "acute food insecurity" this winter, warning the unstable country faces one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

Aid-dependent Afghanistan, which has spent decades trapped in cycles of war, has borne the sixth hardest blow from climate change, driven by greenhouse emissions such as CO2, according to a study by environmental group Germanwatch. An Afghan lifestyle causes 0.2 tons of CO2 emissions per year, compared



KABUL: Burqa clad Afghan women walk along a footpath in Kabul. — AFP

More than half of Afghans face acute food crisis

KABUL: Afghanistan is on the brink of one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, UN agencies warned yesterday, with more than half the country facing "acute" food shortages. More than 22 million Afghans will suffer food insecurity this winter, they said, as a drought driven by climate change adds to the disruption caused by the chaotic Taliban takeover of the country.

"This winter, millions of Afghans will be forced to choose between migration and starvation unless we can step up our life-saving assistance," said David Beasley, executive director of the World Food Program. The crisis is already bigger in scale than the shortages facing war-torn Yemen or Syria, and worse than any food insecurity emergency apart from the Democratic Republic of Congo, officials told AFP. "Afghanistan is now among the world's worst humanitarian crises - if not the worst - and food security has all but collapsed," Beasley said in a statement.

"We are on a countdown to catastrophe and if we don't act now, we will have a total disaster on our hands." According to the statement issued by the World Food Program and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, one in two Afghans faces Phase 3 "crisis" or Phase 4 "emergency" food shortages. Phase 4 is one step below a famine, and officials told AFP that Afghanistan - already struggling to emerge from a 20-year civil war - is facing its worst winter in a decade.

FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu said: "It is urgent that we act efficiently and effectively to speed up and scale up our delivery in Afghanistan before winter cuts off a large part of the country, with millions of people - including farmers, women, young children and the elderly - going hungry in the freezing winter." — AFP



Delivery driver of inciting secession

Anjhula Mya Singh Bais, chair of Amnesty's board, said the decision to close had been made "with a heavy heart" and was "driven by Hong Kong's national security law". "(It) has made it effectively impossible for human rights organizations in Hong Kong to work freely and without fear of serious reprisals from the government," she added. The decision ends more than four decades of the international human rights group's presence in the city.

Amnesty maintains two offices in Hong Kong. The first is a local branch that focuses on human rights and campaigns in the city itself. Recent reports published by the team have included investigations into how the security law has been deployed and studies of the police's use of force against democracy protesters. The second office is a regional headquarters that carries out research and advocacy work across East and Southeast Asia and the Pacific.



MOSCOW: A general view shows the US embassy building in Moscow. Russians hoping to apply for an immigrant visa to the United States are now required to travel to the US Embassy in Warsaw, the State Department confirmed on October 24, 2021. — AFP

Russians now must travel to Warsaw for US immigrant visas

WASHINGTON: Russians hoping to apply for an immigrant visa to the United States are now required to travel to the US Embassy in Warsaw, the State Department confirmed Sunday, while blaming restrictions imposed by Moscow. That development came amid unresolved US-Russian tensions, and tit-for-tat expulsions that earlier led Moscow to limit the number of US diplomatic staff in Russia. The US visa move, in effect since October 12, prompted a heated rejoinder from Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova.

American diplomats, she wrote on the Telegram platform, had long been "destroying" the consular services system in Russia, turning what should be a routine, technical procedure "into a real hell." The State Department, for its part, pinned the blame squarely back on Moscow. "The Russian government's decision to prohibit the United States from retaining, hiring or contracting Russian or third-country staff severely impacts our ability to provide consular services," a State Department spokesman said in a statement received by AFP.

"The extremely limited number of consular staff in Russia at this time does not allow us to provide routine visa or US citizen services." It added: "We realize this is a significant change for visa applicants," and it cau-

tioned them not to travel to Warsaw before booking an appointment with the embassy there. The statement recognized that the shift to Warsaw, which took effect this month, was not an "ideal solution."

It added: "We considered a number of factors including proximity, availability of flights, convenience for applicants... the prevalence of Russian speakers among our locally engaged personnel, and the availability of staff." Warsaw is around 1,200 kilometers from Moscow. On the State Department website, Russia has been added to a short list of countries where "the United States has no consular representation or in which the political or security situation is tenuous or uncertain enough" to prevent consular staff from processing immigrant visa applications.

Most countries on that list have poor or no direct relations with the US, including Cuba, Iran, Syria, Yemen and Venezuela. Amid a continuing dispute over how many diplomats each side can post in the other's country, Russia has placed the US on a list of "unfriendly" countries requiring approval to employ Russian nationals. Russian applicants for nonimmigrant visas can still apply at any overseas US embassy or consulate so long as they are physically present in that country, the US statement said.

Meantime, the US Embassy in Moscow will be able to process only "diplomatic or official visas." Successive rounds of tit-for-tat diplomatic expulsions by the two countries have left embassies and consulates badly understaffed, playing havoc with normal services. This was a central subject of talks two weeks ago during a Russia visit by Victoria Nuland, the undersecretary of state for political affairs, but little progress was announced. — AFP

Climate change 'now worse' than war for Afghan farmers

BALA MURGHAB: Drought stalks the parched fields around the remote Afghan district of Bala Murghab, where climate change is proving a deadlier foe than the country's recent conflicts. As the world watched the Taliban wage a stunning offensive that ended in the rapid collapse of the country's western-backed government, a longer-term crisis was building.

In desperate attempts to feed their families, herders have been forced to sell their livestock, farmers to flee their villages and parents to sell their daughters into marriage at ever younger ages. "The last time I saw rain



BALA MURGHAB: Children wash clothes in Bala Murghab district of Badkhis province. — AFP

Business

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2021

Zain first digital service provider to offer managed SD-WAN in Kuwait

Launch in partnership with Cisco during GITEX in Dubai

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced the launch of software-defined wide area network (SD-WAN) managed services in collaboration with its global partner Cisco. The company is the first service provider in Kuwait to offer world-class SD-WAN services to its business customers, enabling them to optimize their networks to suit their unique needs while balancing performance and cost.

The announcement was made during Zain's participation at the Gulf Information Technology Exhibition (GITEX Technology Week 2021). The international event, hosted in the United Arab Emirates, is organized by the Dubai World Trade Center, and features the biggest global technology companies, organizations, and entities from the Telecom and IT industry.

Commenting on the announcement, Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al-Roudhan said: "With today's launch, we continue to expand our extended partnership with our global partner Cisco towards achieving our joint goals by serving the needs of Kuwait's business community. We are keen on bringing the most innovative services and solutions from global markets and exclusively launch them for our customers within the local market."

Al-Roudhan continued: "We are proud that Zain is the first service provider in Kuwait to offer world-class SD-WAN services from Cisco. These services will serve a wide range of our customers, including large companies, public entities, as well as SMEs. SD-WAN will elevate the quality and efficiency of the customer's network as per their unique needs".

Al-Roudhan added: "This offering comes as part of Zain's tireless efforts to continue bringing the latest and most advanced network security solutions to the Kuwaiti business community, both large businesses and small and medium-sized enterprises. This announcement also comes in line with the company's digital transformation strategy that aims at empowering a more efficient business sector in the nation".

Al-Roudhan concluded: "Digital transformation tools are a necessity to grow business sectors and overcome their challenges. Zain serves the biggest customer base in Kuwait, and so we double our efforts to enrich their experiences with the latest and most advanced solutions in collaboration with our global partners". "The implementation of Cisco SD-WAN Architecture with Zain reflects our position as a leader in the global, software-based network transformation movement" said Shukri Eid, Managing Director, Cisco Gulf Region. "With



DUBAI: Eaman Al-Roudhan with Shukri Eid and Nawaf Al-Gharabally along with Cisco officials at GITEX.

Cisco's SDN Architecture, Zain has taken a significant step in realizing not only its digital future but also Kuwait's digital transformation journey, and we are proud to be supporting them on this journey."

Zain's SD-WAN, powered by its global partner Cisco, provides customers with a clear view of their data flows across their wide area network, allowing them to optimize traffic to suit their unique business needs while balancing performance and cost. The service solves many critical enterprise IT cases, including establishing a transport-independent

WAN for lower costs and higher diversity, meeting Service-Level Agreements (SLAs) for business-critical and real-time applications on-premises and in the cloud, providing complete security roadmaps for branches and SaaS/Internet, enabling secure multi-cloud transformation for enterprises, providing centralized management, analytics, and policy across the global WAN, and more. The improved control also reduces risk when migrating applica-

tions and data to the cloud, and it is offered globally as a managed service while building on Zain's sophisticated orchestration capabilities. Customers will benefit from a full Cisco technology roadmap and the skills and experience of a dedicated center of excellence to help them design, deliver and evolve their SD-WAN.

Cisco SD-WAN is a cloud-delivered overlay WAN architecture connecting branches to data center and multi-cloud environments through a single fabric. The launch further expands Zain's enterprise

fications from Cisco, the global leader in telecommunications and networks technologies. The certifications reflected the company's commitment to offering the latest and most advanced digital solutions as per the highest international standards for customers in Kuwait's business sector. The first certification from Cisco, Advanced Collaboration Architecture Specialized Partner, acknowledged Zain's capabilities with respect to Cisco's HCS solutions over the cloud in the Kuwaiti market. The second certification, Advanced Cloud and Managed Services Certified Partner, affirmed Zain's capabilities in offering the latest advanced cloud and managed services to corporate customers. The third certification recognized Zain as a Premier Certified Partner of Cisco. The bundle of services and solutions Zain offers in collaboration with Cisco aims at raising operational efficiency and increasing productivity for businesses while providing high levels of security.

Zain's strategy is centered around digital transformation leadership and empowering the community to enjoy a smarter portable lifestyle, as well as using advanced technology to enable an easier and more flexible life. The company places itself as an active partner in creating the future of smart life in Kuwait. Yesterday's launch contributes to proving the company's full potential in triggering the digital community, and will enrich its collaborations in Telecom and IT areas with its strategic partners on multiple levels.

- **Eaman Al-Roudhan:** Digital transformation tools are a necessity to grow business sectors and overcome their challenges
- **Shukri Eid:** With Cisco's SDN Architecture, Zain has taken a significant step in realizing not only its digital future but also Kuwait's digital transformation journey, and we are proud to be supporting them on this journey

WAN for lower costs and higher diversity, meeting Service-Level Agreements (SLAs) for business-critical and real-time applications on-premises and in the cloud, providing complete security roadmaps for branches and SaaS/Internet, enabling secure multi-cloud transformation for enterprises, providing centralized management, analytics, and policy across the global WAN, and more. The improved control also reduces risk when migrating applica-

customers' choice of Cisco-based software defined networking (SDN) and network functions virtualization (NFV) solutions. Zain's orchestration capabilities are an essential part of the new service, allowing it to correlate data from across a customer's hybrid network, while providing a complete picture of incidents and causes to manage day-to-day network operations effectively.

Last year, Zain received three international certi-

Recovering HSBC bank announces mega share buyback

HONG KONG: HSBC yesterday announced bumper profits and plans to repurchase shares worth up to \$2.0 billion as the Asia-focused bank recovers from pandemic fallout. HSBC endured a tumultuous 2020 like the rest of the banking sector as the virus outbreak rocked the economy, while last year the lender triggered a restructuring program to slash 35,000 jobs as it refocuses on its most profitable areas in Asia and the Middle East.

The London-headquartered bank yesterday said net profit nearly tripled in the third quarter of this year to \$3.54 billion (3.0 billion euros), helped by the release of unused provisions set aside for bad loans during the pandemic. "While we retain a cautious outlook on the external risk environment, we believe that the lows of recent quarters are behind us," said chief executive Noel Quinn.

"This confidence, together with our strong capital position, enables us to announce a share buyback of up to \$2 billion, which we expect to commence shortly," he added in the results statement.

HSBC shares rose 1.5 percent in afternoon London deals. "The company is... feeling sufficiently flush, having stored up more funds than it needed to withstand the pandemic, to return cash to shareholders

through a big share buyback," noted AJ Bell investment director Russ Mould. HSBC added that pre-tax profit more than doubled in the July-September period to \$5.4 billion from a year earlier.

"HSBC has flexed its financial muscles as it continues to emerge from the horror show of 2020," said Richard Hunter, head of markets at Interactive Investor.

Asia focus

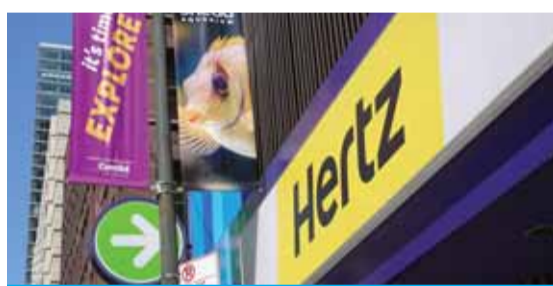
The bank makes 90 percent of its profit in Asia, with China and Hong Kong the major drivers of growth. In February it published a new strategy laying out plans to redouble its attempt to seize more of the Asian market.

HSBC wants to seek out more fee-based income, especially via wealth management for Asia's increasingly affluent. It is also hopeful of a significant boost to income thanks to the prospect of higher interest rates amid surging global inflation. "We're seeing strong progress on our transformation, strong progress on growth," Quinn told reporters on a conference call.

"I'm really excited about the months ahead," he said, adding that the bank was in a "strong position going into 2022". Earlier this year, HSBC sold its 90 branches in the United States and completed a long-running disposal of its unprofitable French retail business. While all banks were hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic, HSBC also had to deal with another added wrinkle-geopolitical tensions. HSBC's historical and present-day connections to China are both its major selling point and a source of vulnerability. —AFP



HONG KONG: People walk past the HSBC bank headquarters in Hong Kong yesterday. —AFP



CHICAGO: A sign hangs above a Hertz rental car office in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

Hertz orders 100,000 Tesla electric autos

CHICAGO: Hertz announced yesterday an order to buy 100,000 autos from Tesla by the end of 2022 in the latest embrace of electric car technology by the auto industry. The car rental giant, which emerged from a bankruptcy reorganization earlier this year, said the electric vehicles (EV) would be available "in US major markets and select cities in Europe" beginning in early November, according to a Hertz press release.

Hertz is also installing EV charging stations at its locations. "Electric vehicles are now mainstream, and we've only just begun to see rising global demand and interest," said interim Hertz Chief Executive Mark Fields. "The new Hertz is going to lead the way as a mobility company, starting with the largest EV rental fleet in North America and a commitment to grow our EV fleet." Hertz exited the US Chapter 11 bankruptcy process in June, a little more than a year after filing to reorganize its finances as the coronavirus pandemic devastated the travel industry.

However, with the global economy reopening in the wake of Covid-19 vaccines, the car rental market has revived and rental companies are renewing their fleets. Led by Elon Musk, Tesla has been ramping up production rapidly by increasing output at existing factories and building new plants in Germany and the US state of Texas. In the last year, conventional automakers like General Motors and Volkswagen have also announced significant new EV plans. With the current order, EVs will comprise 20 percent of Hertz's global fleet. The company will have EV chargers in around 65 markets by the end of 2022 and more than 100 markets by the end of 2023, Hertz said. —AFP

Oil-reliant Saudi faces questions over 'net zero' pledge

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's pledge to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2060 must go hand-in-hand with a plan to phase out fossil fuels, experts said on Sunday. They questioned plans by the world's top oil exporter to raise its production capacity despite the pledge, and Greenpeace raised doubts over the timing of Saturday's announcement. The watchdog accused Saudi Arabia, one of the world's biggest polluters, of trying to divert criticism at next week's COP26 climate-change summit in Glasgow.

With increasing global urgency to limit global warming, COP26 aims to set the world on a path to net zero by mid-century. "We question the seriousness of this announcement, as it comes in parallel with plans for the kingdom to increase its oil production," Greenpeace MENA campaigns manager Ahmad El Droubi said in a statement. Saudi state oil firm Aramco said this month it plans to increase production capacity from 12 million to 13 million barrels a day by 2027.

Riyadh's net zero pledge "seems to simply be a strategic move to alleviate political pressure ahead of COP26", El Droubi said. For Ben Cahill, senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the kingdom "will have to make a massive push on energy efficiency and decarbonising the power sector."

Saudi Arabia also said it would join a global effort to cut emissions of methane—another planet-warming gas—by 30 percent by 2030, while Aramco committed to being a carbon net zero enterprise by 2050. The United Nations says more than 130 countries have set or are considering a target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by mid-century, an objective it says is "imperative" to safeguard a liveable climate. Carbon neutrality is a balance between emitting carbon and absorbing carbon from the atmosphere.

Saturday's Saudi pledge came after neighboring United Arab Emirates, also one of the world's biggest oil exporters, said it was targeting carbon neutrality by 2050. Bahrain, which exports refined petroleum, made a promise similar to Saudi on Sunday. —AFP

Business

ECB charts lonely course through inflation spike

US and UK signal willingness to take action on inflation

FRANKFURT: Pressure is growing on the European Central Bank to respond to rising inflation in the eurozone, as its counterparts in the United States and the United Kingdom signal willingness to take action. ECB policymakers will meet on Thursday, with markets hoping for hints on when the bank might start raising historically low interest rates or tweak the pace of bond buying under its massive pandemic-era stimulus program.

Bottlenecks have pushed up prices and pinched industrial production in the eurozone, drawing a tightrope for policymakers to walk as withdrawing stimulus to quash inflation risks further crimping the economic

Eurozone business sentiment in October was at its lowest point since April, according to an IHS Markit survey published last week, with shortages being felt particularly in European powerhouse Germany and its vital automotive sector.

President Christine Lagarde has however said the ECB would not “overreact” to what the bank’s economists see as “transitory” inflation driven by one-off pandemic effects.

‘Getting closer’

At the end of September, the heads of the world’s biggest central banks came together at the ECB’s monetary policy summit to discuss the problems facing them. The US

also expect the Fed to start raising interest rates at the end of 2022 — a prospect which has yet to officially materialize at the ECB as the bank’s medium-term inflation forecasts continue to sit below its target. The Bank of England governor Andrew Bailey said in mid-October that his institution “will have to act” on inflation, bringing forward expectations of a rise in interest rates. Other central banks within the European Union have responded aggressively to rising prices.

The Polish central bank hiked interest rates at the beginning of October for the first time in almost a decade, while its Czech counterpart raised rates sharply in September to tame soaring inflation.

ing schemes could be modified to maintain support.

“Flexibility” had been the success of

the pandemic program, France’s central bank boss Francois Villeroy de Galhau said earlier this month. — AFP



FRANKFURT: The headquarters of the European Central Bank (ECB) is pictured in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany. — AFP

recovery. In September, prices in the euro area rose 3.4 percent year on year, a 13-year high pushed by the cost of energy, and well above the bank’s two-percent target.

At the same time, material shortages linked to the pandemic have stalled the economic recovery in parts of the eurozone.

Federal Reserve was “getting closer” to meeting its targets to start winding down its own stimulus program, its chair Jerome Powell said in a panel discussion with Lagarde and colleagues from the UK and Japan.

Members of its policy-making committee

Zen master

Despite some dissent among members of the governing council, the ECB seemed “pretty zen”, said Bruno Cavalier, economist at Oddo. In a letter last week announcing his resignation to colleagues, Jens Weidmann, the president of the German central bank and a prominent advocate of tight monetary policy, said it would be “decisive” for the ECB’s strategy “not to lose sight of future inflation risks”.

Upwards pressure on prices would however “largely fade out over the course of next year,” Isabel Schnabel, who sits on the executive board of the ECB, said earlier this month. The ECB has long held its interest rates at historic lows, including a negative bank deposit rate that means lenders pay to park excess cash at the ECB. While markets are pricing in a small rates rise in 2022, analysts at ING doubted that the first increase would come “before late 2023”.

The ECB’s 25-member governing council left interest rates untouched, but dialed back its bond-buying scheme at its last meeting in September.

The 1.85-trillion-euro (\$2.15-trillion) pandemic emergency bond-buying program (PEPP) is the ECB’s main crisis-fighting tool, aimed at keeping borrowing costs low to stoke economic growth. The expectation is that the scheme will end in March, but ideas are percolating amongst observers and the central bank’s policymakers as to how exist-



NEST launches the National Leadership Institute in Kuwait

KUWAIT: The National Leadership Institute (NLI) is an institute fully owned by NEST, a national company for educational services and training, which is a subsidiary of NTEC - the National Technology Enterprises Company, a governmental entity owned by the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA).

The National Leadership Institute (NLI), in Kuwait, has partnered with Imperial College Business School, in London, to deliver the NLI Conference Series 2021 - a four-month Conference Series that consisted of 6 conferences and 6 follow-up sessions, which took place from June 15th to October 12th, 2021. The series was delivered by top authors and professors from Imperial College Business School, London Business School (LBS) and George Washington University to an audience of local Executives, Managers, and Team Leaders from both the government and private sectors across many industries.

As the global pandemic challenged every aspect of society - including personal development - and restricted social interactions, the NLI Conference Series took place on Zoom. Its themes revolved around important topics such as

Generational Leadership, Digital Transformation, Women in Leadership, and the Future of Oil and Gas, in line with Kuwait’s 2035 mandate. Attendees from top Kuwaiti companies like Zain, Gulf Bank, Kuwait Investment Authority, KDI-PA, Al-Shaya Group, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, Kuwait Oil Company, Kuwait Oil Tankers Company, and KIPIC were amongst many others who participated in the conference series.

NLI revealed another Conference Series that is scheduled to launch in January 2022 in partnership with more world-renowned institutions and top professors to cultivate a culture of continuous learning. Find out more about the National Leadership Institute (NLI) through Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn @nliedukw or visit nli.edu.kw.

NTEC consists of six subsidiaries in several sectors including Kuwait Life Sciences Company (KLSC), Impulse which specializes in information and communication technologies, Eneritech for energy and renewable energy, Global Innovation Company (GIC) for personnel management, National Advisory Services Company (NASCO) for consultation services, and NEST which specializes in education and training.

This announcement is prepared for promotional purposes and does not omit any essential information related to the investment in the financial security subject of this announcement



Announcement

Invitation to existing Shareholders only to participate in the increase of the Share Capital of Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) K.S.C.P.

The Board of Directors of Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) K.S.C.P. (the “**Issuer**” or “**KIPCO**”) would like to invite the shareholders who are registered on the share register of the Issuer at the end of trading on Sunday 31 October 2021 (“**Record Date**”) and the holders of the pre-emption rights who acquired the pre-emption rights during the subscription period (“**Pre-Emption Rights**”) to subscribe in the increase of the Issuer’s share capital by 640,000,000 new ordinary shares (the “**Issue Shares**” or “**Shares**”) with a nominal value of KWD 64,000,000 at an Offer Price of 125 fils per Issue Share (including the nominal value and the issuance premium) during the subscription period commencing on Monday 01 November 2021 (inclusive) and closing on Sunday 21 November 2021 (inclusive) according to the following terms:

<p>Issuer: Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) K.S.C.P.</p> <p>Commercial Registration No: 23118</p> <p>Total Value of the Offering: Kuwaiti Dinar 80,000,000</p> <p>Offering Price: 125 fils per share (including the nominal value of 100 fils and the issuance premium of 25 fils).</p> <p>Eligible Shareholder: Shareholders who are recorded in the shareholder register of the Issuer as at close of Record Date (“Eligible Shareholders”) and the holders of the Pre-Emption Rights. In the event an Eligible Shareholder does not subscribe, the shareholder’s entitled shares shall be deemed waived for the benefit of existing shareholders and the holders of the Pre-Emption Rights. The holders of Pre-Emption Rights may, during the subscription period, from the date of the opening of the subscription period until the end of the business day falling five (5) business days prior to the closing of the subscription period, transfer fully or partially their rights through the Clearing and Depository Agent to shareholders or to others without consideration may trade all or part of their rights in Bursa Kuwait.</p> <p>Subscriber: Eligible Shareholder and Pre-Emption Rights Holder</p> <p>Entitled Shares: Subscribers will be entitled to 327 Issue Shares for every 1,000 existing shares that they hold.</p> <p>Minimum Subscription: One (1) share</p> <p>Issuance Advisor and Subscription Agent: Kamco Investment Company K.S.C. (Public) – “Kamco Invest”</p> <p>Clearing and Depository Agent: Kuwait Clearing Company K.S.C.</p> <p>Subscription for Additional Issue Shares: Subscribers have the right to subscribe to additional Issue Shares in addition to their Entitled Shares and such subscription shall be made at the Offering Price</p> <p>Subscription Period: The Subscription Period will commence at 10:00 am on Monday 01 November 2021 during normal business hours Sunday through Thursday and shall close on Sunday 21 November 2021 at 1:00 pm Kuwait local time.</p> <p>Pre-Emptive Rights Trading Period: Commences on Monday 01 November 2021 and ends on Sunday, 14 November 2021 (inclusive)</p> <p>Pre-Emptive Rights ISIN Code: KW0EQ260020</p> <p>Subscription Instructions: Subscribers may subscribe to the Issue Shares by following the below instructions: First: Subscription through the Subscription Website for individual subscribers only: The Subscription Website allows subscription in the</p>	<p>Offering for individual subscribers only, whereby Payment shall be made by K-NET service.</p> <p>The Subscriber shall:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Login to the Subscription Website via the link: https://www.ipo.com.kw 2. Register the civil ID number, thereafter the system shall verify whether the subscriber is eligible to the subscription or not. 3. Record the number of shares to be subscribed for. Be transferred to the payment portal via the K-NET service, where the Subscriber can pay from their own account up to the limit allowed by the Subscriber’s bank which issued their K-net card (no other person may pay on behalf of the Subscriber except in the cases provided for under law “Required documents shall be reviewed when submitting the subscription application”). The Subscriber shall bear all legal consequences in case of violation). <p>Second: Subscription through referral to the Kuwait Clearing Company office for individual subscribers who wish to subscribe in more than 80,000 (Eighty Thousand) shares or corporate subscribers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Login to the Subscription Website via the link: https://www.ipo.com.kw 2. In the event that the Subscriber is an individual, the Subscriber shall register the civil ID number; the system to verify whether the Subscriber is eligible to subscribe or not. 3. In the event that the Subscriber is a corporate entity, the Subscriber shall register the commercial registration number; the system shall verify whether the Subscriber is eligible to subscribe or not. 4. Record the number of shares to be subscribed for 5. The Subscriber shall print the subscription form 6. The Subscriber shall visit his/her/its own bank and submit a copy of the Subscription Document printed from the above link and transfer the amount required to the Bank Account (non-interest bearing) by way of electronic funds transfer (net amount without any charges by the transferring bank and the receiving Bank) stated below: <p>Name of the Bank: Burgan Bank</p> <p>Account number: 6015378046</p> <p>IBAN: KW53 BRGN 0000 0000 0000 6015 3780 46</p> <p>SWIFT: BRGNKWKW</p> <p>Beneficiary: KIPCO – Capital Increase</p> <p>Reference/Narration: KIPCO Capital Increase + Shareholder Trading ID + Shareholder Contact Number <p>7. The Subscriber shall get an original deposit voucher of the amount transferred from his own bank and then refer to the Clearing and Depository Agent to complete the remaining procedures.</p> <p>8. The Subscriber shall go to the headquarters of the Clearing and Depository Agent located at the Arabian Gulf Street, Ahmad Tower, the</p> </p>	<p>Fifth floor to submit the documents listed in the “Documents Required when Submitting Subscription Application” in this Prospectus during normal working hours Sunday through Thursday and fill in the Subscription Application form.</p> <p>9. The Clearing and Depository Agent shall provide the Subscriber with a deposit receipt of the Subscription.</p> <p>Documents required for subscription The Subscription Application Form must be accompanied by the following documentation, as applicable. Staff at the offices of the Clearing and Depository Agent will compare copies with originals and return originals to the Subscribers:</p> <p>General Requirements from the Subscribers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of the notice issued by the Clearing and Depository Agent containing the shareholder’s name, shareholder identification and the number of shares owned; and • Transfer receipt of the Subscription Monies along with the Subscriber’s IBAN number <p>Individual Subscribers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original and copy of personal civil identification card for subscribers that are Kuwaitis and residents of the State of Kuwait and minors; • Original and copy of passport for subscribers that are Gulf Cooperation Council citizens; • Original and copy of special legal proxy for subscribing in shares (for proxy subscriber); • Original and copy of Certificate of Guardianship for orphans; • Original and copy of Certificate of Guardianship for minors; • Original and copy of a Limitation of Succession Deed for beneficiaries; and • In the event that the subscriber does not appear in person, the original authorization issued by the subscriber to the person authorized to conduct administrative transactions regarding the subscription application (provided that the signature contained in the authorization is attested by the subscriber’s bank). <p>Corporate Subscribers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original and copy of Commercial Registration Certificate; • Original and copy of the Authorized Signatories Certificate or the Extract of the Commercial Register; • Original and copy of the personal identification card of the authorized signatory; • Original and copy of the specimen of signature for the authorized signatory issued by the Public Authority of Manpower or attested by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry; and • In the event that the authorized signatory does not appear in person, the original authorization issued by the authorized signatory to the person authorized to conduct administrative transaction regarding the subscription application. <p>Non-Kuwaiti subscribers Non-Kuwaiti subscribers (whether corporates or individuals (as applicable)) are required to provide the equivalent of the aforementioned documentation as issued by their jurisdictional authorities if they do not have Kuwait issued documentation as highlighted further above.</p>	<p>Failure of any Subscriber to submit a duly completed Subscription Application Form (together with all applicable supporting documentation thereto), after the transfer or deposit of the subscription monies as required, shall render the Subscription Application Form of a Subscriber null and void. Subscription monies shall not be accepted in cash.</p> <p>Risk Factors: Investment in the Issue Shares is associated with some types of risks. These types of risks can be categorized as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Economic risks. 2. Risks relating to the Issuer: The Issuer is exposed to risks associated with expansion into new markets, start-up or early stage businesses and acquisition of new companies and businesses - Issuer’s cash receipts are mostly restricted to dividends from Principal Companies or the proceeds of asset sales - The Issuer may not be able to effectively re-invest cash received from the sale of investments - Valuations of unquoted investments are subject to management judgment and may not reflect the value that the Issuer will actually be able to realise - Funding risk - Counterparty Credit Risk - Interest Rate and Equity Price Risk - Foreign Exchange Risk - The Issuer may be impacted by financial market disruptions - Historic level of the Issuer’s growth may not be sustained, which could impact its profitability - Competition from global competitors - Legal and regulatory systems may create an uncertain environment for investment and business activities - Risks related to Kuwait and the Middle East and North Africa region - Kuwait and other GCC legal systems continue to develop and this may create an uncertain environment for investment and business activity - Risks related to changes in significant accounting standards and new standards - Downgrade in Issuer’s credit ratings - The Issuer is exposed to risks associated with the loss of its key personnel - Operational Risk - Cyber Security Risk - The Issuer’s banking subsidiaries are exposed to reputational risks related to their operations and industry - Regulatory risks relating to the Issuer’s banking Subsidiaries - The Issuer’s banking Subsidiaries have significant credit-related contingent liabilities and commitments that may lead to potential losses - The Issuer’s banking Subsidiaries are exposed to various risks resulting from fluctuations in interest rate and exchange rate levels - The results of the Issuer’s insurance operations could be adversely affected by a failure to accurately access underwriting risks and by catastrophic events - The failure of the Issuer’s insureds, intermediaries and reinsurers to satisfy their obligations to the Issuer could reduce its net income - The Issuer’s Pay-TV business may suffer if it cannot acquire or retain attractive content for the Pay-TV services it offers - The Issuer’s Over-The-Top (OTT) business may face adverse impact if it cannot offer attractive content for the OTT Platform it offers - The Issuer may be adversely affected if its strategic options regarding its Media business are not realised on satisfactory terms - The Issuer may be affected by risks inherent in the development for sale of real estate - Kuwait Bankruptcy rules - Force Majeure. 3. Risks related to the Issue Shares: Investing in securities in developing and emerging markets generally involves a higher degree of risk - Suitability of investment - Liquidity and volatility in the Share price - Dividend payments - Dilution of existing shareholdings - Risks of unprofitability or not exercising Preemption Rights - Risks of insufficient demand for Preemption Rights or the Company’s shares, or withdrawal from subscription - Risks of speculation in Preemption Rights - Taxation risks on payments - Kuwait may introduce Corporate Income Tax on Kuwaiti and other Companies, as well as Value Added Taxes - Change in Law - The application of the Kuwaiti income tax regime on stock dividends - GCC countries may form a monetary union. <p>For further details on any such risk factors, please refer to the downloadable/printable version of the Prospectus relating to the offering on the Issuer’s website (https://kipo.com), Subscription Agent and Lead Manager’s website (www.kamcoinvest.com), Clearing and Depository Agent’s website for this Offering (www.ipo.com.kw), or Bursa Kuwait’s website (www.boursakuwait.com.kw).</p> <p>Prior to investing in any Issue Shares, prospective investors should carefully consider, together with all other information contained in the Prospectus relating to the Offering, the risk factors highlighted above and seek professional advice before investing (for further details on any such risk factors, please refer to the downloadable/printable version of the Prospectus relating to the offering found in the above websites). This announcement does not contain all the information that prospective investors should consider before deciding to invest in the Issue Shares and does not purport to be complete.</p> <p>Subscription Information The necessary information regarding the investment in the Issue Shares is included in the Prospectus.</p> <p>The terms and conditions in the Prospectus and the Subscription Application Form shall apply. The Subscribers are hereby advised to carefully read and understand the content of the Prospectus and to seek the advice of an advisor licensed by law and which specializes in advising on the content of the Prospectus, the subscription of the Issue Shares and the related risks prior to making the decision to subscribe.</p> <p>The Kuwait Capital Markets Authority or any regulatory organization in the State of Kuwait shall not bear any liability for the contents of this announcement or its accuracy and it did not approve its content or verify the validity or accuracy of the information herein. Kuwait Capital Markets Authority or any regulatory organization in the State of Kuwait shall not bear any liability of any type for any loss arising from reliance on all or any part of this announcement. We recommend obtaining the advice of an investment advisor.</p> <p>For Inquiries, please contact: Call Centre : +905 2233 6751 Email : kipciori@kamcoinvest.com</p>
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Business

Gulf Bank records KD 27.5 million in net profit for first 9 months of 2021

Net profit increased by 50% compared to previous year

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank K.S.C.P. has announced its financial results for the first nine months of 2021. The bank recorded a net profit of KD 27.5 million for the nine months ended 30 September 2021, an increase of 50 percent compared to a net profit of KD 18.4 million for the prior period.

The bank recorded an operating income of KD 125.5 million for the nine months ended September 2021, an increase of 8 percent compared to the same period of 2020. The improvement in net profit was mainly driven by a 6 percent or KD 5.8 million increase in net interest income, a 14 percent or KD 3.4 million improvement in non-interest income and a decline of 24 percent or KD 12.0 million in total provisions. As for asset quality, Gulf Bank booked KD 37.6 million in total provisions for the nine months ended 30 September 2021, a reduction of 24 percent in comparison to the same period of last year. The bank continues to have significant coverage ratio of 472 percent including total provisions and collaterals, whereas the non-performing loan (NPL) ratio stood at 1.3 percent as of 30 September 2021, lower than the prior year level of 1.5 percent.

Compared to 30 September 2020, total assets increased by 7 percent to KD 6.3 billion, gross loans and advances to customers climbed by 4 percent to KD 4.7 billion, and shareholders' equity increased by 5 percent to reach KD 653.6 million. Customer deposits reached KD 4.1 billion, an increase of 5 percent compared to the prior year.

Gulf Bank capital ratios are at an optimal level, with the capital adequacy ratio as at the end of

September 2021 reaching 16.2 percent, which is well in excess of minimum regulatory requirements.

Commenting on the results, Jassim Mustafa Boodai, Gulf Bank's Chairman said: "Gulf Bank continued its strong performance throughout the third quarter of 2021 with a noticeable improvement in many key indicators. The strong business growth, stable asset quality and resilient capital ratios are testaments of our prudent strategy and sound risk management." Boodai added: "We have witnessed an accelerated and positive impact on the businesses and the economy in general, with the intensified vaccination rollout covering more than 80 percent of the population and the opening of the country. We hope it will continue at this pace in the coming phase, and head towards a full recovery from the pandemic."

"A" credit ratings

Gulf Bank continues to be well recognized in terms of its creditworthiness and financial strength internationally, rated "A" by three leading credit rating agencies. Moody's Investors Service maintained the Long-Term Deposits Rating of "A3" with a "Stable" outlook. Fitch Ratings affirmed the bank's Long-term Issuer Default Rating of "A+" with a "Negative" outlook. Capital Intelligence affirmed Gulf Bank's long-term Foreign Currency Rating of "A+" with a "Stable" outlook.

2025 strategy

Gulf Bank is spearheading its digital transformation by providing technology solutions, fostering a



Jassim Mustafa Boodai Tony Daher

performance-driven culture based on meritocracy and engagement, and adopting world-class risk management practices. Tony Daher, CEO of Gulf Bank, commented: "The new strategy is based on a comprehensive digital transformation, and aims to assert the bank's pioneering position as the leading Kuwaiti bank of the future. After many successes and achievements on the operational front, the bank is now turning to the future with a strategy that provides customers with simple and innovative services to facilitate their lives and achieve sustainable growth."

"Gulf Bank's new strategy aims to provide customers with an unprecedented banking experience in Kuwait. Recently, we announced that customers can now open bank accounts in just under a minute, marking a new era of digital banking services with the simplest and fastest account onboarding process in Kuwait," continued Daher. "One of the

key pillars of Gulf Bank's 2025 strategy is the investment in integrated technological solutions, a transformation which will be tangible to all those who are connected with Gulf Bank."

Sustainability initiatives

Daher also touched on the Bank's ongoing sustainability initiatives, commenting: "Sustainability is an important and integral part of our strategy. We are committed towards our stakeholders, community, and the overall economy. In this respect, we are proud to announce that Gulf Bank will very soon be issuing its first official sustainability report. The baseline report will provide a consolidated view of Gulf Bank's contribution to sustainability development in the financial sector. The report provides a road map on how we plan to take this initiative to the next level. Our approach has been based on several sustainability-related frameworks including Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and Kuwait Bourse sustainability disclosures."

Gulf Bank's major sustainability contributions during the third quarter, included a sponsorship of a digital talk show highlighting women's voices and female success stories in the workplace. In August, Gulf Bank also sponsored the National Union of Kuwaiti Students (NUKS) new student orientation for high school graduates as part of its promise to support and empower Kuwaiti youth. As part of its internal efforts to support sustainability, Gulf Bank also organized a new initiative to address paper waste and printing requirements more effectively.

NBK Economic Report

Oman growth picks up steadily as reform program accelerates

KUWAIT: After a very difficult 2020, the outlook for Oman's economy is improving, with GDP growth expected to rebound to 2.1 percent in 2021 and to 3.1 percent on average in 2022-24, on a combination of higher oil and gas output as well as the government's wide-ranging structural reform program. Short-term headwinds are expected, however, from the large fiscal consolidation being implemented this year to address the deficit.

In the energy sector, the further unwinding of OPEC+ supply cuts from August should see Oman's crude production increase by about 8 kb/d per month to a year-average of 759 kb/d (-0.4 percent y/y). A boost in natural gas production (associated and non-associated), helped by output gains in the key Ghazeer and Khazzan fields, and resulting increases in condensate volumes will more than compensate for this year's overall decrease oil output. Hydrocarbon sector GDP is forecast to grow by 2.8 percent in 2021 and by 3.6 percent on average in 2022-24.

Non-oil activity, meanwhile, has benefitted from a post-COVID bounce (a travel ban was lifted in September for vaccinated individuals), which together with the government's strong commitment to reform and diversification (under both Vision 2040 and the new five-year plan running 2021-25), has provided for a more constructive outlook. After falling by an estimated 4.4 percent last year, non-oil GDP is forecast to rise 1.6 percent in 2021 as domestic and external demand start to recover.

In the medium term, non-oil growth should pick up to above 3 percent by 2024 as the benefits of the structural reform program start to materialize more fully. As well as stabilizing the public finances (see below), measures include boosting labor market flexibility, private sector jobs and female participation, which should lift productivity, reforming state-owned firms (eventually leading to privatization) and improving the business climate. Targeted sectors for develop-

Table 1: Key economic indicators

	2020e	2021f	2022f	2023f	2024f	
Nominal GDP	\$ bn	72.0	80.8	81.8	84.1	86.6
Real GDP	% y/y	-3.5	2.1	3.9	2.6	2.7
- Oil	% y/y	-2.2	2.8	6.1	2.3	2.3
- Non-oil	% y/y	-4.4	1.6	2.3	2.8	3.1
Inflation	% y/y	-0.9	1.5	1.9	1.2	1.2
Budget balance	% of GDP	-10.5	-3.6	-2.5	-1.0	-0.5
Current account	% of GDP	-12.0	-7.3	-4.3	-2.2	-1.0
Public debt	% of GDP	86.1	83.1	79.3	77.3	73.1

Source: Official sources, NBK estimates

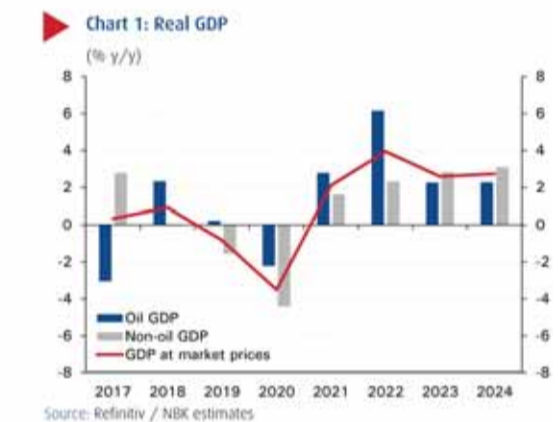
ment include hi-tech industry, agriculture, transport, logistics and tourism, with an additional focus on green initiatives. Moreover, the \$7 billion 230,000 bpd Duqm refinery (more than 80 percent complete) will attract significant new investment in ancillary activities and surrounding infrastructure.

Fiscal deficit

Faced with a sharp widening of the deficit last year, the government rolled out the Medium Term Fiscal Plan in 2020 to restore fiscal stability and balance the budget by 2025. As well as VAT, measures already implemented include cuts to utility subsidies and capital outlays as well as reductions in the public sector wage bill (though social safety nets will be expanded and better targeted to support vulnerable Omanis). The introduction of personal income tax is also being considered. These measures, together with higher oil prices, helped narrow the deficit sharply by 46 percent y/y to a pro-rated 5 percent of GDP by August. We expect the deficit to shrink further to 3.6 percent by year-end from 10.5 percent in 2020.

While such a sharp near-term fiscal adjustment carries risks to economic growth, it has already yielded some dividends: S&P and Moody's both upgraded their outlooks on Oman, and the government could even be on track for its first rating upgrade since 2007. Fiscal consolidation and broader reforms would also help to reverse the increase in public debt (to 80 percent of GDP in 2020 from 5 percent in 2014) due to both domestic and external debt issuance, potentially bringing it down to 73 percent of GDP by 2024.

Meanwhile, consumer prices fell 0.9 percent in 2020 (average) but are forecast to rise 1.5 percent this year following the introduction of a 5



Source: Refinitiv / NBK estimates

percent Value Added Tax (VAT) in April and amid increasing demand and international food prices. As the initial impact of VAT fades though, inflation should slow to 1.4 percent on average in 2022-24.

External position

The current account deficit widened to 12 percent of GDP in 2020 from 5.5 percent in 2019, on the back of lower oil exports. It should, however, narrow to 1.0 percent of GDP by 2024 helped by higher oil prices and as the government's diversification and Omanization drive supports manufacturing exports and reductions in remittances, respectively. Currently elevated energy prices are behind much of the recent improvement in the external balance. Backed by \$35 billion in foreign assets (including \$18 billion in SWF assets), the long-standing peg to the US dollar has anchored prices and financial stability. According to a recent IMF report, the authorities would be open to a more flexible exchange rate in the long term as the importance of the non-hydrocarbon tradable sector increases under the diversification agenda.

Successful reform program

Higher oil prices and the accelerated pace of reforms are expected to boost non-oil growth and cut Oman's long-standing twin fiscal and external deficits sharply by 2024, reducing economic vulnerabilities. However, a drop in energy prices could upend progress, with negative spillovers across the economy. Renewed pandemic-linked demand weakness is also a risk, as is the sizeable and rapid fiscal adjustment, which will affect near-term growth. The reforms themselves could also meet with resistance and have to be scaled back or slowed down.

BEC Send & Mega Win campaign giving away cash prizes to 133 winners

KUWAIT: Bahrain Exchange Company (BEC), specialists in worldwide money transfers and currency exchange, has launched its latest promotional campaign 'Send & Mega Win'. The campaign consists of cash prizes to be given away daily \$200, weekly \$500, and mega prize of KD 5,000. This campaign will see a total of 133 lucky winners winning cash prizes.

Running from the October 17, 2021, to January 8, 2022, the campaign will be open to all customers that make any money transfer or currency exchange transaction from one of its 50+ branches, plus customers who send money online through BEC's secure online money transfer service 'BEC Online' will also be eligible to take part. Customers will be entered into the draw for the transactions made between each draw dates throughout the campaign period.

Mathews Varughese, BEC general manager, commented on the campaign, "As we approach the

end of the year, we are delighted to spread goodwill amongst our customers and reward their loyalty with the chance to win incredible cash prizes. We would like to take this opportunity to wish our customers and their families a good health and prosperous life ahead."

BEC currently has over 50 branches across Kuwait including three branches at Kuwait International Airport in T4 and T5 terminals respectively. BEC specializes in sending money around the globe safely and quickly to over 46,000 locations in 30 countries through its own money transfer product - EzRemit. Its global reach is extended to over 200 countries through its partnership with international remittance company such as MoneyGram and TransFast.

CBK bonds and related Tawarruq

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK Bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KD 200 million for three months with a rate of return at 1.125 percent.

Al-Maryah Community Bank appoints Adeeb Ahamed as an advisor

ABU DHABI: UAE's first licensed digital-only bank - Al-Maryah Community Bank LLC, has appointed Adeeb Ahamed, Managing Director of Abu Dhabi based LuLu Financial Holdings to the position of Advisor to the Board Members.



Adeeb Ahamed

Adeeb, whose investments in financial services and digital payments span 11 countries in the GCC, Indian sub-continent and APAC regions, is an established and recognized industry name, known for his far-reaching contributions to the development of the global payments ecosystem. A member of the prestigious World Economic Forum's South Asian Regional Strategy Group, Adeeb additionally sits at the helm of companies in retail, F&B and luxury hospitality.

Al-Maryah Community Bank, which started operations earlier this year, is a community oriented financial services provider committed to improving the quality of life of the UAE community by operating with integrity and using innovative smart technologies.

The board comprises leaders from diversified sectors of economy, and Adeeb's inputs as an advisor will help improve the bank's strategic direction. Al-Maryah Community Bank is also heavily invested in digital solutions and elevation of user experience for the UAE community, and Adeeb's vision for the payments ecosystem will be of much support in this regard. Al-Maryah Community Bank is UAE's first licensed digital-only bank, with an aim to build a base among individuals and small businesses. The bank allows consumers to seamlessly open accounts and experience a range of smart banking services built on AI powered technology integrated with UAE Government's smart services.

LuLu Financial Holdings, which operates a network of 238 branches worldwide alongside its proprietary digital financial services, is geared to improve people's lives, with a vision to innovate value and inspire experiences through its varied offerings.



Nigeria launches eNaira digital currency

ABUJA: Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari launched the country's new digital eNaira currency yesterday as Africa's largest economy looked to tap into the growing popularity of virtual money and cryptocurrencies.

With its eNaira currency, Nigeria joined China and others who are using or piloting central bank-backed digital tenders as the global use of e-payment systems expands. "We have become the first country in Africa and one of the first in the world to

introduce a digital currency to our citizens," Buhari said at the official launch. He said the new virtual currency would improve cross-border trade, financial inclusion for those outside the formal economy and increase remittances.

Nigeria has seen booming interest in cryptocurrencies as people look for ways to avoid the weakening naira currency and combat high costs of living and unemployment in Africa's most populous country. Central bank-backed digital currencies or CBDCs and cryptocurrencies are both virtual money though the CBDCs are legal tender regulated by central banks while cryptos are out of government control.

Five countries have already launched CBDCs, with another 14 including Sweden and South Korea in the pilot stage, according to the Atlantic Council's CBDC tracking project. —AFP

Business

ABK gains strong momentum with a net profit of KD 21.1m

Operating income up by 13% to reach KD 116.4 million

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) reported a net profit of KD 21.1 million for the nine month period ended 30th September 2021 against a net loss of KD 7.9 million incurred in the corresponding period in 2020. EPS was at 9 fils compared to loss per share of 9 fils in 2020. Operating income for the current period was KD 116.4 million, up 13 percent over the same period last year, while operating profits increased to KD 62 million, representing a 17 percent rise over the same period in 2020. This improvement in performance is driven by efficient cost of funds management, improved fee based income, and lower provisions for credit losses.

Total assets increased by 4 percent, to reach KD 5.2 billion compared to the same period last year, driven by an increase in investments and improvements in liquid assets, while loans and advances decreased by 3 percent to reach KD 3.2 billion, and customer deposits grew by 13 percent to reach KD 3.8 billion. The bank's balance sheet is healthy with strong capital, adequate liquidity and impaired loan coverage ratios. The non-performing loan



George Richani

(NPL) ratio stood at 2.6 percent with the NPL coverage at 258 percent. The capital adequacy ratio (CAR) was 17.15 percent while shareholders' equity stood at KD 512 million.

George Richani, Group CEO of ABK said: "The bank has delivered a robust financial performance, bolstered by a cautiously improved macroeconomic outlook for Kuwait. Our cost of funds has decreased on account of efficient cost of fund management, and our UAE and Egypt operations continue to perform well, with Egypt reflecting a 12 percent increase in operating income. These results highlight the bank's progress quarter on quarter this year, and confirm that we are on track to deliver sustainable

results to our stakeholders. "We have continued our strategy of realignment of the balance sheet, supplemented with our focus on increased synergies across our Group entities to fully serve all our clients in the geographies in which we operate. "Moving forward we will remain focused on our strategic objectives in order to deliver strong and consistent returns for our shareholders. Further, our investments in digitization are delivering efficiencies within the organization. We will continue to invest in our people, technology and capabilities which form part of our growth strategy."

ABK recently launched its first Kuwaiti dinar denominated bond Issuance of KD 50 million which was oversubscribed. The success of this bond issuance shows market confidence in the Kuwait Banking sector in general and in ABK in particular.

In line with ABK's focus on service enhancement through digitization, the Bank launched its customer-facing intelligent chatbot "Ask Sanad" and announced the successful completion of the Phase I proof-of-concept

(POC) blockchain solution for electronic Know-Your-Customer (eKYC).

The bank recently upgraded its core banking platform to support the Kuwait National Payments System and upgraded its credit card system to the latest version.

ABK has also launched its first draw account, Alfouz, which is intended to facilitate a positive savings culture amongst Kuwaiti nationals and residents. Alfouz offers the largest single weekly draw prize of KD 10,000 and a grand draw prize which will be paid over a period of 10 years at KD 5,000 per month.

ABK continues to focus on employee development with the launch of Moody's - ABK Graduate Program, in line with the Bank's commitment to create and sustain a robust performance-based culture with the view of developing and promoting talent from within the bank. Employees are encouraged to continue learning and developing and the bank has put in place an extremely effective learning & development plan that includes free learning through various platforms.

KFH highlights banking services for customers with special needs

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) sheds light on the rights of customers with special needs, while introducing services provided by the banks to them. This comes as part of the bank's efforts to support the banking awareness campaign "Be Aware", which was launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and Kuwait Banking Association (KBA).

KFH provides all services to this segment of customers to ensure that they obtain banking services without incurring any additional fees or costs. This includes allocating a special branch for them in each governorate, with adequate car parks, wheelchairs, and other means necessary for customers with special needs. Banks also allow at least one ATM machine in the branch that provides banking services for people with special needs, which can be easily accessed. It provides complete privacy to the customer through a glass room that opens with the card and enables the usage of headphones.

Additionally, KFH provides safe-deposit box serv-

ices, staff trained in sign language to communicate with this segment of customers, and forms for account opening and other contracts and financial transactions printed in the Braille system. In addition, KFH provides voice service on the bank's website, which makes it easier for the customer to obtain banking services through the Internet.

KFH is keen on providing its services to people with special needs in an optimal manner. This supports its strategy in serving all customer segments, while facilitating their access to banking services easily and as per the highest quality and safety standards. KFH supports the "Be Aware" campaign activities with the aim of spreading financial education in society and raising awareness among the public about their rights regarding dealing with banks, so that they are aware of financial and banking transactions. This is through publishing videos, educational materials and awareness messages through the bank's social media channels, website, ATM screens, display screens in branches, in addition to newspapers and other media outlets.

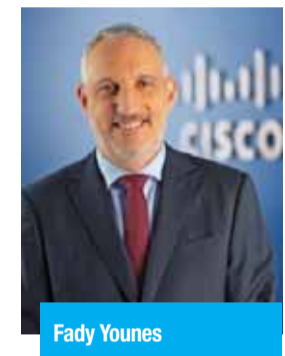
The "Be Aware" campaign addresses several topics, such as the consumer and housing finance process, banking cards, awareness of the rights of customers with special needs, advice related to cybersecurity and the protection of bank accounts, clarifying the mechanisms for submitting a complaint and protecting the rights of customers, as well as introducing the functions of the banking sector and its role in stimulating and developing the economy.

Cisco warns of a hacking campaign targeting the aviation industry

KUWAIT: Cisco detected a targeted phishing campaign aimed at the aviation industry for two years, which was potentially organized by cyber threat actor(s) operating out of Nigeria. The actor(s) have been targeting the aviation industry for the last two years, while managing other campaigns at the same time. Researchers found that they do not seem to be technically sophisticated as they're using off-the-shelf malware since the beginning of their activities without developing their own malware.

The operators also bought crypters that enable the usage of such malware without being detected. Throughout the years they used several different crypters, mostly bought on online forums and are believed to have been active since 2013. The cyberattacks involve emails containing specific lure documents centered around the aviation or cargo industry that purport to be PDF files but link to a VBScript file, which ultimately leads to the delivery of remote access trojans (RATs), leaving organizations vulnerable to an array of security risks.

Actors that perform smaller incidents can keep doing them for a long period of time under the radar. However, their activities can lead to major incidents at large organizations. These are the operators that feed the underground market of credentials and cookies, which can then be used by larger groups on activities.



Fady Younes

Commenting on the targeted attacks, Fady Younes, Cybersecurity Director at Cisco Middle East and Africa said: "Many operators can have limited technical knowledge but still be able to operate RATs or information-stealers - posing a significant risk to large corporations given the right conditions. In this case, what appeared to be a simple campaign was, in fact, a continuous operation that has been active for years - targeting a whole industry with commodity malware hidden with different crypters."

"Even though cybersecurity is not a threat specific to aviation, in the last few years the sector has been at the forefront of several cyberattacks. It is crucial to be careful with weak links that could lead to flawed conclusions. The weak links shouldn't be discarded - It would be wise to view them as one more piece of information that, together with other links, can yield to a much stronger relationship between two pieces of information," Younes added.



GENEVA: The UN's World Meteorological Organization said that continued rising greenhouse gas emissions would result in more extreme weather and wide-ranging impacts on the environment, the economy and humanity.

Greenhouse gas levels reach new record high: UN

GENEVA: Greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere reached record levels last year, the United Nations said yesterday in a stark warning ahead of the COP26 summit about worsening global warming.

The UN's World Meteorological Organization said that continued rising greenhouse gas emissions would result in more extreme weather and wide-ranging impacts on the environment, the economy and humanity. The WMO said the economic slowdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic triggered a temporary decline in new emissions, but had no discernible impact on the atmospheric levels of greenhouse gases and their growth rates.

The organization's Greenhouse Gas Bulletin said the annual rate of increase last year was above the yearly average between 2011 and 2020 — and the trend continued in 2021. The WMO said that as long as emissions continue, global temperatures will continue to rise.

And given the long life of carbon dioxide (CO₂), the temperature level already observed will persist for several decades even if emissions are rapidly reduced to net zero. The UN Climate Change Conference COP26 is being held in the Scottish city Glasgow from October 31 to November 12.

"The Greenhouse Gas Bulletin contains a stark, scientific message for climate change negotiators at COP26," said WMO chief Petteri Taalas. "At the current rate of increase in greenhouse gas concentrations, we will see a temperature increase by the end of this century far in excess of the Paris Agreement targets of 1.5 to two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

Taalas said that if the world kept using fossil fuels in an unlimited way, the planet could be about 4C warmer by 2100 — but limiting warming to 1.5 C was still possible through mitigation efforts.

'No time to lose'

The WMO said that with continued rising greenhouse gas emissions, alongside rising temperatures, the planet could also expect more extreme weather. That includes intense heat and rainfall, ice melt, sea-level rise and ocean acidification — all of which will have far-reaching impacts on people across the world. "We need to transform our commitment into action that will have an impact on the gases that drive climate change," said Taalas. "We need to revisit our industrial, energy and transport systems and whole way of life. The needed changes are economically affordable and technically possible. There is no time to lose."

The WMO also revealed that the southeast part of the Amazon rainforest, long a carbon sink, has now become a source of carbon emissions.

"This is alarming and this is related to deforestation," Taalas said. Euan Nisbet, from the University of London's Greenhouse Gas Group, compared the greenhouse gas measurements to "skidding into a car crash". "The disaster gets closer and closer but you can't stop it. You can clearly see the crash ahead, and all you can do is howl." Dave Reay, director of the Edinburgh Climate Change Institute, said the report provided a "brutally frank" assessment of COP achievements so far: "an epic fail".

CO₂ record

The three major greenhouse gases are CO₂, methane and nitrous oxide. CO₂ is the most important, accounting for around 66 percent of the warming effect on the climate. CO₂ concentrations reached 413.2 parts per million (ppm) in 2020, up 2.5 ppm, and is at 149 percent of the pre-industrial level in 1750, the WMO said. The report said that roughly half of the CO₂ emitted by human activity remains in the atmosphere, with the other half ending up in the oceans and the land. "The last time the Earth experienced a comparable concentration of CO₂ was three-five million years ago," Taalas said, adding "but there weren't 7.8 billion people then".

Methane averages reached a new high of 1,889 parts per billion in 2020, up 11 ppb on the year before, and is at 262 percent of the pre-industrial benchmark. Nitrous oxide averages reached 333.2 ppb, up 1.2 ppb, and is now at 123 percent of 1750 levels. —AFP

China aims to cut fossil energy use to below 20% by 2060

BEIJING: China is targeting an ambitious clean energy goal of reducing fossil fuel use to under 20 percent by 2060, according to an official plan published by state media on Sunday. The cabinet document follows a pledge by President Xi Jinping to wean the world's biggest polluter off coal, with a target of peaking carbon emissions by 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality 30 years later. But the country has been criticized for pushing ahead with opening dozens of new coal power plants. Authorities have also been looking to ramp up production with coal prices surging and supplies running low, both factors behind recent power outages. But on Sunday, guidelines published by China's official Xinhua news agency laid out a host of targets in its path towards carbon neutrality.

Among them was the proportion of non-fossil fuel consumption reaching around 25 percent of total energy use by 2030 — when the nation targets peak emissions. By then, carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP would have dropped by more than 65 percent



Yellen: US inflation may moderate by mid-to-late 2022

WASHINGTON: Inflation in the United States, pushed upward by pandemic-related supply and labor problems, should return to more moderate levels in the second half of next year, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Sunday. With supply-chain woes slowing deliveries of a range of parts, including the semiconductors needed by automakers, and amid widespread labor shortages and still strong demand for products, US consumer prices in September were 5.4 percent higher than in the same month in 2020, raising concerns about economic recovery.

But Yellen told CNN's "State of the Union" she sees a positive trend. "Monthly rates of inflation have

from 2005 levels, while the total installed capacity of wind and solar power is targeted to reach more than 1,200 gigawatts, Xinhua said.

The guidelines also reiterated an earlier aim for carbon emissions per unit of GDP to fall 18 percent in 2025, from 2020 standards. Authorities called for a shift in industrial structures, saying they would "resolutely curb the blind development" of projects with high energy consumption and emissions.

The scale of coal-based oil and gas production capacity should be "reasonably controlled" too, authorities said, while calling for the development of low-carbon industries. Meanwhile, they also stressed the need for effective responses against economic and social risks that could accompany a low-carbon transition, and to "prevent overreaction and ensure safe carbon reduction".

The guidelines come as countries gear up for a new round of climate talks in Glasgow starting on October 31, from which Xi will be conspicuously absent. China faces a struggle to wean itself off coal, which fuels nearly 60 percent of its energy-hungry economy. Economic planners are nervous about slashing coal too quickly as it could cripple growth. While China said in an earlier statement that President Xi intended to "strictly control" the growth of coal power plants, it also signaled a continued increase in the next few years, saying coal consumption would start to gradually reduce from 2026. —AFP

already fallen substantially from the very high rates that we saw in the spring and early summer."

She added: "On a 12-month basis, the inflation rate will remain high into next year because of what's already happened, but I expect improvement by the middle to end of next year, second half of next year." The US Federal Reserve, the country's central bank, aims for an annual inflation rate of around two percent over time.

"I don't think we're about to lose control of inflation," said Yellen, who chaired the Fed before being named by President Joe Biden to lead the Treasury Department.

She acknowledged that "Americans have not seen inflation like we have experienced recently in a long time." But Yellen added that conditions should improve as the country gradually recovers from the pandemic crisis, as supply-chain woes are resolved and as more people return to work. "Already on a monthly basis, the inflation numbers are way down below their peaks," she said.—AFP

Lifestyle | Features

MICHAEL JORDAN SNEAKERS SELL FOR NEARLY \$1.5 MILLION, AN AUCTION RECORD



A pair of sneakers worn by NBA superstar Michael Jordan early in his career sold for nearly \$1.5 million on Sunday, setting a record price at auction for game-worn footwear, Sotheby's said. The white leather shoes with the red Nike swoosh and soles were worn by the iconic player in the fifth game of his rookie season with the Chicago Bulls, when Nike's Jordan-affiliated brand was only just taking off as a sensation both on and off the court.

"The most valuable sneakers ever offered at auction—Michael Jordan's regular season game-worn Nike Air Ships from 1984 — have just sold at \$1,472,000 in our luxury sale in Las Vegas," the auction house said in a statement on Twitter. The astronomical price easily beat the record held by a pair of Nike Air Jordans which sold for \$615,000 in August 2020 at a Christie's auction. A pair of Nike Air Yeezy 1s worn by rapper Kanye West sold for \$1.8 million in April, triple the pre-



In this file photo former NBA star and owner of Charlotte Hornets team Michael Jordan looks on as he addresses a press conference ahead of the NBA basketball match. — AFP

vious record for sneakers—although that was a private sale.

Jordan's autographed size-13 lace-ups were in good overall condition, with signs of court wear and tear, Sotheby's said. The pair was a gift from the player to Tommie Tim III Lewis, who was a ball boy for the Denver Nuggets during the 1984-'85 season. The market for rare sports

shoes is soaring. The record price for sneakers has been broken several times recently as what was seen as a niche market a decade ago now attracts interest from the general public as well as leading collectors. And the market value of objects identified with the retired basketball superstar have skyrocketed since the release of "The Last Dance," an ESPN/Netflix documentary that chronicles the saga of Jordan and his Chicago Bulls. The sneakers that went under the hammer Sunday predate the first Air Jordans, the now-classic line that quickly morphed from popular basketball gear to sought-after streetwear worldwide.

A bankable star

The Air Ship shoe that served as the genesis for the Air Jordan series was designed by Bruce Kilgore and originally released in 1984, and it was the first sneaker worn by Jordan as an NBA professional. That year Jordan, already a

bankable star given his college basketball heroics, completed a deal with Nike in which the company gave him his own signature line of shoes and clothing. The deal was a first for Nike, and it paved the way for a proliferation of player-brand collaborations.

Jordan's now-famous black and red Air Ships became a focus of controversy in 1984 when the National Basketball Association sent Nike a letter informing the company that the player's colorful sneakers which he wore during an October 18 preseason game that year violated the league's uniform clause. Sunday's auction also sold a pair of Nike Air Jordan 11 Retro x OVO "Gold" sneakers, designed under a collaboration between the shoemaker and rapper Drake, for \$20,160. The model was never released to the public, making them a rare set of shoes. — AFP



Moin (left) and Mustapha Abu Hassira display fresh fish at Roma fish restaurant owned by the Abu Hassira family in Gaza City. — AFP photos



Gaza fish restaurants thrive far from the foodie trail



Mustapha Abu Hassira stands in front of his seafood shop in Gaza City.

The Gaza Strip might be off-limits for foreign foodies but the coastal Palestinian enclave is brimming with seafood restaurants, many owned by one local family whose culinary hook is their matriarch's spicy fish tajine. Munir Abu Hassira arrives at the Gaza port's fish market at daybreak, but holds back as traders snatch up sardines and other fish caught during the night. He is angling for more discerning catches like grouper, sea bream and large shrimp, which can go for around 70 shekels (\$22) a kilo—a small fortune in the impoverished enclave, under Zionist's entity blockade since 2007. "It's expensive because of the economic situation, but we buy the fish to supply restaurants and to export" to the occupied West Bank, he says, as workers pile fresh fish into a van.

For decades, the Abu Hassira family were fishermen, but since opening their first restaurant in the 1970s, they have

gradually traded their fishing kit for chef's tools. Gaza fishermen say they struggle to eke out a living, snared by Zionists restrictions on the enclave's fishing zone and on importing equipment into the enclave, from boat motors to sonar devices for finding shoals. Problems like overfishing and pollution blight the local industry. Some 4,200 tons of fish and seafood were netted from Gaza's waters last year, according to the Zionists authorities. Just 300 tons were exported to the West Bank.

Sitting on a chair in a Gaza courtyard, Eid Abu Hassira, in his 80s, said he was the last of the family's fishermen. "I sold everything in 2013," said the head of the family, sporting a white moustache and wearing a traditional robe and headdress. "Today, we are in the fish trade, and have 13 Abu Hassira restaurants," he said, clutching Muslim prayer beads as he leaned on a wooden cane.

No Michelin stars

One of his ancestors was a prominent Jewish Moroccan rabbi, who died during a trip to Egypt in the 19th century. A descendent in Egypt had a vision that "they had to go to Gaza," Eid Abu Hassira said. "So we came here. My grandfather chose to live off the sea," he said, adding that a Jewish branch of the family lives in Zionist entity, while those in Gaza are Muslim. As a young boy, his mother would cook up a seafood tajine that has become the Abu Hassira family chain's signature dish. Moeen Abu Hassira, 56, paid homage to his family's culinary heritage, from their signature shrimp and tomato tajine, known as "zibdiyit", to a fish tajine made with tahini, herbs and pine nuts, to grilled grouper.

"The secret of Gaza cuisine is strong chili," he said from the kitchen of his restaurant, which he opened earlier this year. The Abu Hassira family's clientele

has changed over time. "Until the start of the first intifada, our restaurants were packed. Zionists came to eat here and so did tourists," Moeen Abu Hassira said, referring to the first Palestinian uprising in 1987. Since the Zionists blockade began in 2007 after the Islamist group Hamas took control of the enclave, few international tourists, foodies or gastronomic guide writers have visited.

Now, the family's restaurants cater to a well-off Palestinian clientele, but Moeen Abu Hassira said times were hard as unemployment in Gaza hovers around 50 percent. "Nobody will give you a star" in recognition of your restaurant, said the chef, who trained in French cuisine in a restaurant in the Zionist city of Jaffa. "We did not learn in cooking schools or universities. There is none of that in Gaza," he said. "We all learn from each other." — AFP



Prepared seafood dishes are pictured.



Fresh fish is grilled on charcoal before being served to customers at Roma fish restaurant.



Moin Abu Hassira shows a plate of fried fish dumplings prepared at Roma fish restaurant.



Mustapha Abu Hassira works in the kitchen of Roma fish restaurant.

Lifestyle | Features



In this file photo actor James Michael Tyler attends the Central Perk Pop-Up Celebrating The 20th Anniversary Of "Friends". — AFP photos



In this file photo actor James Michael Tyler attends the Central Perk Pop-Up Celebrating The 20th Anniversary Of "Friends" in New York City.

'Friends' actor James Michael Tyler dies

Actor James Michael Tyler who played coffee shop manager Gunther on the hit sitcom "Friends" died Sunday at age 59, US media reported. Tyler died at his home in Los Angeles after battling prostate cancer that he was first diagnosed with in 2018, according to a representative.

"The world knew him as Gunther (the seventh 'Friend'), from the hit series Friends, but Michael's loved ones knew him as an actor, musician, cancer-awareness advocate, and loving husband," representative Toni Benson said in a state-

ment to US media. His "Friends" character appeared in some 150 episodes across all 10 seasons of the beloved 1990s sitcom, sarcastically managing Central Perk—the cafe where the other characters hung out—and pining after Rachel, played by Jennifer Aniston. "Michael loved live music, cheering on his Clemson Tigers and would often find himself in fun and unplanned adventures. If you met him once, you made a friend for life," Benson said.

Tyler appeared in a number of other roles in series such as "Scrubs," "Sabrina

the Teenage Witch" and "Modern Music." Warner Bros TV tweeted that it was mourning the loss of "a beloved actor and integral part of our FRIENDS family. Our thoughts are with his family, friends, colleagues and fans." Tyler announced on NBC's "Today" show in June that he had been diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer in September 2018, which had spread to his bones. The cancer was discovered during a routine physical. — AFP



People attend candlelight vigil for cinematographer Halyna Hutchins, who was accidentally killed by a prop gun fired by actor Alec Baldwin. — AFP photos

Hollywood gathers for Baldwin shooting victim vigil

Shell-shocked friends and colleagues of Halyna Hutchins gathered Sunday to pay tribute to the cinematographer who was killed when Alec Baldwin fired a prop gun on a movie set. Anguish and anger were on display as Hollywood held vigil for Hutchins, as questions grew over how such a tragedy could have happened, despite rigorous safeguards. "I had the pleasure of working with Halyna," said actress Sharon Leal. "She was a wonderful woman and just, we're all just so shocked."



A girl pays respects near a photo of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins, who was accidentally killed by a prop gun fired by actor Alec Baldwin, at a memorial table during a candlelight vigil in her memory in Burbank, California.

Hutchins, 42, was struck in the chest when Baldwin fired a prop gun he had been told was safe on the set of low-budget western "Rust" in New Mexico on Thursday. She was declared dead in hospital hours later. Director Joel Souza, 48, who was crouching behind her as they lined up a shot, was also hit. He was treated by doctors and sent home.

Police are still investigating the shooting, and have executed a search warrant at the set, where, among other things, they were looking to see if the rehearsal had been caught on film. Baldwin has been interviewed by detectives in Santa Fe, and has said he is co-operating fully with the probe. Attention has also focused on the film's assistant director, Dave Halls, who handed the weapon to the actor, and on the armorer, 24-year-old Hannah Gutierrez-Reed.

No one has been charged in connection with what police describe as an "ongoing

investigation", and no arrests have been made. But as scores of Hollywood insiders gathered in a Los Angeles suburb on Sunday, there was palpable anger about what went wrong. "The low budget productions oftentimes they want to make it look bigger than they really are," said director Gustavo Sampaio, who worked with Hutchins four years ago. "So they cut corners and they put safety in the backseat when it really should be at the forefront of everything that's done on a set." That sentiment was echoed by producer Sabrina Oertle. "I can tell you that as a producer, someone dropped the ball. Somebody decided to go with the bottom line, meaning keep your budget... cheap."

'No excuse'

Calls were growing for a ban on live firearms on movie sets, with a petition on change.org gathering more than 22,000 signatures by Sunday evening. "There is no excuse for something like this to happen in the 21st century," says the text of the petition launched by Bandar Albuliwi, a screenwriter and director. Dave Cortese, a Democrat elected to the California Senate, said Saturday he would be pushing a bill banning live ammunition on movie sets in California.

"There is an urgent need to address alarming work abuses and safety violations occurring on the set of theatrical productions, including unnecessary high-risk conditions such as the use of live firearms." The hit Los Angeles police drama "The Rookie" decided the day after the shooting to ban all live ammunition from its set, effective immediately, according to industry publication The Hollywood Reporter.

But some industry professionals said the use of weapons on film was not the problem. Movie armorer SL Huang, writing on Twitter, said she had worked on hundreds of film sets without incident, thanks to the stringent safety protocols and the built-in redundancies. "A tragedy happening in this particular way defies everything I know about how we treat guns on film sets," she wrote. "My colleagues and I have been trying to figure out how this could happen when following our basic safety procedures and we keep ending at a loss. "Which implies... that very basic, very standard safety procedures may not have been followed. And that nobody shut the production down when they weren't."

The Los Angeles Times reported this week there had been crew disquiet about safety and working conditions. The paper, citing crew members who had been on set, said three prop weapons had unexpectedly discharged prior to Thursday's tragedy. The production company has not responded to AFP requests for comment. — AFP

Under growing pressure, Russian stand-ups vow to joke on

In the loft of a trendy Moscow bar, stand-up comedian Pavel Dedishchev walks up to a microphone under a spotlight. "I have seven coronavirus antibodies, they all know each other, it's like a family living inside me," he tells the audience of around 50 mostly young people. "Of course, I know they are from the government. Vladimir Vladimirovich (Putin) gave us all seven antibodies before the election, right? Twelve to the security services!" he says to roaring laughter. Dedishchev was making a sly reference to cash handouts that President Putin gave out before last month's parliamentary elections—and that the security services often get special treatment in Russia.

During his 40-minute performance, the bearded 30-year-old joked about corruption, the powerful Russian Orthodox Church and the National Guard, a security force that has been at the forefront of suppressing protests. Stand-up comedy is booming across Moscow and videos of sketches often get more than a million views on YouTube, with many Russians hungry for humor that is not tightly controlled, unlike the comedy that is shown on television.

After a year that saw Putin's main opponent Alexei Navalny jailed and a severe crackdown on independent media, comedians say they, too, are feeling the pressure. A Belarusian-Azerbaijani comedian living in Moscow was arrested this summer and deported over a joke, and stand-ups told AFP they have recently spotted security agents at their gigs. But many said they intend to carry on making jokes, and that their work resonates with so many Russians precisely because of the country's increasing lack of critical voices. "Of course, the situation is bad. But either you get upset, or you improve your repertoire," Dedishchev said.

'Our most loyal audience'

In an interview before his performance, Dedishchev said Moscow's comedians began earlier this year seeing what they believe are security agents turning up to their shows. "We all started noticing it. We know they come and film things," he said.



Russian standup comedian Vera Kotelnikova poses for a photo in Moscow.

'Dune,' on big and little screens, tops N America box office

New sci-fi thriller "Dune," a classic that almost demanded big-screen treatment, topped the North American box office this weekend with a take estimated at \$40.1 million, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported Sunday. Yet that solid three-day showing for Denis Villeneuve's adaptation of the Frank Herbert opus came even as studio Warner Bros. released the film simultaneously for small-screen streaming via HBO Max, an increasingly common pandemic-era practice.

With an all-star cast led by Timothee Chalamet, Rebecca Ferguson, Oscar Isaac, Jason Momoa and Zendaya, the film tells the tale of a family in the distant future fighting for survival on a treacherous desert planet. "Dune," with a plainly relevant environmental subtext, has taken in \$180 million overseas, and Villeneuve,

whose growing sci-fi catalogue includes "Blade Runner 2049" and "Arrival," hopes to make this the first in a two-part saga. In distant second was last weekend's leader, Universal's horror flick "Halloween Kills," at \$14.5 million. A follow-on to 2018's "Halloween," it again stars Jamie Lee Curtis, and the studio has said she will be back for another sequel next year.

Third place went to United Artists' latest James Bond film, "No Time to Die," at \$11.9 million. Daniel Craig stars, supposedly for the final time, as 007 is dragged out of retirement for one last-no really! — assignment. In fourth was Sony superhero film "Venom: Let There Be Carnage," at \$9.1 million. Tom Hardy stars as a journalist whose symbiotic link to an alien gives him superpowers. And fifth went to a new 20th Century release, computer-animated sci-fi comedy "Ron's Gone Wrong," at \$7.3 million. Zach Galifianakis and Ed Helms are among the voice actors telling the story of a socially awkward middle-schooler in the future who receives a defective but good-hearted robot as a present.

Rounding out the top 10 were: "The Addams Family 2" (\$4.3 million) "The Last Duel" (\$2.1 million) "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings" (\$2 million) "The French Dispatch" (\$1.3 million) "Free Guy" (\$258,000). — AFP



"We can't tell them to go away. So we accepted them as our most loyal audience," he joked. Because of Russia's many restrictive laws—such as bans on offending religious beliefs and spreading so-called "gay propaganda"—comedians often check with lawyers if their material could get them into trouble.

Tomas Gaysanov, a former producer of television comedies who now organises stand-up nights, said it has become a trend on social media to find old videos by comedians and threaten them. He said comedians are most often targeted after jokes about nationalities. "We are a former empire, this is still a sensitive issue," said Gaysanov, who is from the Caucasus republic of Ingushetia. The deported Belarusian-Azerbaijani comedian, Idrak

and that is why it has become a target.

'Letting off steam'

While on television there is almost no political satire and no swearing, in Moscow's bars comedians can allow themselves more freedom. "It's one of the few places left where you can say what you want," Sietlov said. Vera Kotelnikova, one of a growing number of women stand-up artists in Russia, said she can still joke about most things when performing in cafes and bars. "It's unlikely you will go to prison," she said, before quickly adding: "Though that's still an open question." In a male-dominated industry, the Siberian-born 26-year-old says she finds it harder to joke about weighty issues as a woman. "Audiences have a less serious attitude



Members of the audience react while Russian standup comedian Pavel Dedishchev performs on stage in the loft of a Moscow bar. — AFP photos

Mirzalizade, was accused of spreading hatred against Russians for a joke about how difficult it is to find an apartment in Moscow as a non-Slav.

Comedian Ariana Lolayeva recently posted a tearful apology after she received social media hate for a joke about an Ossetian pie—a traditional cheesy dish in her native Caucasus region—in a sketch last year. Comedians have faced such a backlash in recent weeks that one of them—Kirill Sietlov—set up a channel on social media platform Telegram documenting it. "I have something to write about every week," Sietlov said. After a year in which authorities have "cleared the field" of independent media and places where Russians can talk in public "without censorship", he said there is a growing demand for stand-up

towards women comedians, they are considered more stupid," she told AFP. She called stand-up a "democratic genre" and said she hopes it will survive in Russia. Comedians AFP spoke to expect authorities to continue putting pressure on them, but not to shut down stand-up altogether. "They want people to go let off some steam somewhere and not take to the barricades," said Dedishchev. On stage, Dedishchev impersonated a Moscow metro police officer trying to choose which of the many passengers not wearing a mask to fine. The officer settled on fining the few passengers who were smiling. "If you want to smile in this country, wear a mask!" — AFP



Russian standup comedian Pavel Dedishchev performs on stage.

Sports

China battles new COVID outbreak with eye on Winter Olympics

Authorities determined to subdue latest outbreak

BEIJING: Tens of thousands of people in northern China were under strict stay-at-home orders yesterday as authorities sought to stamp out a growing COVID outbreak in the run-up to the Beijing Winter Olympics.

Officials in the Chinese capital also restricted access to tourist sites and advised residents not to leave the city unless necessary, although regular transport services continued as normal. China reported 39 new cases yesterday, bringing the tally from the latest Delta variant-linked outbreak to more than 100 cases over the past week.

The numbers are extremely low compared with most places in the world, but China has pursued a zero-case strategy throughout the pandemic and authorities are determined to subdue the latest outbreak with the Winter Olympics just over 100 days away.

Several housing blocks in Beijing have been locked down, and organizers on Sunday indefinitely postponed a marathon at which 30,000 runners were expected. Some 23,000 residents in one housing compound in Changping district have been ordered to stay indoors after nine cases were found there in recent days, local outlet Beijing News reported. Photos showed officials in hazmat suits standing watch outside the entrances to each apartment block, and the perimeter of the compound blocked by metal barricades.

Entry will be restricted for people who have been to places with local COVID-19 infections in the last 14 days, Beijing's vice publicity minister said yesterday. Speaking at a press briefing, Xu Hejian added that those who do come into the capital from affect-

ed areas must show a negative test and undergo two weeks of health monitoring.

Authorities are also restricting parks, scenic areas, cinemas, museums and other indoor venues to 75 percent capacity, and have closed mahjong rooms, he said. In recent days, officials have advised people to avoid large gatherings and "unnecessary" travel out of the capital.

Mass testing

Northern China has accounted for the majority of recent cases, with mass testing under way in 11 provinces. A stay-at-home lockdown started yester-



Opening day 100 days away

day for around 35,000 people — including tourists — in the Inner Mongolia region's Ejin county.

Health officials have warned that more infections may emerge as testing is ramped up in the coming days to fight the outbreak, which has been linked to a group of domestic tourists that travelled across China. Authorities on Sunday suspended inter-provincial tour groups in five areas where cases



BEIJING: This picture shows a general view of the Yanqing National Sliding Center during the IBSF Bobsleigh Int'l Sanctioned Race, part of a 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games test event in Beijing yesterday. —AFP

have been detected, including Beijing.

In a sign of how seriously Beijing is taking the outbreak, police in the city have launched three criminal investigations into alleged COVID safety breaches, the deputy director of the city's public security bureau said Sunday.

These included two infected people who initially concealed their symptoms, two residents escaping lockdown by climbing over a fence — plus a pair of pharmacy managers who sold cough and fever med-

icine in breach of COVID requirements. China requires registration for anyone buying cold or flu medicine in case they later turn out to have the virus.

Some cities, including Gansu's provincial capital Lanzhou, and parts of Inner Mongolia have already suspended bus and taxi services and closed tourist sites. In the central city of Wuhan — where the coronavirus was first identified in late 2019 — organizers abruptly cancelled another marathon Sunday that was expected to draw 26,000 participants. —AFP



AUSTIN: Winner Red Bull's Dutch driver Max Verstappen (center) celebrates on the podium with second place Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton (left) and third place Red Bull's Mexican driver Sergio Perez after the Formula One United States Grand Prix at the Circuit of The Americas in Austin, Texas, on Sunday. — AFP

Verstappen holds off Hamilton to win US Grand Prix thriller

AUSTIN: Max Verstappen held off a charging Lewis Hamilton to win the United States Grand Prix on Sunday and extend his Formula One world championship lead to 12 points. Verstappen, in a Red Bull, claimed his first victory at the Circuit of the Americas in front of 140,000 fans. Mercedes star Hamilton, the reigning world champion, had cut the deficit in the race to under a second on the penultimate lap but could not find a way through the Dutchman's impressive defense.

"Of course we lost out in the start so we had to try and do something else," said Verstappen. "The tire wear is quite high around this track, we went aggressive and I was not sure it was going to work but the last few laps were fun. A bit sideways through the high-speed corners but super happy to hang on."

Sergio Perez completed the podium for Red Bull ahead of Charles Leclerc in a Ferrari and McLaren's Daniel Ricciardo. The victory by 1.33 seconds was Verstappen's eighth of the season at a track where Hamilton had won five times. "I think I've aged about 25 years in that race," said Red Bull boss Christian Horner. "I really didn't think we were

going to hang on."

Hamilton admitted Red Bull were stronger. "Max did a great job today," he said on the podium. "It was such a tough race. I got a good start, gave it absolutely everything but at the end of the day, they just had the upper hand this weekend and we couldn't really have asked for more." Hamilton, second on the grid, stunned pole-sitter Verstappen at the start. The Briton edged ahead at the first turn and stayed in front for 10 laps until Red Bull pulled off what they hoped would be a tactical coup.

'Sliding a lot'

"He's sliding a lot and I have a lot more pace," Verstappen told his team over the radio. By calling in the Dutchman, who had a sluggish Hamilton in his sights, for an early pit stop, he was able to undercut the champion. By the time Hamilton had pitted and reappeared, Verstappen had constructed a 6.7-second lead. "We pulled the trigger early, but Max is doing a good job," Horner told Sky Sports from the pit wall. "It's like a game of chess this race."

Hamilton consistently chipped away at the lead and by half-distance in the 56-lap race, he had slashed the deficit to 3.3 seconds. His efforts were further aided by a virtual safety car period called so marshals could collect some debris off the track. Again Verstappen pitted for a second stop, relinquishing the lead to Hamilton. When he returned, Perez conceded track position to allow the Dutch driver to slip into second spot, albeit more than 16 seconds back from the seven-time champion. — AFP

Kevin Durant led all scorers with 38 points for the Nets, who dropped to 7-3 in home openers since moving from New Jersey in 2012. Durant came out firing, making his first five shots of the game. He shot 17 of 24 overall from the floor but it wasn't enough to lead his team to the win. The Hornets also beat the Indiana Pacers and Cleveland Cavaliers by using strong second-half performances. Bridges shot nine of 16 from the floor and had 12 rebounds.

LaMelo Ball scored 18 points while Ish Smith scored 11 of his 15 in the fourth quarter for the Hornets, who shot 53 percent from the field in the second half. Cody Martin chipped in 12. James Harden added 15 points for the Nets, who missed 26 of 35 three-point attempts. Harden made just two of eight from beyond the arc.

Durant said the Nets will be fine without Irving. "It's three games in. Of course, we've got enough," Durant said. "We definitely want Kyrie Irving out here on the floor and he's a huge part of what we do, but it's not happening right now. So we've got to figure it out. You've got to play."

Elsewhere, reserve Carmelo Anthony scored 28 points as the Los Angeles Lakers avoided starting 0-3 for the second time in four years with a 121-118 win over the Memphis Grizzlies. Anthony Davis finished with 22 points and eight rebounds, LeBron James had 19 points and Russell Westbrook delivered 13 points and 13 assists for the Lakers.

Ja Morant scored a game-high 40 points and added 10 assists, Desmond Bane scored 17 points and Steven Adams contributed 14 points and 16 rebounds for the Grizzlies, who have two wins and one loss in the new season. — AFP

Proud to have made history against India: Pakistani captain Babar

DUBAI: Pakistan skipper Babar Azam yesterday said he and his players were 'proud' to have made history by beating India for the first time in a World Cup match. Pakistan humiliated their arch-rivals romping to a ten-wicket victory in the Twenty20 World Cup in Dubai on Sunday, sparking starkly contrasting reactions.

The win was Pakistan's first in 13 World Cup matches (seven in the 50 over World Cup and six in the Twenty20 World Cup) dating back to 1992 in Australia. "It is definitely a proud moment for me as well as for all my players that we have made history," Babar told AFP in an exclusive interview.

Lanky paceman Shaheen Shah Afridi put India on the back foot from the start with the wickets of openers Rohit Sharma and KL Rahul off his first seven deliveries. He finished with 3-31 after dismissing India's top scorer, skipper Virat Kohli for 57 in a total of 151-7 in 20 overs. Babar along with fellow opener Mohammad Rizwan knocked off the target in 17.5 overs without losing a single wicket. Babar hit 68 not out while Rizwan finished with an undefeated 79.

"We realize how important and how much needed that win is as everyone wanted us to win and to

have made history is one of the defining moments in our careers," said Babar. "I had said before the match that records are meant to be broken so we have broken that jinx and we are very happy, in fact the whole country is happy and celebrating."

Babar said the 'special' match was as usual of high intensity. "All of us know that when Pakistan plays India there is very high intensity and it's a pressure game," he said. "The whole world waits for this match, so it is a special match."

'Keep things simple'

Babar admitted the noise in the stadium made his task of arranging his fielders tough. "The stadium was nearly packed," said Babar of the Dubai stadium where a 70 percent crowd was allowed in under relaxed COVID-19 restrictions. "There was so much noise in the stadium that I found it tough to call my players, I told them to keep looking at me so that I can move the fielders in between overs. We have gelled well over the years so we are used to that. The response from the players was extraordinary. We got a head start in bowling when Shaheen got us wickets and then we batted as per our plan."

This was Pakistan's first ten wicket win in all Twenty20 internationals and the first defeat by this margin for India. Babar said he had been part of two defeats against India, in the Junior World Cup in Australia in 2012 as skipper and then at the 2019 World Cup in England. "I remember that we lost to India in the quarter finals of the Junior World Cup in 2012 so it was a much desired thing to beat India," he said. — AFP



DUBAI: Pakistan's team captain Babar Azam (center) and his teammate Mohammad Rizwan (left) react following their victory as India's captain Virat Kohli looks on during the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup cricket match between India and Pakistan at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai on Sunday. — AFP

Hornets beat Brooklyn for third straight win, Lakers get first victory

LOS ANGELES: Miles Bridges scored a team-high 32 points as the Charlotte Hornets won their third straight to spoil the Brooklyn Nets' home debut with a 111-95 win on Sunday. Charlotte, who trailed by eight points at halftime, shook off a slow start by outscoring the Nets 61-37 in the second half.

The Hornets are 3-0 and off to their best-ever start to a season. "That just shows where our growth is," said forward Bridges, who finished one point short of his career-high points total. "As long as we're all being mature, we're going to keep winning."

There was a kerfuffle outside the stadium before the game when a small group of anti-vaccine demonstrators, protesting that Kyrie Irving will not play for the Nets until he gets vaccinated, gathered outside Barclays Center carrying signs and waving flags. Some of the demonstrators pushed past some barriers and got near the entrance of the arena before being confronted by security. There were no arrests and no one was injured. "Barclays Center briefly closed its doors today in order to clear protestors from the main doors on the plaza and ensure guests could safely enter the arena," a Barclays Center spokesperson said in a statement. "Only ticketed guests were able to enter the building and the game proceeded according to schedule."

Kuwait loses to Saudi in Asian cricket qualifiers

DOHA: Kuwait's National Cricket team lost to its Saudi counterpart yesterday in ICC Men's T20 world cup Asian qualifier match. Kuwait scored 146-8 in twenty overs, while Saudi team scored

149-6 with six balls remaining yesterday.

The match was quite thrilling and competitive as the two teams were neck-to-neck up until the very last minutes when the Saudi team managed to score victory with three wickets. The Kuwaiti team will be facing Maldives on Thursday and Qatar on Friday. The qualifiers, lasting until October 29, will yield only one qualifying team amongst Kuwaiti, Saudi, Bahraini, Maldivian and Qatari teams. Organizing the event is the International Cricket Federation. — KUNA



DOHA: The match between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in action during the final Asian qualifiers for the world cricket championship yesterday. — KUNA

Sports

Five candidates to replace Solskjaer as Man Utd manager

Pressure mounts as United sits eight points off top of table

MANCHESTER: Manchester United's historic 5-0 thrashing at the hands of fierce rivals Liverpool has left manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer clinging to his job despite signing a new three-year deal just three months ago.

Solskjaer has failed to win a trophy in nearly three years in charge at Old Trafford and tangible signs of progress after finishing second in the Premier League last season have been blown away amid a run of five defeats in their last nine games.

United are already eight points off the pace at the top of the table and there is a growing consensus that they need a coach to match the caliber of Liverpool's Jurgen Klopp, Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola and Chelsea's Champions League winner Thomas Tuchel. Solskjaer has led United to two consecutive top-four finishes for the first time since Alex Ferguson's retirement as manager in 2013, but his time looks to be running out. AFP Sport looks at five of the candidates to replace the 48-year-old if and when he is shown the door at Old Trafford.

Antonio Conte

A proven title winner, Conte turned a Chelsea side that had finished 10th the previous season into Premier League winners in his debut campaign in England in 2016/17. The Italian is without a club having left Inter Milan in May after ending their 11-year wait to win Serie A.

Conte appears a perfect fit to solve United's defensive woes that have blighted their season. Solskjaer's men have kept one clean sheet in 21 games and shipped 11 goals in a week against Leicester, Atalanta and Liverpool. However, Conte's fiery temperament and tendency to fall out with his superiors could count against him. "He's not a fit for United," said former United captain Gary Neville on Sunday.

Zinedine Zidane

Expectations were high for United to challenge for major trophies this season after the signings of serial winners Cristiano Ronaldo and Raphael Varane, along with £73 million (\$100 million) winger Jadon Sancho. Three of Ronaldo and Varane's Champions League titles came under Zidane at Real Madrid and the

Frenchman is also a free agent having ended his second spell with the Spanish giants in May.

Zidane proved himself a master of molding a star-studded squad into a team at Madrid, where he also won two La Liga titles. That is exactly what United need and his global profile fits the brand-building exercise the English giants have gone down in recent years, at times to the detriment of a well-functioning team on the field.

Brendan Rodgers

The outstanding option on the domestic market for United is Leicester boss Brendan Rodgers. The Northern Irishman's past as a Liverpool manager may rule him out for many United fans, but he has rebuilt



Five losses in last nine games

his reputation since a rollercoaster three years at Anfield between 2012 and 2015. Rodgers proved himself capable of handling the demands of winning every week in three years at Celtic, where he won a clean sweep of seven domestic trophies before returning to the Premier League with Leicester.

The Foxes have narrowly missed out on the Champions League for the past two seasons to Chelsea despite far inferior resources and beat the European champions to win the FA Cup for the first time in the club's history last season.

Erik Ten Hag

The Dutchman is responsible for arguably the form team in Europe right now with Ajax cruising towards the last 16 of the Champions League and another Eredivisie title after thrashing PSV Eindhoven 5-0 on Sunday. Ten Haag was linked with a number of top



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Norwegian manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (left) and Liverpool's German manager Jurgen Klopp (right) look on during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Liverpool at Old Trafford in Manchester, north west England, on Sunday. — AFP

jobs after leading the four-time European champions to the semi-finals of the Champions League for the first time since 1997 two years ago. But unlike many of his players from that run, he is yet to be poached by one of Europe's top clubs. The former Bayern Munich youth team coach would fit the attacking style demanded of a United manager, as exhibited by a 4-0 thrashing of Borussia Dortmund last week.

Luis Enrique

The Spain coach is another with plenty of experience in getting the best out of a collection of talented individuals. He won the treble in his first season at Barcelona and added another La Liga title with a front three of Lionel Messi, Luis Suarez and Neymar.

Fluent in English, Luis Enrique has never hidden his desire to one day coach in the Premier League. His success with Spain this year at Euro 2020 and the Nations League finals shows he is also capable of producing an exciting side without the same quality of stars he had on offer at the Camp Nou. — AFP

Mediocrity setting in at Barca as Clasico leaves them adrift in La Liga

BARCELONA: The biggest worry perhaps for Barcelona at the end of another Clasico defeat at Camp Nou on Sunday was that Real Madrid hardly even celebrated. This was a victory that sent Madrid five points clear of their opponents, a healthy gap even at this early stage of a La Liga season that has 29 games to go. It was Madrid's fourth consecutive Clasico victory, the first time that has happened in 56 years, and it left Barca sitting eighth at full-time, ninth by the end of the weekend.

There were things to admire in Barcelona's performance. They had more of the ball, more shots and might have managed a draw if Sergino Dest had shown a cooler head in front of goal. They could certainly not be faulted for effort or ambition, with a team that had four players aged 20 or younger, including Gavi, who at 17 was Barca's youngest starter in this fixture for 80 years. Barca fought hard and, within their own limitations, they played well. "We continued to dominate the ball but it was difficult for us to create clear chances," said Sergio Busquets. "They scored that goal in the first half and made it count. It was a pity, because we tried but it wasn't to be."

Real Madrid though were the better team, not more dominant perhaps, but

more threatening, more solid and more diligent in following a clearer plan. They counter-attacked at speed and created more chances. If Sergio Aguero had not scored in the 97th minute, a 2-0 away win would have been a fair reflection.

Just as Atletico Madrid strolled to a 2-0 victory at the Wanda Metropolitano before the international break, for one of their most comfortable wins over Barcelona in years. "We played a great team, we have suffered but we were able to cope," said Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti. A pattern has developed that when Barca face an elite opponent, they are found wanting. Since Koeman took over, his team have played six games against Atletico Madrid and Real Madrid and have lost five and drawn one of them.

Against Paris Saint-Germain in last season's Champions League last 16, Barcelona lost 5-2 on aggregate. This season, they have been thrashed 3-0 by both Bayern Munich and Benfica. Since beating Real Sociedad on the opening day of the season, Barcelona's four wins have come against Getafe, Levante, Valencia and Dynamo Kiev, all at home.

The concern is these results are an indicator of Barcelona's level now, that key departures in the summer and mediocre replacements have led to a drop



BARCELONA: Barcelona's players leave the pitch after their team's Spanish League football match against Real Madrid at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on Sunday. —AFP

in quality that could leave them fighting to make La Liga's top four, let alone challenge for the title.

As it stands, Real Madrid, Atletico Madrid, Real Sociedad and Sevilla all look stronger than Barcelona. "We do not have players of the quality and punch that we had before," said Barcelona's technical secretary Ramon Planes. "This is a team that is rebuilding." But while rebuilding they cannot afford to drift too far. The financial consequences of failing to qualify for the Champions League would be so enormous that Koeman is unlikely to survive the scenario becoming a realistic possibility.

It should not come to that. Barcelona have Rayo Vallecano, Alaves, Celta Vigo and Espanyol next in La Liga, when victories should push them back among the frontrunners. History suggests Real Sociedad will probably not last the pace.

Barcelona still have good players too, even if Frenkie de Jong is now injured and performing well below his level and Ansu Fati is regaining fitness, as long as a knock to his knee does not prove serious. The return of Aguero, Ousmane Dembele and Pedri should make a considerable difference to the attack. "The championship is very long, we have to keep improving," said Koeman. — AFP

News in brief

Messi muted as PSG draw

PARIS: Lionel Messi was kept quiet as 10-man Paris Saint-Germain settled for a 0-0 draw with bitter rivals Marseille in a heated atmosphere in Ligue 1 on Sunday. The meeting of French football's biggest rivals was briefly held up on more than one occasion as objects were thrown from the stands when PSG players went to take corner kicks. There was another interruption in the second half when one young man invaded the pitch and approached Messi before being escorted off by a legion of security staff. The game was also marked by two goals disallowed in the first half for tight VAR offside decisions, one an own-goal by Marseille defender Luan Peres and another at the opposite end from Arkadiusz Milik. It is a perfectly acceptable result for Mauricio Pochettino's side, who have lost just one of their opening 11 matches in Ligue 1 and are seven points clear at the top from Lens in second. — AFP

Juve survive Inter

MILAN: Paulo Dybala saved Juventus on Sunday with a controversial late penalty which earned his team a 1-1 draw at Inter Milan, while Napoli's perfect start to the season came to an end with a goalless draw at Roma. Argentina forward Dybala slotted home his spot-kick with a minute left after Denzel Dumfries was ruled to have kicked Alex Sandro as he tried to clear the ball, a decision that enraged Inter to the point that coach Simone Inzaghi was sent off by referee Maurizio Mariani. Juve are up to sixth on 15 points, level with Atalanta and Fiorentina, while champions Inter are seven points behind Napoli and city rivals AC Milan in third place. —AFP

Wydad advances in CAF CL

JOHANNESBURG: Two-time winners Wydad Casablanca scored six goals and Jwaneng Galaxy stunned Simba to share the spotlight in CAF Champions League last-32 second-leg qualifying on Sunday. Moroccan outfit Wydad wasted little time wiping out a 1-0 first-leg deficit at home to Hearts of Oak from Ghana with Tanzanian Simon Msuva netting after just five minutes to level the tie on aggregate. By half-time the Casablanca club had built a four-goal lead and that stretched to six in the second half before Patrick Razak snatched a late consolation for the Accra side in a 6-1 hammering. Wydad advanced 6-2 on aggregate and among the other 15 qualifiers for the group stage will be neighbors and fierce rivals Raja Casablanca, who have been African champions three times. Elsewhere, Botswana club Galaxy stunned 2021 quarter-finalists Simba 3-1 in Tanzania to qualify on away goals having lost 2-0 at home. — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adallya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075

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CHANGE OF NAME

I, PRANNAV PETHAMBAR, holder of Indian Passport No. T0708345, resident at Kuwait would like to change my name to given name: Prannav and surname: Peethambar. (C 0963)

I, PROCARIUS MARIANESAN, holder of Indian Passport No. T2417987 declare to change my name from PROCARIUS MARIANESAN to PROCARIUS MARIA NESON. Given Name: PROCARIUS, Surname: MARIA NESON, Father Name: MARIA NESON. (C 0964) 21-10-2021

EMERGENCY



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Astros seek redemption with World Series win over Braves



HOUSTON: The Houston Astros celebrate after defeating the Boston Red Sox 5-0 in Game Six of the American League Championship Series to advance to the World Series at Minute Maid Park on Friday in Houston, Texas. — AFP

WASHINGTON: With a cheating scandal tainting their 2017 baseball crown, the Houston Astros seek a measure of redemption when they face the Atlanta Braves in the 117th World Series starting today. The host Astros will send Dominican left-handed pitcher Framber Valdez to the mound for the opening game in the best-of-seven Major League Baseball final against US right-hander Charlie Morton for Atlanta.

Morton pitched for the Astros in 2017 and won a seventh-game winner-take-all World Series showdown over the Los Angeles Dodgers, throwing the last four innings to deliver Houston's first MLB title.

But a sign-stealing scheme revealed in 2019 showed the Astros used cameras to learn what pitches were coming to their hitters in home games, banging on trash cans to signal batters what sort of throw to expect.

The scandal brought a \$5 million fine, forfeited draft picks, one-season bans and quick firings for Astros manager AJ Hinch and general manager Jeff Luhnow and the firings of two former Astros, Boston manager Alex Cora and New York Mets manager Carlos Beltran.

The Astros kept their crown even as their cheat-

ing aroused the ire of fans across the league. COVID-19 saw few spectators attend 2020 games but this year they faced the music, a chorus of boos and jeers and insults when on the road. "Honestly, we learned how to live with it," Astros shortstop Carlos Correa said. "It wasn't our motivation this year. Our motivation is to show the world we're the best team in the world."

The Astros, who lost in seven games to Washington in the 2019 World Series, are back in the title matchup for the third time in five seasons against an Atlanta squad that hasn't won the crown since 1995 and hasn't been in the World Series since losing in 1999 to the New York Yankees.

Puerto Rico's Correa, Venezuelan slugger Jose Altuve, American Alex Bregman and Cuban-born American League batting champion Yuli Gurriel will try to win a second World Series title with the Astros.

Houston hired long-time major league manager Dusty Baker in 2020 to try and put the scandal behind them. Now 72, Baker is among the game's most beloved figures and still seeking his first crown in a managerial career than began with San Francisco in 1993.

"These guys felt we were going to get to this point. It was a matter of belief," Baker said of his players' faith in a World Series title quest. "They wanted it for us. They wanted it for me. We've still got some work to do. We've got four more to go to complete that."

Baker is the first manager to guide five different teams to division crowns and only the ninth to direct teams from both the American and National leagues into the World Series, having been manager for San Francisco's 2002 appearance, where the Giants lost to Anaheim in seven games.

Baker's 19-year gap between World Series

managerial appearances is the second-longest in MLB history, Bucky Harris setting the record by winning titles with Washington in 1924 and the Yankees in 1947.

A Snitker will win title

Morton faced the Astros with Tampa Bay in the 2019 and 2020 playoffs and, after signing with Atlanta for \$15 million this year, will pitch in his third World Series in five years for his third different club, having made it last year with the Rays.

The Braves feature veteran first baseman Freddie Freeman and leadoff hitter Eddie Rosario, who batted .560 (14-for-25) in being named the National League Championship Series Most Valuable Player as Atlanta dethroned the Dodgers in six games. "It took a minute to (realize) this is really happening. What a special feeling," Braves manager Brian Snitker said. "It's pretty cool."

Snitker will be going for the crown against his son Troy, a batting coach for the Astros. Houston's Yordan Alvarez was the ALCS MVP, hitting .522 with a home run, a triple, three doubles and six runs batted in. — AFP



Best-of-seven final starts today

Brady throws 600th TD in Bucs romp, Bengals rip Ravens

WASHINGTON: Seven-time Super Bowl champion Tom Brady reached another NFL milestone on Sunday, throwing his league-record 600th career touchdown pass in a 38-3 Tampa Bay rout over visiting Chicago.

The 44-year-old legend completed 20-of-36 passes for 211 yards and four touchdowns, three of them to Mike Evans, including the historic 600th on a 9-yard pass with six seconds to play in the first quarter for a 21-0 Buccaneers lead.

"I believe I'm just very lucky to play with so many great players and teammates over the years," Brady said. "I try to play the game the best I can. Nothing in this sport is individual. I'm just grateful for being able to play as long as I have."

Brady, whose landmark touchdown was his second of the game, saw Evans give the football to a spectator, unaware of its significance. "He said, 'Oh man, do you want it back?'" Brady said. "I said, 'I think they are going to get it.'"

It took a jersey and another ball in exchange, but the fan parted with the historic ball. "I definitely know we got that one back," Brady said. "That was one I wanted to have."

The reigning Super Bowl champion Bucs improved to 6-1 as Brady enjoyed his 97th game with three or more touchdowns and 37th with four or more, both matching NFL records set by Drew

Brees, who ranks second in all-time touchdown passes on 571.

Cincinnati's Joe Burrow threw for a career-high 416 yards and three touchdowns to spark the Bengals over host Baltimore 41-17, snapping the Ravens' five-game win streak.

The top overall selection in last year's NFL Draft completed 23 of 38 passes, finding Ja'Marr Chase on eight receptions for 201 yards and a touchdown and CJ Uzomah three times for 91 yards and two touchdowns. "It was a big statement," Burrow said. "We really won all of our one-on-one matchups that really mattered. We've got tough resilient guys who don't back down under pressure."

It was the first time since 2013 the Bengals had managed 40 points against an opponent and the outcome left both clubs 5-2 atop the AFC North division. "We're starting to earn respect," said Bengals coach Zac Taylor. "We have a long way to go. But I'm really proud of the collective team effort." Green Bay's Aaron Rodgers completed 27-of-35 passes for 274 yards and three touchdowns to spark the Packers over visiting Washington 24-10. The Packers improved to 6-1 ahead of a Thursday matchup against unbeaten Arizona. Kyler Murray threw for 261 yards and three touchdowns to lead the Arizona Cardinals (7-0) over visiting Houston 31-5.

At Nashville, Ryan Tannehill threw for 270 yards and a touchdown and ran for another score to power the host Tennessee Titans over Kansas City 27-3. NFL rushing leader Derrick Henry carried 29 times for 86 yards and also threw for a Tennessee touchdown while the Titans (5-2) frustrated Patrick Mahomes, who was intercepted and sacked four times.

Derek Carr completed 31-of-34 passes for 323 yards and two touchdowns to spark the Las



TAMPA: Tom Brady #12 of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers throws a pass in the second quarter against the Chicago Bears in the game at Raymond James Stadium on Sunday in Tampa, Florida. — AFP

Vegas Raiders (5-2) over visiting Philadelphia 33-22. Matthew Stafford threw for 334 yards and three touchdowns, two to Cooper Kupp, to lead the Los Angeles Rams (6-1) over winless host Detroit 28-19.

Koo kicks Atlanta to win

South Korean Koo Young-hoe kicked a 36-yard field goal on the final play to give the Atlanta Falcons (2-3) a 30-28 victory at Miami (1-5). The 27-year-old from Seoul had earlier kicked field

goals from 33 and 36 yards. Koo kicked a 40-yard game winner on the final play last month to beat the New York Giants.

Mac Jones threw for two touchdowns while Damien Harris and JJ Taylor each ran for two touchdowns as the New England Patriots routed the visiting New York Jets 54-13. Daniel Jones threw for 203 yards and a touchdown and Devontae Booker added a 19-yard touchdown run as the New York Giants beat visiting Carolina 25-3. — AFP