



4 Around 500 people visit Liberation Tower daily



5 Passenger found alive on ferry ablaze off Greece



8 Lebanon's 'zombie banks' downsize to weather crisis



16 Olympics closes after sporting drama, doping and golden Gu



UAE drone conference warns of rising threat

Unmanned aerial systems difficult to detect and shoot down

Egypt President meets Speaker



CAIRO: Egypt's President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi yesterday received Kuwait's top lawmaker, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, who conveyed to him the warm greetings of his country's political leaders. In return, Sisi, ahead of his visit to Kuwait tomorrow, told Ghanem that he looked forward to the trip, citing Cairo's distinguished relationship with Kuwait. — KUNA

ABU DHABI: The UAE and its allies warned yesterday of the rising threat of drone attacks, as Middle East militants rapidly acquire a taste for the cheap and easily accessible unmanned systems. But while the countries called for a collective effort to protect airspaces against the small and often hard to detect targets, one question remained: How to easily stop a drone attack?

"We have to unite to prevent the use of drones from threatening civilian safety and destroying economic institutions," Mohammed bin Ahmed Al-Bowardi, United Arab Emirates' Minister of State for Defense Affairs, said at a defense conference in Abu Dhabi. The Unmanned Systems Exhibition (UMEX), running until Wednesday, began in the UAE capital with regional and Western military and industry representatives, including from the United States, Britain and France.

Speakers addressed the importance of developing such systems for civil and military uses but also acknowledged their dangers when used by groups deemed a threat to the region. While the event will showcase the latest in high-tech drone technology, the

host country warned that such weapons are becoming cheaper and more widespread.

"They are now part of the arsenals of 'terrorist groups that use the systems to terrorize civilians or to impact the global system in a negative way,'" said the UAE's Minister of State for Artificial Intelligence, Omar bin Sultan Al-Olaima. "That is a challenge that requires us to... work together to ensure that we can create a shield against the use of these systems."

The UAE is part of a Saudi-led military coalition that has been fighting in Yemen since 2015 to support the government against Iran-backed Houthi rebels. While the Emirates announced it withdrew its troops from the country in 2019, it remains an influential player, backing fighters there. The UAE has been on heightened alert since a Houthi drone and missile attack killed three oil workers in Abu Dhabi on Jan 17. Authorities have since thwarted three similar attacks, including one claimed by a little-known militant group believed to have ties with pro-Iran armed factions in Iraq.

The UAE's staunch ally the United States has deployed a warship and fighter planes to help protect the Middle East financial

and leisure hub, usually a safe haven in the volatile region. France also said it would bolster its defense cooperation with the UAE, mostly in securing its air space. In December, the Saudi-led coalition said the Houthis had fired more than 850 attack drones and 400 ballistic missiles at Saudi Arabia in the past seven years, killing a total of 59 civilians.

That figure compares with the 401 coalition air raids carried out in January alone over Yemen, according to the Yemen Data Project, an independent tracker. Last year the United States and the Zionist entity said an Iranian drone attacked a ship managed by a Zionist billionaire as it sailed off Oman. Two crewmembers were killed. More recently, the Zionist entity's military said its air defenses fired at a drone that had crossed into its airspace from Lebanon on Friday, the second such intrusion in as many days.

Such incidents have again raised concerns about the dangers of bomb-laden drones. Some are difficult for radars to detect and require a complex process to shoot down without causing casualties from falling shrapnel.

Continued on Page 2

News in brief

Iran MPs demand West guarantees

TEHRAN: Iranian MPs urged the government yesterday to secure Western guarantees at Vienna talks to restore the 2015 nuclear deal, state media reported, amid signs a deal could be close. In a letter addressed to President Ebrahim Raisi and read at parliament, 250 MPs out of the 290-strong assembly, set out several conditions for reaching a deal. — AFP

Egypt probes journalist over comments

CAIRO: Egypt's public prosecutor has launched an investigation into Ibrahim Issa, a journalist well-known for his campaigns against Islamists, after he questioned the "Israa and Miraj" ascension to the heavens by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Issa's comments sparked wide controversy on social media, while Egyptian actor Mostafa Darwish quit filming a movie authored by Issa called "The Atheist". — AFP

Tear gas fired at Sudan protest

KHARTOUM: Sudanese security forces yesterday fired tear gas at protesters demonstrating against last year's military coup, as a UN human rights expert arrived in the country. Thousands rallied in Khartoum carrying Sudanese flags and posters of people killed during anti-coup demonstrations in recent months. Security forces fired tear gas and wounded several protesters who were heading toward the presidential palace. — AFP

Truck crashes into Iran mosque

TEHRAN: A trailer-truck smashed one of the gates at an important place of worship in Iran's Shiite holy city of Qom yesterday and its driver was arrested, Fars news agency said. "A truck destroyed gate number six of the holy mosque of Jamkaran and entered the precincts of the sacred place," Fars said. — AFP

Ethiopia dam starts power generation

GUBA, Ethiopia: Ethiopia began generating electricity from its megadam on the Blue Nile yesterday, a milestone in the controversial multibillion-dollar project. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, accompanied by high-ranking officials, toured the power station and pressed a series of buttons on an electronic screen, a move that officials said initiated production. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance

Dam (GERD) is set to be the largest hydroelectric scheme in Africa but has been at the center of a dispute with downstream nations Egypt and Sudan ever since work first began in 2011.

Abiy described yesterday's development as "the birth of a new era". "This is a good news for our continent & the downstream countries with whom we aspire to work together," he said on Twitter. Addis Ababa deems the project essential for the electrification and development of Africa's second most populous country, but Cairo and Khartoum fear it could threaten their access to vital Nile waters.

Abiy, wearing sunglasses and a khaki-colored hat emblazoned with

Continued on Page 2



GUBA, Ethiopia: Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed cuts the ribbon during the first power generation ceremony at the site of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) yesterday. — AFP

Queen catches 'mild' COVID soon after 70th 'versary

LONDON: Queen Elizabeth II tested positive yesterday for COVID-19 but aides said her symptoms were "mild", as politicians wished Britain's longest-serving monarch a rapid recovery in her 70th year on the throne. In what is meant to be a banner year of Platinum Jubilee celebrations, the news comes at a stressful time for the 95-year-old queen with scandals

stalking her two eldest sons, Charles and Andrew.

The queen's heir Prince Charles, 73, tested positive for a second time for the coronavirus on February 10, two days after meeting his mother at Windsor Castle. No information was given then on whether she had taken any COVID tests herself. The queen resumed in-person audiences at the castle last week, but complained to one attendee of suffering from stiffness and was photographed holding a walking stick.

"Buckingham Palace confirm that the queen has today tested positive for Covid," a statement from the palace said. "Her Majesty is experiencing mild cold-like symptoms but expects to continue light

Continued on Page 2



Queen Elizabeth II

Moscow, Kyiv call for talks amid shellfire

KYIV: Ukraine and Russia both called yesterday for intensified diplomatic efforts to avert all-out war, but blamed each other for a sharp escalation in shelling on Kyiv's frontline with Moscow-backed separatists. After

separate calls with France's President Emmanuel Macron, both Russian leader Vladimir Putin and Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky pressed for more talks.

Washington is warning a Russian invasion of Ukraine is imminent, and Macron's office had dubbed the calls "the last possible and necessary efforts to avoid a major conflict in Ukraine". US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Russia remained "on the brink" of invading Ukraine, but promised that President Joe Biden

was ready to talk to Putin and that Washington would seek a diplomatic solution until Russian "tanks are actually rolling".

During his 105-minute discussion with Macron, Putin said "the cause of the escalation is provocations carried out by the Ukrainian security forces," according to a Kremlin account. Putin repeated a call for "the United States and NATO to take Russian demands for security guarantees seriously". But he added that the two leaders "believe it is important to intensify efforts to find

solutions through diplomatic means".

Macron's office also said the two had agreed on "the need to favor a diplomatic solution to the ongoing crisis and to do everything to achieve one", adding that both countries' foreign ministers would meet "in the coming days". Moscow has demanded that the NATO alliance permanently rule out Ukraine's bid for membership and the withdrawal of Western forces that deployed in eastern Europe since the end of the Cold War.

Continued on Page 2

Local

Kuwait's Amir receives Crown Prince, Prime Minister at Dar Al-Yamama

Crown Prince meets former defense, interior ministers



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos

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

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness

the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince also received Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil, Minister of Electricity and Water and Sustainable Energy and Acting Interior Minister Mohammad Al-Fares.

Furthermore, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received former Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, and former Deputy Prime Minister and



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets former Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, and former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Minister of Interior Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. During the reception, His Highness the Crown Prince expressed his appreciation to the sincere efforts of the two ministers in serving their country during their tenure, wishing them further success.

In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, in which he expressed sincere condolences on the demise of Prince Saad bin Abdulrahman Al-Saud's

mother. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables of condolences. In the meantime, His Highness the Amir sent a cable to the Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, in which he expressed his deepest sentiments to the victims of the floods that hit Rio De Janeiro. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent him similar cables. — KUNA

Official touts Kuwait's anti-corruption legislation

KUWAIT: Acting Undersecretary of State Ministry for National Assembly Affairs Dr Ahmad Al-Haifi said yesterday that Kuwait was a pioneer in terms of anti-corruption legislation, and the diversity of bodies entrusted with it, touting the legislative and executive authorities' efforts in legislation and accountability. Haifi referred to the instructions of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to complete all requirements to eradicate corruption, as it impedes economic growth, as well as its social impact in the absence of justice, equality and equal opportunities. Haifi then reviewed, in a report issued by the ministry the efforts of Kuwait in facing corruption, which stems from four main aspects. On the aspect of the legislative system, he stated that the government, in cooperation with the National Assembly, established a legislative system that highlighted its efforts to fight corruption. On the aspect of government decisions and measures to fight corruption and maintain public funds, he discussed the government's efforts to develop an effective strategy to face administrative and financial corruption, including digital transformation.

Haifi also referred to developing work mechanisms in government bodies, committing to applying the law on everyone, activating the role of regulatory bodies and community partnership in fighting cor-

ruption, and cooperating with the National Assembly to complete the legislative system. On the aspect of activating the role of regulatory bodies, he explained that Kuwait possesses a diverse system of regulatory bodies that integrate with each other to curb manifestations of financial and administrative corruption, including the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha), the State Audit Bureau (SAB) and the Civil Service Council (CSC). He also referred to the Government Performance Follow-up Agency, the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, the Ministry of Finance's Financial Control Department, the Financial Intelligence Unit, the National Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Committee, Public Funds Protection Committee of the National Assembly, the Parliament's Budgets and Final Account Committee, in addition to the Public Prosecution and several other official relevant bodies.

On the aspect of improving Kuwait's ranking in international indicators, Haifi said that the government's efforts to fight corruption in recent years have contributed to improving Kuwait's ranking on the Global Corruption Perceptions Index after falling to the 85th globally and advancing to the 73rd place in the last three years. He pointed out that this improvement reflected various efforts represented in referring many cases of corruption and money infringement to the competent authorities and issuing laws to help improve the legislative environment. These laws are related to enhancing integrity, transparency, and implementing Kuwait's strategy to enhance integrity, fight corruption and e-governance in state agencies, in addition to submitting periodic reports to monitor government performance. —KUNA



KUWAIT: A view from the press conference. — KUNA

Kuwait delivers aid to impoverished Afghans

KUWAIT: Kuwait yesterday delivered food and medical aid to some 14 million Afghans teetering on the edge of the poverty line, local charity Kuwait Society for Relief said yesterday. The Kuwaiti charity will start distributing

the aid package to Afghans starting tomorrow, as the war-torn nation continues to suffer from a dearth of food and medical supplies, its chief Jamal Al-Nouri told a press conference. "This initiative comes at a time where humanitarian conditions in Afghanistan are on a downward spiral," said Assistant Foreign Minister for International Cooperation and Development Hamad Al-Mashaan. On the initiative, the Kuwaiti diplomat said it epitomizes the generosity that Kuwaitis are known for, citing the country's well-deserved "humanitarian center" moniker. — KUNA

Moscow, Kyiv call for talks...

Continued from Page 1

Zelensky called for an immediate ceasefire and the resumption of talks under the Trilateral Contact Group of Russia, Ukraine and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). "We stand for intensifying the peace process," he tweeted, adding that he had informed Macron about "new provocative shelling" on the frontline between Ukrainian forces and Russian-backed rebels.

Earlier, fears of escalation mounted after Belarus announced that Russian forces would remain on its soil after yesterday's scheduled end to joint drills. Moscow had previously said the 30,000 troops it has in Belarus were carrying out readiness drills with its ally, to be finished by Feb 20, allowing the Russians to head back to their bases.

But the Belarus defense ministry said Putin and Belarus leader Alexander Lukashenko had decided to "continue inspections", citing increased military activity on their shared borders and an alleged "escalation" in east Ukraine. Amid fears that Russia could use Belarus as a launch-pad for a lightning assault on Kyiv, exiled Belarus opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya said their extended stay was also a threat to the sovereignty of her own country.

The extended drills will be seen as a further tightening of the screws on Ukraine, already facing increased shelling from Russian-backed separatist rebels and a force of what Western capitals says is more than 150,000 Russian personnel on its borders. More bombardments were heard by AFP reporters overnight close to the frontline between government forces and the Moscow-backed rebels who hold parts of the districts of Lugansk and Donetsk.

In Zolote, a frontline village in the Lugansk region, an AFP reporter found residents hiding from the shelling in a shelter under a housing block, an earth-floored cellar roughly furnished when the separatist conflict erupted in 2014. "These weeks they started shelling harder. Now they are shelling again. This shelter, of course, is not equipped, but it saved people in 2014. There is no water here, people bring it with them," said 33-year-old handyman Oleksiy Kovalenko.

Natalya Zibrova, a 48-year-old teacher, remained in her flat with her daughters, despite the shelling. "We are all people. We all want to live normally. I want to get up in the morning and think about how I will spend the day. And not to think about whether I and my children will have time to escape," she said, as shellfire rang out.

The Moscow-backed separatists have accused Ukraine of planning an offensive into their enclave, despite the huge Russian military build-up on the frontier. Kyiv and Western capitals ridicule this idea, and accuse Moscow of attempting to provoke Ukraine and of plotting to fabricate incidents to provide a pretext for a Russian intervention. — AFP

Unmanned Aircraft Systems Office.

"They're rapidly purchasing this stuff off the shelf, redesigning it, taking the great technology that's being developed for good, and then employing it" for other purposes, he said. One way of countering a drone attack is to integrate artificial intelligence in air defense systems. "They can detect a target through some form of AI, track that target and ultimately defeat that target," Gainey said, adding: "AI is going to be a key component to the counter-UAS fight." — AFP

Queen catches 'mild' COVID soon...

Continued from Page 1

duties at Windsor over the coming week," it said. "She will continue to receive medical attention and will follow all the appropriate guidelines."

While normally secretive about the queen's health, the palace has previously confirmed she is triple-vaccinated against COVID-19. Britain's Press Association said "it is understood a number of cases have also been diagnosed among the Windsor Castle team". The news also comes in a week when Prime Minister Boris Johnson is expected to declare a victory of sorts over the pandemic, by announcing the scrapping of remaining legal restrictions in England with the Omicron wave apparently under control.

Ethiopia dam starts power...

Continued from Page 1

the Ethiopian flag as he toured the site, dismissed those concerns. "As you can see this water will generate energy while flowing as it previously flowed to Sudan and Egypt, unlike the rumors that say the Ethiopian people and government are damming the water to starve Egypt and Sudan," he said as water rushed through the concrete colossus behind him.

But Cairo denounced yesterday's start-up, with the foreign ministry saying Addis Ababa was "persisting in its violations" of a declaration of principles on the project signed by the three nations in 2015. The \$4.2-billion dam is ultimately expected to produce more than 5,000 megawatts of electricity, more than doubling Ethiopia's current output. Only one of 13 turbines is currently operational, with an installed capacity of 375 megawatts.

"I'm sure I speak for everyone in wishing Her Majesty The Queen a swift recovery from COVID and a rapid return to vibrant good health," Johnson tweeted, as members of his cabinet sent their own best wishes. Keir Starmer, leader of the main opposition Labour party, tweeted: "Get well soon, Ma'am." Joe Little, managing editor of Majesty magazine, said there was naturally "cause for concern" with the queen two months away from turning 96. But he said: "In the coming days a very close eye will be kept on her and the indications are that, all being well, it's nothing more than a minor inconvenience."

Nationwide celebrations to mark the queen's Platinum Jubilee are due to be held in June, after she marked 70 years on the throne on Feb 6. On the eve of the anniversary, the monarch held a reception for locals at Sandringham, her estate in eastern England. It was reportedly her largest in-person public engagement since an unexplained health issue saw her spend a night in hospital last October. — AFP

A second will come online within a few months, project manager Kifle Horo told AFP, adding that the dam is currently expected to be fully completed in 2024. The 145-m high structure straddles the Blue Nile in the Benishangul-Gumuz region of western Ethiopia, near the border with Sudan. Egypt, which depends on the Nile for about 97 percent of its irrigation and drinking water, sees the dam as an existential threat.

Sudan hopes the project will regulate annual flooding, but fears its own dams could be harmed without agreement on the GERD's operation. Both have long been pushing for a binding deal over the filling and operation of the massive dam, but African Union-sponsored talks have failed to achieve a breakthrough.

William Davison, senior analyst at the International Crisis Group, said the GERD is seen domestically "as a symbol of Ethiopia resisting external pressure". "The government has propagated the idea that foreign actors are trying to undermine Ethiopia's sovereignty, so I think this will be cast as showing they are still making progress despite a hostile environment." — AFP

UAE drone conference...

Continued from Page 1

These are concerns and challenges that "our adversaries" do not have, said Major General Sean A Gainey, US Army director of the Joint Counter-Small

Local

Would shorter workweek help improve productivity?

Kuwait Times survey shows 84 percent support four-day workweek

By Sahar Moussa and Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The pandemic has created a major shift in workplaces around the world. Many employees were able to work remotely and working hours were reduced to avoid spreading COVID-19. This new experience proved and that an employee does not necessarily always have to stay eight hours at the office to be productive. These options are now becoming part of the mainstream - but not at all workplaces.

Meanwhile, several countries have started discussing the possibility of shortening the workweek to four days, while others have already done so. Belgium is giving employees the right to ask for a four-day workweek under a proposed shakeup of its labor laws. The change would allow employees to clock up 38 hours of work over four days instead of five, opening the possibility to permanent long weekends without salary reduction.

Sharjah already switched to a four-day work system with a three-day weekend, including Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Some reports suggested that Saudi Arabia could also be studying a four-day workweek, but authorities later denied this news. Are people in Kuwait receptive of the idea of a shortened workweek? A Kuwait Times survey on social media showed 84 percent of respondents are in favor of a four-day workweek in Kuwait.

Advantages of a shorter workweek

Experts believe that working fewer hours leads to happier, healthier and more engaged workforces and increased mental wellbeing and physical health. Research also shows that people get more done when they work fewer hours, and less done when they work longer hours. "Four days per week will improve productivity and happiness for the people," one commenter wrote. "Of course, I support it, because we are overworked at the expense of our mental health," said another.

A 2021 study that followed Swedish workers showed that decreased working hours reduced stress, exhaustion and negative emotions. Another study in 2017 showed that cutting working hours by 25 percent improved sleep, while research from the 1990s showed that working only six hours a day improved workers' family lives.

"I am in favor of it because I can enjoy more time with my family. It will also solve problems of many,



especially with the lack of housemaids in Kuwait," said Francis Noynay, a Filipino elevator technician. He said a shorter workweek means he won't need to hire a nanny for his kids anymore. Mohammad Sohag, a Bangladeshi cleaner, said he hoped the shorter workweek will be implemented soon. "I am a cleaner and they require us to work 12 hours a day for six days a week," he complained. "I will

to work and be active, productive members of our community," Matthew NR, an Indian expat, told Kuwait Times.

A shorter workweek might create problems for some employers too. "I am against it because it means as a company, you have to hire more workers," said Anil Suresh, a human resource manager. "It's also not easy to hire new people and train them to do the job." Suresh also mentioned that this system would add a financial burden on companies that have already lost a lot of money during the pandemic. "I am in favor of working from home. They can go ahead with the 'four-days-a-week plus one day at home' system," he suggested.

Those who oppose a four-day workweek argue that it will increase the cost of recruitment, widen existing inequalities amongst staff, disturb the workflow and create challenges in managing multiple teams. Furthermore, there are concerns that applying this system in Kuwait could affect work efficiency, especially in the public sector, where productivity is often seen to be substandard.

"Employees in the public sector rarely work and do not do their work properly, so giving them three days off in a week will make productivity even worse," said one commenter. Another commenter however argued that a shorter workweek would encourage employees to perform better and boost productivity in general.

“ I can enjoy more time with my family ”

work as per the instructions of my manager. I am in favor of working four days a week.”

Disadvantages of a shorter workweek

While a majority of people support working four days, some believe it may come at the cost of productivity. "I am not in favor of it, because I don't want my sons and daughters to be lazy. I want them

Al-Mulla Group covers new costs for those over 60

KUWAIT: Following the recent announcement by the Public Authority of Manpower in the State of Kuwait, and the subsequent new government-imposed costs for renewal of work permits for a certain category of residents 60+ years of age in Kuwait, Al-Mulla Group has opted to cover these new fees and the associated health insurance premiums on behalf of its dedicated veteran employees in that category, who have served the interests of the Group throughout their tenures.

Al-Mulla Group, a leading diversified privately held business group based in the State of Kuwait, has once again manifested its Core Values by investing in preserving the valuable experience of its longtime veteran employees 60+ years, who belong to the category included in the government's resolution. This responsible corporate initiative is a reflection of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies of Al-Mulla Group that embrace giving back to the community and ensuring the sustainability of its workforce.

Chief Administration Officer of Al-Mulla Group Abdulla Najeeb Al-Mulla said: "To maintain sustainability in our workforce, whilst continuing to embrace the experience of our loyal and dedicated veteran employees, Al-Mulla Group will cover the new government-imposed costs. Consequently, we will bear the applicable expenses of renewing work permits and associated health insurance premiums for those 60+ years of age as described in the government's resolution. This mutually beneficial corporate initiative stems from the Group's belief in the value of its workforce." He added, "We want to put the minds of our devoted employees at ease. This is a small token of appreciation for those who have devoted their lives to working with the Group and helped us get to where we are today."

Al-Mulla Group is committed to its CSR policies through investing in its dedicated employees' growth and professional development throughout their career journeys and offering them the required support and incentives for mutual prosperous growth.

Kuwait reports 1,195 COVID-19 cases, one death

KUWAIT: The Health Ministry announced yesterday 1,195 coronavirus (COVID-19) infections, 3,380 recoveries and one death. Health Ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad indicated that this brought the tallies of infections and recoveries to 613,015 and 591,664 respectively, while total deaths reached 2,529. He indicated there were 90 patients in ICUs due to COVID-19 as of yesterday, while there are 18,822 active cases and 313 patients in COVID-19 wards. Swabs in the last 24 hours reached 22,158, taking the total to 7,468,718, he added. — KUNA



DHAMAN hosts open day for staff

KUWAIT: Health Assurance Hospitals Company (DHAMAN) organized an open day for all staff and their families, as part of the company's various efforts to encourage positive communication and direct interaction between all employees to spread the culture of cooperation and one family among them. During the open day, DHAMAN CEO Thamer Arab welcomed the attendees, expressing his happiness with the participation of employees and their families in the activities of the open day and enjoying the atmosphere through numerous events.

He pointed out that the year 2022 represents a critical period for DHAMAN, due to the establishment and introduction of DHAMAN based on the strategic plan of the government through the Ministry of Health as part of the New Kuwait Vision 2035 to establish an integrated healthcare system considered the first of its kind in the Middle East, which means it is one of the most important pillars among the high-quality healthcare projects within the new vision, directly contributing to reducing the financial and administrative burdens on the national budget in the health sector, as well as contributing to raising healthcare indicators.

Arab noted the expected completion of the first phase of the company's plan and the launch of its activities in full after the completion and operation of the two hospitals and five healthcare centers, as the company has successfully operated three primary healthcare centers in Farwaniya, Hawalli and Dhajeej for over one year, and two new centers will be opened in Jahra and Ahmadi

soon, adding that these successive achievements are the fruits of the efforts of all company staff, thanking them for their hard work, diligence and sincerity. He expressed his confidence in everyone's commitment to DHAMAN's success and excellence in fulfilling its mission to provide high-quality healthcare services and raise healthcare indicators in Kuwait.

Arab indicated that once the approvals of the Ministry of Health are obtained, the beneficiaries of the mandatory health assurance certificate will be transferred from the Ministry of Health to the healthcare system of DHAMAN, as the first healthcare corporation in the Middle East operating under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) system. In addition DHAMAN is the first company in the Middle East to provide its services based on the integrated Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) model by providing health assurance with an integrated system of healthcare centers and hospitals that include many medical specialties and various related services such as laboratories, pharmacies, radiology, and related consultations, diagnosis, treatment and prevention to raise healthcare indicators in Kuwait through prevention and community awareness.

Arab expressed his hope to celebrate more achievements, such as more open days, the opening of the two hospitals in Jahra and Ahmadi and the opening of more primary healthcare centers, especially with DHAMAN's holistic vision and strategy which is ready to implement its healthcare system during 2022. During his speech, Thamer Arab expressed his gratitude to all employees by speaking in their native languages, such as Arabic, English, Italian, Hindi and Filipino. The open day was attended by a large number of employees and their families, where everyone enjoyed a wide range of activities, competitions and events throughout the day in a positive atmosphere.

On the occasion of the



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Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Kuwait is bracing for marking its 61st National Day and 31st Liberation Day, which fall on February 25th and 26th respectively, by lighting up the buildings of its ministries and institutions with photos of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince. In a joyous atmosphere, Kuwaiti flags are also hoisted on all governmental facilities and buildings, and lights adorn the country involving streets, shopping malls and the renowned Kuwait Towers. — KUNA



Fawzia Sultan network opens multisensory gym

KUWAIT: Under the patronage of Sheikha Sheikha Khaled Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Fawzia Sultan Health Network launched a multisensory gym. The gym is designed for children with special needs including developmental disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder. Figures indicate that between 40 percent and 80 percent of children with developmental disabilities also have significant difficulties with sensory processing. The multisensory gym features specialized equipment from the United States and helps children to develop, modify and distinguish between sensations that are received through sensory systems that depend on inputs such as sight, hearing, touch, and sensation. The gym also helps improve balance and movement.

In her speech during the opening ceremony of the gym, Sheikha Sheikha said: "I am confident that this hall will effectively contribute to the development of the sensory skills of autistic children and people with special needs, who need social, psychological and moral support, especially that enhancing their skills will contribute to their proper integration into society." During the opening ceremony, a plaque was presented to Sheikha Sheikha from Fawzia Sultan Healthcare Network in appreciation to her for her keenness and support for the gym.

The sensory integration gym allows Fawzia Sultan Healthcare Network to treat children with a range of concerns. Fawzia Sultan Healthcare Network provides sensory integration services by licensed professionals specialized to work with children. Approximately 60-80 percent of the children they treat have developmental delays, autism, and genetic disorders and about 10-12 percent of children have sensory integration disorders that affect their overall functioning and development.

Sensory integration gyms help develop fine motor skills, body awareness, increased social skills as well as improve muscle strength and balance. Recent studies have proven that these types of gyms help integration into society, in addition to enhancing their levels of attention.

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The number of visitors to the Liberation Tower after it reopened has been higher than expected. After announcing the opening of the 150th floor of the Liberation Tower to the public in February, around 500 people visit daily to enjoy the great views of Kuwait City from the observation deck. Liberation Tower stands 372 meters tall and is the second highest tower in Kuwait after Hamra Tower.

Liberation Tower was opened in March 1996. "In the early 2000s, we started opening it to the public during the national celebrations. In previous years, it opened only for a few days in February, but this year we decided to welcome visitors during the entire month of February. We also decided to add an exhibition, in addition to enjoying the view," Rasha Al-Duweihy from the maintenance department of Liberation Tower told Kuwait Times.

The exhibition includes images and sketches of Liberation Tower submitted by various artists and photographers. Furthermore, there are models of old telephones used in Kuwait over more than 70 years, as well as other communication machines such as fax machines, operator switchboard, pagers and others. In addition, postal stamps issued by Kuwait since the 1920s are on display.

"In the beginning we expected 50 visitors per hour, but we were surprised by the huge interest by the public. According to our statistics, we welcome around 500 visitors daily. We are expecting even higher numbers during the National Day and Liberation Day holidays," stressed Duweihy.

Visitors must book their visit in advance. "The morning period is open for official delegations and diplomats. The public can visit the tower from 3:00 pm to 8:00 pm on weekdays and from 2:00 pm to 8:00 pm on weekends. Visitors have to be vaccinated,



KUWAIT: Rasha Al-Duweihy speaks to Kuwait Times. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Old telecommunication devices on display.



An old mailbox on display.



Old postal stamps on display.

ed, and entrance is free of charge," she added. "Currently, we plan to welcome visitors till the end of February. Due to the great demand, we may decide to extend the visiting period in future years. We are also considering launching a cafe at the Tower," Duweihy added.

Liberation Tower consists of four buildings. "It includes the Government Mall, basements, a new

main building and the tower. This is the 150th floor (the observation deck); from the 185th till the 200th floors are the technical areas, which includes the telecommunication machines of companies and institutions that are renting these spaces. And on top of that are the antennas. The top of the tower is at 372 meters, with lights for civil aviation," explained Duweihy.

Diplomatic Women's Committee celebrates national holidays



KUWAIT: On the shores of the Arabian Gulf and under Kuwait Towers, the Diplomatic Women's Committee held its celebration of the National Day and Liberation Day as part of the February celebrations of the State of Kuwait. The celebration was a gathering for the members of the committee, including ambassadors and spouse of ambassadors and diplomats accredited to the State of Kuwait. The Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba also

participated in the celebration, where the participants shared a large canvas to express their feelings towards Kuwait and painted a picture that reflected their sentiments regarding the past and their best wishes for a better future for Kuwait. DWC members described their admiration towards Kuwait Towers and their connection to the Kuwaiti heritage as one of the symbols of the urban art and the civilization of the State of Kuwait.





Brother freed over 'honor killing' of Pakistani social media star

Protests against foreigners resurface in South Africa

Page 6

Page 7



This handout picture released on Saturday shows Ukrainian servicemen of 36 separate brigades of marines take part in exercises on Feb 18, 2022. —AFP

UK PM denies ending COVID law reckless

Britain warns Russia could start Europe's 'biggest war since 1945'

LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has denied throwing "caution to the wind" as he prepares to end all pandemic-related legal restrictions in England, amid a political backlash and scientific unease. Johnson's premiership is in peril as police investigate a series of lockdown-breaching parties in Downing Street, and he stands accused by opposition parties of seeking to distract public attention with the new COVID plan.

But in a BBC interview broadcast yesterday, he said that with case numbers and hospitalisations from the Omicron wave apparently under control, it was time to revert to "personal responsibility" rather than legal mandates. "I'm not saying that we should throw caution to the wind. But it's time for everybody to get their confidence back," he said, after bringing forward the plan by a month from when the current law was due to expire in late March.

However, the prime minister also stressed: "I think it's very important we should remain careful. COVID remains a dangerous disease, particularly if you haven't been vaccinated." Under a "living with COVID" plan, the government says it intends this week to end a legal requirement for people to self-isolate when infected with the coronavirus. Johnson could address parliament as early as Monday.

The government says local authorities will be required to manage further outbreaks with pre-existing legal powers, and is expected to phase out free COVID testing for the general public, having already eliminated a mandate to wear masks in public settings.

The NHS Confederation, which represents senior managers in the state-run National Health Service, said its internal polling showed a large majority of health staff were opposed to ending self-isolation and free tests. Matthew Taylor, the confederation's chief executive, acknowledged that the government's mass vaccination programme and emergence of new COVID treatments offered "real hope". "But the government cannot wave a magic wand and pretend the threat has disappeared entirely," he said.

'Very unwise indeed'

David Nabarro, the World Health Organization's special envoy for COVID, said that scrapping the law on self-isolation was "really very unwise indeed". While the UK has suffered one of the world's worst per-capita death tolls in the pandemic, it remains a country with "an enviable record for public health expertise", the British official told BBC radio on

Saturday. "I really do worry that Britain is taking a line that is against the public health consensus—that other countries, other leaders will say if Britain is doing it, why can't we, and this will create a bit of a domino effect around the world," Nabarro added.

In the UK's devolved system, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland set their own health policies and are largely staying more cautious than Johnson's intentions for England. The opposition Labour party said that ending free testing was akin to substituting "your best defender" with 10 minutes to go of a football match.

"Boris Johnson is declaring victory before the war is over,

"The fact is that all the signs are that the plan has already in some senses begun," he said in a BBC interview broadcast yesterday from the Munich Security Conference, after two Ukrainian soldiers were killed in attacks around rebel-held enclaves.

Russian invasion plans would see its troops not just enter Ukraine from the rebel-held east, but from Belarus to the north and encircle the capital Kyiv, Johnson said, citing US intelligence relayed to Western leaders by President Joe Biden. "People need to understand the sheer cost in human life that could entail," he said, after previously indicating that the West would continue to support any Ukraine resistance after an invasion.

"I'm afraid to say that the plan we are seeing is for something that could be really the biggest war in Europe since 1945, just in terms of sheer scale." In a speech Saturday to the conference in Germany, Johnson warned that Western sanctions in response to any invasion would make it "impossible" for President Vladimir Putin's regime to access the City of London's deep capital markets.

He indicated a global reach for the sanctions also involving US measures, telling the BBC that they would stop Russian companies "trading in pounds and dollars"—which he said would hit Russia "very, very hard".

The UK government has long been accused of turning a blind eye to lucrative flows of Russian-sourced money through London, some of which has ended up in Conservative coffers, although Johnson's party says all its donations are legal. The Sunday Times newspaper reported a list of elite party donors which it said had privileged access to Johnson's government, including Lubov Chernukhin, who is married to Putin's former deputy finance minister Vladimir Chernukhin.

Amid accusations that the Putin regime has vast wealth hidden abroad, British law on company and property ownership has also long benefited investors who want to keep their involvement a secret. But Johnson said Saturday that Britain intended to "open up the Matryoshka dolls of Russian-owned companies and Russian-owned entities, to find the ultimate beneficiaries within".

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss meanwhile told the Mail On Sunday newspaper that unless Russia is stopped in Ukraine, Putin would look to "turn the clock back to the mid-1990s or even before then" by possibly annexing the Baltic States and the Western Balkans. —AFP



It is very important we should remain careful

in an attempt to distract from the police knocking at his door." Labour's health spokesman Wes Streeting said. Downing Street confirmed on Friday that Johnson had submitted a written response to police questions over the parties held over the past two years, as detectives probe whether attendees violated strict distancing and virus prevention rules in place at the time.

He stonewalled questions about the "partygate" affair in the BBC interview, and declined to say if he would resign if he is fined by the police. But Johnson insisted that despite the apparent party breaches by himself and his staff, the public would still follow guidance to self-isolate when necessary, even without a legal mandate. "Look at the evidence, look at what the British people have done," he said, referring to general compliance with the rules since the pandemic struck early in 2020.

Meanwhile, Russia is preparing to plunge Europe into its worst conflict since World War II, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said, warning that any invasion of Ukraine would freeze Moscow out of global finance.

Show of force in Ottawa as police clear protest hub

OTTAWA, Canada: Police in riot gear cleared the main protest hub in downtown Ottawa Saturday, using batons and pepper spray and making dozens of arrests, as they worked to flush out a hard core of demonstrators occupying the Canadian capital. In a day-long show of force, hundreds of officers pushed into the city center-facing off in tense scenes with determined protesters who hurled gas canisters and smoke grenades at advancing police, linking arms and chanting "freedom."

By the afternoon, police backed by tactical vehicles and overwatched by snipers had cleared Wellington Street in front of the Canadian parliament—the epicenter of the trucker-led demonstrations that began almost a month ago over COVID-19 health rules. Trucks were towed and tents, food stands and other structures set up by the demonstrators were torn down.

Ottawa interim police chief Steve Bell told a news conference "very important progress" had been made on day two of the operation to clear the protesters, though he cautioned it was "not over." On side streets around the parliament, a police message boomed by loudspeaker urged die-hard demonstrators, "You must leave, (or) you will be arrested."

A few hundred ignored the order, braving bone-chilling cold into the night while waving Canadian flags, setting off fireworks at a barricade and singing the 1980s rock anthem, "We're Not Gonna Take It." Bell said 170 people had been

arrested since the start of the operation, 47 of them on Saturday.

He also called out parents for putting their children "at risk" by bringing them "to the front of our police operation." As tensions ratcheted up, police used what they called a "chemical irritant"—apparently pepper spray—against protesters, who they said were being "assaultive and aggressive," launching gas canisters at officers. Organizers of the so-called "Freedom Convoy" meanwhile accused police of beating and trampling demonstrators, telling supporters to leave "to avoid further brutality."

Largest ever operation

Some truckers had chosen to depart on their own as the police closed in, driving their 18-wheelers away after weeks of demonstrations that at their peak drew 15,000 to the capital. Others were defiant. "I'm not leaving," said Johnny Rowe at the start of the day.

"There's nothing to go back to," he told AFP. "Everybody here, myself included, has had their lives destroyed by what's happened in the past two years." "I'm freezing my ass off, but I'm staying," echoed a protester who gave his name only as Brian.

An AFP journalist also observed a steady flow of protesters leaving the area. "We're taking it somewhere else," said musician Nicole Craig, her husband Alex adding: "Even if the truckers have left town, the protest will continue. This



OTTAWA: A flatbed removes a truck from the convoy after police cleared Wellington Street, previously occupied by the Freedom Convoy in Ottawa. —AFP

fight is not over."

Within minutes of deploying Saturday morning, police had claimed a section of road in front of the prime minister's office. Officers pointed guns as they smashed truck windows and ordered occupants out, with smoke filling the air.

As the operation unfolded outside parliament, inside the complex, lawmakers resumed debating Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's controversial use of emergency powers for the first time in 50 years—to subdue the protests.

The Ottawa police operation was the largest ever seen in the capital, drawing hundreds of officers from across the nation. Bell said police had opened several criminal investigations "that relate to the seizure of weapons."

And he warned participants in the protest that authorities—who've already

frozen Can\$32 million in donations and bank accounts—"will actively look to identify you and follow up with financial sanctions and criminal charges."

Debating emergency powers

The Canadian trucker convoy, which inspired copycats in other countries, began as a protest against mandatory COVID-19 vaccines to cross the US border. Its demands grew, however, to include an end to all pandemic rules and, for many, a wider anti-establishment agenda.

At its peak, the movement also included blockades of US-Canada border crossings, including a key trade route across a bridge between Ontario and Detroit, Michigan—all of which have since been lifted after costing the economy billions of dollars, according to the government. —AFP

Passenger found alive on ferry ablaze off Greece

ATHENS: A passenger was yesterday found alive aboard a ferry that has been ablaze off Greece for three days, reviving hopes that several more missing people may have survived. Eleven truck drivers—seven Bulgarians, three Greeks and one Turk—remained unaccounted for yesterday before Skai television reported that an operation was underway "to rescue 4-5 more passengers who are alive".

Rescuers had first spotted a 21-year-old man on the stern of the stricken vessel as it was being towed to port 50 hours after the fire broke out. The ferry was 1.5 miles (about two kilometres) off the northern part of Corfu, the coastguard said.

The smiling Belarussian was taken to Corfu on a coastguard boat wearing flip flops and put in an ambulance, television footage showed. "I'm fine", he told journalists before being transported to hospital where he is expected to stay at least until tomorrow. "Tell me I'm alive," the truck driver, had told rescuers, according to the Proto Thema news website. "I was in my cabin. I went to the lower deck. I heard voices. I did not see others," the survivor told rescuers and doctors in the hospital where he was treated. The news of the man's "miraculous" survival, according to Greek media, had raised hopes further lives might be saved.

"The ship may still have safe parts for the passengers," Andreas Korikis, who helped with the rescue on Friday told Athens News Agency (ANA). "As we saw, one of them came out and the hope lives on. The search continues but in some places the access is impossible." According to the fire brigade, at least 40 firemen were deployed in the area yesterday morning to help with rescue efforts.

"The thermal load and the toxicity on the vessel remain high. In some areas, fire is still burning. The operation is really delicate", shipping deputy minister, Costas Katsafados told Skai. The blaze broke out on the Italian-flagged Euroferry Olympia late Thursday as it sailed from Igoumenitsa in Greece to Brindisi in Italy, with nearly 300 people aboard.

Rescuers had managed to save 280 passengers on Friday, evacuating them to Corfu, but 12 lorry drivers remained missing. The man rescued yesterday was one of those drivers, the coastguard said. The vessel was officially carrying 239 passengers and 51 crew, as well as 153 trucks and trailers and 32 passenger vehicles, the Grimaldi company has said. But the coastguard has said two of the 281 people rescued were Afghans not on the manifest, sparking fears that more undocumented passengers could also be missing. The missing truckers reportedly slept in their vehicles because cabins on the vessel were overcrowded.

Ilias Gerontidakis, the son of a missing Greek trucker, told the Proto Thema online newspaper the Olympia was "miserable from every point of view". "It had bed bugs, it was dirty, it had no security systems," he said as he waited at the port for news. "It had 150 lorries inside. Normally it should have 70 to 75 cabins, but it only has 50. They force us to sleep four people in a cabin", he said. "My father, from what I was told, slept in the truck."

The vessel owner Grimaldi rejected the accusations, saying in a statement yesterday that its ships, cabins and public spaces, are "regularly disinfected" and "the inspection of the Greek authorities on February 16 2022 in the port of Igoumenitsa had satisfying results". It added that its electronic booking system prevents over-booking and that no passenger is allowed on the vehicle decks. Grimaldi added that "the 77 cabins (308 beds) and the 409 folding seats of the ship could easily accommodate the 239 passengers for a journey of nine hours". —AFP

International

Ukraine minister dives for cover as frontline heats up

Minister, dressed in camouflage fatigues and a military helmet

UKRAINE: Bent in a semi-crouch Ukraine's interior minister ran back from an exposed frontline position, as mortar shells crashed in the fields around him. Just minutes earlier, Denys Monastyrsky had told reporters: "We are ready for any scenario at any time."

On Saturday, the scenario was a surprise mortar barrage after he met troops and inspected trenches and bunkers outside Novoluganske, in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine. The message for the accompanying journalists was that Moscow-backed forces are stepping up attacks along the eight-year-old frontline, amid the growing menace of a full-scale Russian invasion.

But the threat was obvious. As the minister, dressed in camouflage fatigues and a military helmet, walked back up an exposed road lined with abandoned vehicles, shells whistled through the air and exploded in nearby fields.

Monastyrsky, his escorts and reporters scrambled for cover before running back up the road to their vehicles. No one was hurt, and the official would later say that he thought the army, not he, was the target. But the incident underlined the danger of escalation in a conflict that has already left 14,000 dead and could now, if US intelligence is to be believed, become an international war.

The separatist rebels across the frontline from the position visited by Monastyrsky accuse Kyiv of plotting

an offensive to recapture the enclave they hold in parts of Donetsk and Lugansk.

Minefields, abandoned homes

But it is Ukraine which complains that it is under attack—two soldiers were killed on Saturday—and President Joe Biden says US intelligence indicates that Russia plans to invade. One of the dead, 35-year-old Captain Anton Sidorov and father-of-three, was shot dead near Novoluganske, scene of the minister's shelling incident.

If the more than 150,000 Russian soldiers Kyiv and Washington say are massed on the border do launch an assault, they will have to pass through frontline communities like Novoluganske. Andriy, a 26-year-old infantryman from the city of Kharkiv, is based here, and confirmed that the situation is "heating up".

"The situation is even worse than yesterday, they've been firing 152 mm heavy artillery," he told AFP. "There are wounded in several battalions."

There were 4,000 people in the town before the conflict erupted, isolated by potholed roads and now by minefields marked by little painted red posts.

Only three kilometres (less than two miles) from the rebel frontline, the town lives in a sort of no-man's land and many of the homes have been abandoned. "We're not afraid," boasts 10-year-old Ruslan, wandering with his German Shepherd and a

“ We are ready for any scenario at any time ”



ODESSA: Protesters carry Ukrainian flags during a rally to show unity and support of Ukrainian integrity, amid soaring tensions with Russia, in the southern Ukrainian city of Odessa. —AFP

few friends between the ruined city stadium and the Ukrainian army command post.

Elena Valerievna, the 50-year-old owner of a small grocers store, is less afraid to admit that recent days

have been a trial. "It's been a long time since there was such a bombardment," she said. "I wish there was peace, calm, tranquility. That's what I want, not war, but I fear that's impossible." —AFP



NEW YORK: Philip Markle poses for a photo with a ketamine pill pack at his home in the Brooklyn borough of New York. —AFP

Once-taboo ketamine booms for US at home mental care

WASHINGTON: Americans are paying to get a star of the psychedelic medicine movement — ketamine — shipped to them for at-home mental health treatments that are being called both a breakthrough and a gamble.

A pandemic-spurred easing of prescription rules helped fuel a jump in telemedicine offerings of ketamine, an anesthetic that was once a taboo party drug but has become a buzzed-about tool against depression. Yet long-term, large-scale studies of ketamine's medical impact are limited, leaving some experts concerned that an unregulated online boom could result in mishaps or a regulatory crackdown.

"This has to be rolled out slowly," said Boris Heifets, a Stanford University assistant professor of anesthesiology. "The risk is that we are scaling the fix but not the solution, which is a much more integrated approach to mental health."

Ketamine has been available in the United States since the 1970s as an anesthetic called a "dissociative" because of the hallucinogenic effects that have helped make it a rave culture drug. It's legal for US doctors to prescribe, while some other psychedelics getting renewed attention for mental health uses like LSD or MDMA (also called ecstasy) are classified as having no medical utility and a high risk for abuse. In this context, recent years have seen an uptick in clinics offering in-person intravenous ketamine treatments for depression, anxiety or chronic pain, though regulations and practices vary across American states.

Ketamine 'babysitter'

Then came the pandemic, which resulted in US authorities allowing doctors to remotely prescribe drugs like ketamine that previously required an in-person visit. An increasing number of companies, some already doing in-clinic treatments, began offering to evaluate clients online and to send the drugs for home use to approved candidates.

Nue Life, which launched about a year ago, is one of those firms. Its CEO Juan Pablo Cappello estimated it has served over 3,000 ketamine patients so far. "If you actually drill down on the sort of potentials for abuse here, you realize of course they exist, but we're creating a standard of care to make that quite unlikely," he told AFP. For example, he noted clients are instructed to have an adult "babysitter" watch over them for the roughly 90 minutes the drug experience lasts, and he reasoned that people simply looking for ketamine could get it cheaper on the street.

Clients of the service, which costs \$1,250 for a package providing six ketamine experiences, are encouraged but not obligated to couple it with therapy, Cappello said. "The at-home telemedicine model, I would argue, is actually safer and more effective for patients," allowing more patients "to actually take advantage of these therapies," he added. —AFP

Protests against foreigners resurface in South Africa

JOHANNESBURG: They turned up in a mob of several hundred at a migrant centre in South Africa's Soweto township—unemployed, wielding weapons and angry with foreigners they accuse of taking their jobs. "Foreigners, go home," they cried, according to witnesses. With unemployment at 35 percent—and rising up to 65 percent among youth—competition for jobs has spawned resentment among some jobless South Africans.

In the past, xenophobic protests have morphed into violence. Attacks against foreigners left at least 62 people dead in 2008, while another seven were killed in similar unrest in 2015. Armed mobs descended on foreign-owned businesses around the financial hub Johannesburg in 2019. The ensuing clashes left at least 12 people dead, of whom 10 were South African, according to the government.

In recent weeks, scores of protesters have been staging demonstrations against undocumented migrants in what they have dubbed Operation Dudula, Zulu for "drive back". At the Methodist migrant community centre in Soweto, where about 100 migrant families live, there had been rumours of an attack.

A horde arrived earlier this month—some wielding traditional Zulu leather whips—at the centre in South Africa's most famous township, located south of Johannesburg. "Foreign nationals are stealing jobs that belong to South Africans," protesters said, according

to witnesses.

'Thought was going to die'

Sithulisiwe Chinora, a 22-year-old Zimbabwean, recounted how she started shaking violently, her infant wrapped on her back. "I thought I was going to die that day," she said. Father Paul Verryn, who founded the centre, says it is clear who the protesters were.

"They are xenophobic activists, they clearly targeted foreign nationals because they want them out," said the minister, who is famous for having opened a church in Johannesburg to thousands of undocumented Zimbabweans after the first anti-immigration attacks. But the Operation Dudula movement says it is pacifist.

Its leader Nhlanhla Lux Dlamini, a man in his thirties from Soweto who often dresses in a military uniform and bullet-proof vest, says he is simply seeking to "restore law and order". "The law enforcement is failing us," he has told reporters.

On Saturday, Dlamini was among some 2,000 people protesting in Johannesburg's inner-city suburb of Hillbrow. Among the crowd, Bhekani Thusi, 38, was one of those who said they were "tired of foreigners". "We are here to claim our land back. Our space is occupied by foreigners," he said. Last weekend, the same movement held a protest outside a supermarket demanding the sacking of foreign workers employed

60 rebel fighters 'neutralised' in Mali: Army

BAMAKO, Mali: Eight soldiers and 57 "terrorists" were killed in clashes at a rebel base in northern Mali where rival jihadist groups, including the so-called Islamic State, are active, the Malian army said on Saturday. Friday's fighting followed an air raid and erupted just a day after France and its allies announced their military withdrawal from the African country.

The Malian army said it carried out the attack against the rebel base after its troops had been attacked by "unidentified armed men" in the Archam region in the conflict-plagued north, near the border with restive Burkina Faso and Niger. Eight soldiers died and 57 armed rebels were "neutralised" in the ensuing "violent clashes," the army said.

Mali, a landlocked nation of 21 million people, has struggled to contain a brutal jihadist insurgency that emerged in 2012, before spreading to neighbouring Burkina Faso and Niger. Thousands of soldiers and civilians have been killed and two million people have been displaced by the Sahel-wide conflict, of which Mali remains the epicentre.

About 40 civilians—believed to be loyal to rival jihadist groups, according to local sources—have been killed this week in the same area where the incident on Friday occurred. It took place in the so-called "three

borders" area, a hotspot of jihadist violence where the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (EIGS) and the Sahel's largest jihadist alliance, the al-Qaeda-aligned GSIM group, are particularly active.

The Mali army said it had been looking for "terrorist sanctuaries" in the area. The forces deployed to the "three borders" area include Mali's own army, as well as French and European troops and UN peacekeepers. Just a day before, French President Emmanuel Macron announced the withdrawal of French troops from Mali. France first intervened in the country in 2013 and currently has around 4,600 troops stationed across the Sahel, 2,400 of them in Mali.

But relations between the two countries deteriorated sharply after Malian army officers led by Colonel Assimi Goita deposed elected president Ibrahim Boubacar Keita in August 2020. The army then deposed the civilian leaders of a transitional government last year, in a second coup.

Mali's international partners—including France and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) — insisted that the junta stick to a pledge to stage elections in February 2022 and restore civilian rule.

But the junta then floated plans to stay in power for up to five years. On Friday, Mali's army-led government asked France to withdraw its forces from the Sahel state "without delay". Mali has also asked the smaller European Takuba group of special forces, created in 2020, to depart quickly.

But Macron responded with a statement saying he would not compromise the safety of French soldiers and the withdrawal will take place "in orderly fashion". —AFP



HILLBROW: A picture shows a mural as members of the anti-foreigners movement so-called 'Operation Dudula' march during a protest in Hillbrow, Johannesburg yesterday. In recent weeks, scores of protesters in South Africa have been staging demonstrations against undocumented migrants in what they have dubbed Operation Dudula, Zulu for "drive back". —AFP

there. "There is (nothing) xenophobic about that, it's the law," he told journalists. "Any job that doesn't require skill in South Africa belongs to South Africans."

Around 3.9 million foreigners live in South Africa, a country of almost 60 million, including political refugees, according to official statistics. Human Rights Watch says foreigners are often made scapegoats in a country with one of the world's most unequal societies.

Jay Naidoo, a founding member of the Cosatu workers' union, said anti-immigrant arguments did not hold up. "Even if they were to expel all the immigrants, our level of crime would not drop, neither our level of joblessness," he said.

So far, the latest demonstrations have not spiralled into violence. A police source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said law enforcement was keeping an eye on the demonstrations. But "the right to protest is enshrined in the country's constitution and so far, they haven't committed any action that required the police to enforce the law," the source said.

President Cyril Ramaphosa said on Wednesday the authorities were closely watching "pockets of groupings that are trying to foment a type of negative attitudes" towards foreigners. At the start of the month, the government said it was working on a law to install a quota for foreign workers in South African companies. —AFP

Recordings of Colombian drug lord are stolen

Bogota: Recorded confessions made by the man who was Colombia's most wanted drug lord before his arrest have been stolen, in another blow to his latest trial, officials said Saturday. The recordings of Dairo Antonio Usuga, also known as "Otoniel," were made Wednesday by a member of the Truth Commission, the body investigating a decades-long conflict between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) that ended with a 2016 peace deal.

The commission reported that on February 18, "unidentified persons entered the investigator's home at night," according to a statement. "In the incident... the digital recorders that were used in the interview and a computer were stolen," it said.

The commission had already stressed Thursday the need to have "guarantees" that Otoniel's testimonies were received "in confidentiality," after various media outlets reported police officers were present during the interrogations. Police interrupted a hearing for Otoniel Thursday, arguing there were concerns he was planning to escape. The Truth Commission also asked authorities and the international community, including the United Nations, for conditions to continue investigating "without intimidation."

Usuga, 50, was arrested in October in northwest Colombia's dense jungle during an operation involving some 700 uniformed agents backed by 18 helicopters. The government of conservative Ivan Duque has expressed its intention that he be extradited soon to the United States, where he is wanted on drug trafficking charges. —AFP

International

Brother freed over 'honor killing' of Pakistani social media star

'We as a nation should be ashamed of such legal system': Chaudhry

MULTAN, Pakistan: A Pakistani man who murdered his celebrity sister was freed on Saturday after a court ruled it was not an "honour killing", allowing their mother to pardon him, lawyers said. Qandeel Baloch was strangled to death in 2016 by her brother Muhammad Waseem, who described her suggestive behaviour on social media as "intolerable".

In response to public outrage, Pakistan passed legislation supposedly closing a legal loophole that allowed family members to forgive those behind so-called "honour killings", imposing a mandatory life sentence instead.

But after less than six years in prison, an appeal judge ruled that Baloch's murder could not be defined as a crime of honour, dismissing his confession.

In line with Pakistan's other laws on murder, the mother was allowed to grant his freedom. "Waseem has been released from the prison in compliance with the order of honorable Lahore High Court," his lawyer Sardar Mehboob told AFP. "He is a free man now," he added.

Waseem, 38, was released from jail in the east-city of Multan after being acquitted on Monday. Maleeka Bokhari a woman parliamentarian

said the government was "undertaking a review of legal options" against the acquittal.

Earlier Pakistan's information minister Fawad Chaudhry had said the government will challenge the verdict at Pakistan's top court. "We as a nation should be ashamed of such (legal) system," Chaudhry said on Twitter.

Baloch became famous for her flirty and defiant posts which flew in the face of the nation's deeply patriarchal mores. Waseem was arrested immediately after her death and later sentenced to life in prison for strangling her—brazenly telling the media he had no remorse.

The case became the most high profile "honour killing" of recent years—where women are dealt lethal punishment by male relatives for purportedly bringing "shame" to the reputation of a family. The court's verdict published on Friday said had been "acquitted from the case on the basis of compromise", saying a confession from the killer "cannot be considered more than a piece of paper".

In Baloch's case, her parents initially insisted their son would be given no absolution, but they later changed their minds and said they wanted



MULTAN: Muhammad Waseem (C), the brother of slain social media celebrity Qandeel Baloch, sits outside a shop after he was freed from jail in Multan. —AFP

him to be forgiven. A lawyer for the mother said she had given "her consent" to pardon him,

according to her lawyer Safdar Shah on Monday. —AFP

Australian PM terms China laser incident 'intimidation'

SYDNEY: Australia's prime minister accused China of an "act of intimidation" yesterday after Canberra said a Chinese naval vessel shone a laser at one of the country's defence aircraft. The ship was one of two Chinese navy vessels sailing through waters off Australia's northern coast on Thursday when it illuminated a surveillance aircraft in an incident that had "the potential to endanger lives," the defence department said.

"I can see it no other way than an act of intimidation," Prime Minister Scott Morrison said, terming the act "unwarranted and unprovoked". Australia's Defence Minister Peter Dutton echoed his concerns, saying it was "a very aggressive act". "I think the Chinese government is hoping that nobody talks about these aggressive bullying acts," Dutton told Sky News yesterday.

According to the defence ministry, the ships were sailing east through the Arafura Sea, just north of Australia. The Chinese government has



SYDNEY: A handout photo shows a Chinese PLA-N Yuzhao-class amphibious transport dock vessel transiting the Torres Strait in Northern Australia after the Australian Defence Force confirm a Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) P-8A Poseidon detected a laser illuminating the aircraft from the People's Liberation Army - Navy (PLA-N) vessel. —AFP

not responded to the allegations from Australia. China last faced accusations of targeting Australian aircraft using military-grade lasers

in 2019, when Australian Defence Force helicopters were illuminated over the South China Sea. —AFP

The price of love: Pandemic fuels romance scams

WASHINGTON: For years, Debby Montgomery Johnson didn't tell anyone she'd been scammed out of more than \$1 million by a man with whom she believed she was in a loving, though virtual, relationship. "It should not have happened to me," the business owner and former Air Force officer told AFP from her home in Florida, a common refrain among those defrauded by someone they met online and grew to trust.

But many tens of thousands of people are targeted by cons dubbed "romance scams" every year, their numbers skyrocketing during the COVID pandemic when lockdowns sent people flocking to the internet seeking a salve for isolation.

The US Federal Trade Commission, tracking scams reported to its Consumer Sentinel Network, said 2021 saw a record \$547 million stolen in romance scams. This marked a nearly 80 percent increase compared to the year before. Those figures cap an upward trend that leapt in the first year of the pandemic. People reported to the FTC losing \$1.3 billion to the scams over the past five years, the most of any fraud category.

But it is just the tip of the iceberg, the FTC notes, as the vast majority of cons go unreported. Tim McGuinness, founder of the non-profit Society of Citizens Against Relationship Scams (SCARS), said numbers soared because of "the isolation, the loneliness and the utilization of the web as virtually the exclusive communication tool" during the pandemic.

COVID offers new ruses

Cancelled dates over supposedly positive COVID tests and disrupted travel plans due to lockdowns are ruses that feed into the well-worn script of romance scammers, the FTC warned. One male

victim told awareness-raising organization Silent Victim No More that COVID measures provided his supposed girlfriend with excuses to "bail out." "COVID-19 benefited the scammers," he wrote.

He finally did a reverse image search on photos she had sent, discovering they were of a different person—but only after he'd spent \$400,000 on visa fees and other concocted urgent costs. While awareness is growing—through support groups, online forums and even a recent documentary on Netflix "The Tinder Swindler"—many still fall prey to elaborate cons spun to get into a victim's heart.

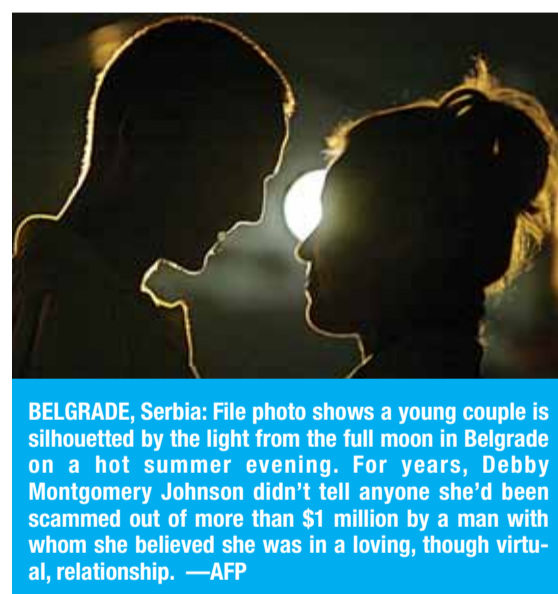
When Montgomery Johnson, now in her early 60s, realized the scale of the problem, she decided to share how she was taken advantage of by a man who had come to feel like "family" over two years starting in 2010. She spoke widely, wrote a book—"The Woman Behind the Smile"—and joined the board of SCARS, which has had contact with some seven million victims since 2015.

"I was looking for a confidant," she said, having waded into online dating following the death of her husband. She said it was out of character to give money the way she did, but "he really had my heart-strings tugged."

"It's expert manipulation," said McGuinness, who himself was a victim of a romance scam. Interactions "will progress like a normal conversation, except that they'll utilize very specific manipulative techniques to begin the grooming."

Scammers, many based in West Africa, will adopt fake identities, often saying they work abroad and travel a lot or are in the military—providing ready-made excuses for why they can't meet in person. A period of intense contact is followed by requests to wire money for plane tickets, visa fees, medical expenses or other emergencies—always with the promise of paying the amount back when they are finally united.

The internet was already a low-cost, high-return field, but scammers, often working in teams, now hunt everywhere from Instagram to online games like Words with Friends. "Any place where you can begin a conversation with someone, that's where the



BELGRADE, Serbia: File photo shows a young couple silhouetted by the light from the full moon in Belgrade on a hot summer evening. For years, Debby Montgomery Johnson didn't tell anyone she'd been scammed out of more than \$1 million by a man with whom she believed she was in a loving, though virtual, relationship. —AFP

scammers are," McGuinness said.

'Nobody was talking'

Another change has seen more young people being caught up, with the FTC saying the number of reports by Americans aged 18 to 29 increased more than tenfold from 2017 to 2021. The rise in cryptocurrency is fueling scams involving bogus investments, though untraceable gift cards and wire transfers are still more common.

McGuinness said millennials are "scammed more often and for smaller dollar amounts" while older people are scammed "for larger amounts but less frequently." Victims often still keep their experience under wraps, fearing scrutiny and judgement.

In the years after being scammed, Montgomery Johnson heard of many more people who had suffered similar fraud, "but nobody was talking." "Something flipped within me that it's not about me anymore," she said. "It's about what I can do... to speak up and to be the voice of the survivor." —AFP

'Fortress Australia'

Australia closed its borders to almost everyone except citizens and residents in March 2020 in an attempt to slow surging COVID-19 case numbers. The travel ban—which also barred citizens from travelling overseas without an exemption and imposed a strict cap on international arrivals—earned the country the nickname "Fortress Australia".

Every month under the policies has cost businesses an estimated Aus\$3.6 billion (\$2.6 billion), according to the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, with tourism particularly hard hit. Tony Walker, manag-

'Fortress Australia' re-opens after COVID closure

SYDNEY: Australia opens its international borders to all vaccinated tourists today, nearly two years after the island nation first imposed some of the world's strictest

COVID-19 travel restrictions. "The wait is over," Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said during a press conference yesterday ahead of the re-opening.

"Pack your bags," he told potential visitors, adding, "Don't forget to bring your money with you, because you'll find plenty of places to spend it." The first flight into Sydney Airport will arrive from Los Angeles at 6 am (1900 GMT), followed by arrivals from Tokyo, Vancouver and Singapore. Only 56 international flights are expected to land in Australia in the 24 hours after the re-opening—far below pre-pandemic levels—but Morrison said he had "no doubt" the number will scale up in time.

News in brief

Helicopter crashes in ocean

MIAMI: Two people were hospitalized Saturday after the helicopter they were flying in crashed into the ocean off a beach in the US state of Florida. Miami Beach police said on Twitter they received a call about the crash at 1:10 pm (1810 GMT). "Police and @MiamiBeachFire responded to the scene along with several partner agencies," the tweet said. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has also responded to the crash. "There were three passengers onboard. Two were transported to the hospital," police said, adding the two were in "stable condition." A video posted alongside the tweet shows a helicopter falling into the Atlantic Ocean, not far from people swimming or sunbathing on the crowded beach. Mary Schiavo, the former inspector general of the US Department of Transportation, said on CNN that the video showed the helicopter appearing to lose engine power. —AFP

Turkish journalist shot dead

ANKARA: A journalist was shot and killed outside the offices of his newspaper in north-west Turkey on Saturday, police and local media reported. Gungor Arslan, the director and chief editor of the local daily Ses Kocaeli (The Voice of Kocaeli) was shot and seriously wounded, dying in the city hospital soon afterwards. Local police said they had arrested a suspect but did not identify him or give any details of the attack. Erol Onderoglu, the Turkish representative of Paris-based media rights group Reporters without Borders (RSF) told AFP Arslan had been investigating corruption in the city. Condemning the killing, he called for those responsible to be identified and punished to the full extent of the law. In the last two editions of Ses Kocaeli, Arslan had accused the mayor of the city, a member of the ruling AKP party of awarding contracts to groups close to the party. —AFP

Zimbabwe arrest supporters

HARARE: Zimbabwe's main opposition party has said at least 80 of its supporters were arrested Saturday while campaigning door to door ahead of crunch parliamentary by-elections next month, the party said. The Citizens Coalition for Change said they were being detained in the city of Masvingo, 300 kilometres (180 miles) south of the capital Harare. "They were campaigning. The charges are unclear," CCC spokesman Fadzayi Mahere told AFP, a day ahead of a planned rally to launch the party's election campaign in the capital. President Emmerson Mnangagwa last week told thousands attending a rally for the ruling Zanu-PF party that no opposition would rule the country any time soon. Police have carried out several arrests in recent days. —AFP

ing director of Quicksilver Group, which operates cruises, diving excursions and resorts across the Great Barrier Reef, told AFP he was "very excited about being able to re-open". International tourists "make up around 70 percent" of business for tourism operators on the reef, Walker said, making the two-year border closure "incredibly difficult". During the pandemic, his company had to reduce its employees from 650 to the 300 it has today. Morrison yesterday said tourism had "really borne the brunt of this COVID pandemic" and he thanked the sector. "It's been tough, but Australia is pushing through," he added. —AFP

Business

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2022

Zain partners with mobile gaming platform Gizer

Agreement adds to Zain Esports' offering to customers to enjoy best mobile gaming titles

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced a partnership with Gizer, a global gaming platform that connects gamers to the world's most popular and competitive mobile gaming titles. As part of the Zain Esports gaming ecosystem, and through Direct Operator Billing (DOB) powered by SLA Digital, Zain customers can now easily subscribe to Gizer and enjoy playing a wide array of mobile esports games on-the-go.

The partnership falls under the umbrella of Zain's strategy to closely focus on enriching its digital partnerships ecosystem. The company aims at expanding its portfolio of innovative services and solutions, which meet the needs and aspirations of its customers, including gaming enthusiasts.

Zain customers can simply select from a range of secure subscription plans without the need to use bank cards. The subscription fee is added to the postpaid customer's bill or deducted from the pre-paid customer's balance. Commenting on the part-

nership, Zain Kuwait's Chief Government Affairs and Business Development Officer, Modhey Al-Sabah said, "We are delighted to announce our partnership with Gizer to offer our customers an easy and secure way to enjoy esports content on their mobile devices wherever they are. We know how passionate our customers are about esports and gaming, and this collaboration forms part of our commitment to expanding our digital partnerships ecosystem with the biggest regional and international partners."

Jack Lamir, CEO of Gizer commented, "As a company, our goal is to make mobile games more fun, rewarding, and better connected. Convenience plays a big part in this, and our partnership with Zain Kuwait means more mobile gamers in the Middle East can easily enjoy their favorite titles such as Brawl Stars, Clash Royale and PUBG Battlegrounds, with only the requirement of simple carrier billing payments."

Zain Kuwait customers can download the Gizer app at <https://gizer.ioto> play their favorite games,



earn rewards, compete in head-to-head challenges, rank in leader boards, live stream games, chat with friends, and more. The app offers gamers the world's most popular competitive mobile titles including Clash Royale, Brawl Stars, Critical Ops, Call of Duty Mobile, PUBG Battlegrounds and Fortnite Battle Royale.

In signing such digital partnerships, Zain seeks to meet its customers' aspirations through the offer of the latest, innovative services and technologies. The company remains keen to offer the most advanced tools to enhance its customers' experience, and offer them an unrivaled digital experience on the largest network in Kuwait.

Zain Esports is a regional gaming powerhouse launched in December 2020 by Zain, and to date, the brand has hosted numerous multi-national tournaments in the Middle East, such as the 'EA

SPORTS FIFA 21 Tournament: Middle East Challenge'. Zain Esports has also organized the 'PUBGM Champions Squad Season 1 & 2', 'Zain Summer Series', and the CSGO 'Final Clash' and most recently partnered with the Kuwait Olympic committee to manage a first-of-its-kind four-week-end esports event.

These and other tournaments have attracted the participation of over 15,000 players from across the region and have been viewed by over 35 million on Zain Esports' YouTube, Twitch and other social media channels. Zain's strategy is centered on 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. Zain considers itself as an active partner in creating the future of a smart and connected life in Kuwait.



A wide array of mobile esports games on-the-go

Lebanon's 'zombie banks' downsize to weather crisis

BEIRUT: Once the economy's crown jewel, Lebanon's banks are shutting branches and laying off employees in droves, resizing to the bleak reality of a crisis they are widely blamed for. Before the onset in 2019 of a financial collapse deemed one of the world's worst since the 1850s by the World Bank, the small Mediterranean country had an oversized but prosperous banking sector.

The capital Beirut was a booming regional financial hub, attracting savers keen to profit from high interest rates and banking secrecy laws. But more than two years into the crisis, the reputation of Lebanese lenders has been shredded. A dizzying currency collapse, coupled with banks imposing strict withdrawal limits and prohibiting transfers abroad, has left ordinary depositors watching on helplessly as their savings evaporate.

And yet bankers stand accused of bypassing those exact same capital controls-stoking the crisis by helping the political elite squirrel billions of dollars overseas. Their trust destroyed, citizens now keep new income well away from the banks, which in turn are deprived of money they could lend.

"The whole banking system today is made up of zombie banks," said economic analyst Patrick Mardini.

"They don't work as banks anymore—they don't give loans, they don't take new deposits."

'Abandoned country'

As a result, the industry has been forced to scale back its operations. In 2019, Lebanon ranked second in the region for bank branches per 100,000 people, according to the World Bank, and held a



BEIRUT: Lebanese women walk past a branch of the Banque Libano-Française in Beirut. —AFP

total of around \$150 billion in deposits. Deposits by Arab investors and Lebanese expatriates propelled the banking sector to peak at three times the value of national economic output.

But more than 160 branches have closed since the end of 2018, leaving a total of 919 branches operating across the country, according to the Association of Banks in Lebanon (ABL).

The number of employees has dropped by around 5,900, reducing the sector's workforce to roughly 20,000 late last year. "Lebanon is an abandoned country," ABL chief Salim Sfeir told AFP, referring to negligence by the nation's authorities.

The association claims the sector has been "forced to adapt to the contraction of the econo-

my," even as others blame the banks for overall economic activity plunging by more than half since 2019.

The Lebanese pound, officially pegged at 1,507 to the greenback since 1997, has lost more than 90 percent of its value on the black market. The slide has prompted banks to adopt a plethora of exchange rates for transactions even though the official rate remains unchanged.

Those who hold dollar accounts have mostly had to withdraw cash in Lebanese pounds and at a fraction of the black market rate. "If we apply international accounting standards, almost all Lebanese banks are insolvent," investment banker Jean Riachi said. —AFP

With weak lira, Turkey woos foreign firms

ISTANBUL: There is a silver lining to Turkey's currency crisis and the global supply chain crunch: The country is becoming an attractive alternative at the gates of Europe for foreign firms.

Turkey is seizing on its geographic advantage to woo companies as the skyrocketing cost of sea freight and pandemic-related disruptions to supply chains push some European companies to reduce their dependence on Asia. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whose policies have contributed to the lira's plunge, has promoted a new slogan for exports: "Made in Türkiye", using the country's language instead of the internationally-known "Made in Turkey".

But his vision must overcome concerns about Ankara's complicated relationship with the European Union, the independence of the judiciary and political uncertainty ahead of elections next year. Nevertheless, Turkey's exports reached a record \$225.4 bil-



ISTANBUL: This picture taken on Friday at Kadikoy in Istanbul shows containers at Haydarpasaa port. —AFP

lion last year, with a target of \$300 billion in 2023.

"Many international companies are taking action to supply more from Turkey," Burak Daglioglu, head of the Turkish presidency's investment office, told AFP. He said the country offers automakers or textile companies a "competitive talent pool,

sophisticated industrial competencies, well-developed services industries, perfect geographic location and state-of-the-art logistic infrastructure." Ikea announced last year it wanted to move part of its production to Turkey.

The Italian clothing group Benetton told AFP it wants to

"increase its production volumes in countries closer to Europe, including Turkey," Peter Wolters, vice chairman of the Netherlands-Turkey Chamber of Commerce, said the business group received "requests from the household and garden sector, textile and fashion and also yacht building industry that search for new partners in Turkey".

Soaring freight costs

It has become extremely expensive to ship goods from Asia. As a result of container shortages, the cost of freight between China and northern Europe has increased nine-fold since February 2020, according to the Freightos Baltic Index. While a cargo ship can take weeks to travel from Asia to Europe, Turkey is only three days away by truck.

A study by the McKinsey consulting group published in November placed Turkey in third position among countries with the best potential for textile supplies by 2025, behind Bangladesh and Vietnam but ahead of Indonesia and China. "Apparel companies are also looking to change their sourcing-country mix... to secure the supply chain," the global report's authors wrote. —AFP

Luxury sector undaunted by COVID, soaring inflation

PARIS: The pandemic and soaring inflation have done nothing to take the shine off luxury brands, from Louis Vuitton to Gucci and Cartier, as the sector hiked prices to notch up stellar profits.

The world economy began to recover from the pandemic last year but the rebound has been accompanied by rising inflation, with prices for raw materials and energy soaring.

But luxury good-makers can respond by hiking their prices and actually look more desirable to their customers. "Our advantage over many other companies and groups is a certain price flexibility, i.e. we have the means to react to inflation," LVMH chief executive Bernard Arnault told reporters.

UBS analysts estimate that top brands such as Louis Vuitton, which is owned by industry leader LVMH, have raised their prices two-and-a-half times higher than the inflation rate over the past 20 years.

Indeed, "pricing power remains one of the key characteristics of the luxury goods industry," UBS analysts wrote in a research note. LVMH bagged a record 64 billion euros (\$72 billion) in sales and 12 billion euros in net profit last year, both exceeding pre-pandemic levels. The French company also owns a broad range of spirits, perfume, jewelry and cosmetics products.

'Less susceptible' to rising costs

Kering—which owns Gucci and Yves Saint Laurent—also beat its pre-Covid levels to book a net profit of 3.2 billion euros on sales of 17.6 billion euros, the group reported on Thursday. Kering CEO Francois-Henri Pinault acknowledged that "for every new season, we create a new collection and we review all the price matrices."

Hermes chalked up profits of 2.4 billion euros on sales of nine billion euros. Hermes chief Axel Dumas said that his brand, which is enjoying "very strong demand", raises its prices once a year. "All of our products have the same margins. We don't play with our prices. They're linked to manufacturing costs and not to desirability."

He argued that the craftsmanship that goes into making Hermes bags means that they are "perhaps less susceptible to rising energy and raw materials prices than others". Swiss group Richemont, which owns Cartier and runs its business year from April to March, said it booked sales of 5.6 billion euros in the third quarter alone, an increase of 38 percent over the corresponding period of 2019. —AFP



Business

NBK Money Markets Report

Broad-based, more persistent inflation baffles central banks

In UK, consumer prices reach a 30-year high of 5.5%

KUWAIT: All signs now point to stronger and broad-based gains in inflation with no signs of slowing down after both the US CPI and PPI report for January ran well above expectations. Pipeline inflationary pressures are mounting alongside higher commodity prices, global trade disruptions, and price increases in key inputs to production which are dragging overall prices higher. Price pressures are also coming from strong wage gains amid a tightening labor market. Hopes that inflation would shift away from goods to services as the pandemic ebbs and supply chains normalize are simply not materializing. Inflation now sits at 7.5 percent in the US, 5.1 percent in the eurozone, and 5.5 percent in the UK. The US Federal Reserve will likely have no other option but to respond aggressively at the next meeting in March, suggestive of a 50bp interest rate hike.

Last week, the greenback ended slightly lower against its peers as risk sentiment fluctuated, with the euro and sterling closing the week at 1.1325 and 1.3594 respectively. Commodity currencies such as the Australian dollar and Canadian dollar maintained support as oil prices remain above \$90. Moving to bonds, yields dipped lower across the board though remain higher YTD with 2-year and 10-year returns last seen sitting at 1.47 percent and 1.93 percent respectively. On Wall Street, the S&P 500 ended the week 1.44 percent lower after dropping 1.9 percent the week earlier.

United States

During last week's meeting, Federal Reserve officials outlined plans for interest rate hikes and a reduction in asset holdings on their balance sheet as concern mounted regarding inflation and financial stability. Minutes revealed FOMC members noted inflation was spreading beyond pandemic-affected sectors and is seeping into the broader economy. Some officials expressed concern that loose monetary policy could be posing a substantial risk, indicating interest rate hikes are likely on the way soon and an unwinding of the bond portfolio may be aggressive. Most participants said rates should rise at a faster pace than 2015 which was no surprise to markets since the Fed waited a full year in 2015 in between tightening.

After weeks of market hype on soaring inflation and a hawkish Fed, markets found the tone of the latest minutes less hawkish relative to expectations. Markets were especially on edge after St. Louis Fed President James Bullard caused traders to price in the equivalent of seven 0.25 percent rate hikes this year - pricing that has since eased after the meeting minutes release. The January meeting solidified market expectations that the Fed was on track to raise interest rates in March, speculation now is on how quickly and by how much. PPI & retail sales data released later in the week continued to support calls for rate hikes.

Strong PPI acceleration

Data last week revealed US producer prices rose double the 0.5 percent level expected in January as inflation ran at a 40-year high. The PPI index - which measures prices at the wholesale level - increased 1 percent for the month and a 12-year high of 9.7 percent on a yearly basis. Excluding volatile items such as food, energy, and trade services, the core figure climbed 0.9 percent for the month versus the 0.4 percent estimated and 6.9 percent for the 12-month period.

When comparing these figures to the record levels hit in December 2021, both core and headline PPI gains are just 0.1 percent lower in January and remain strongly elevated. As a common theme throughout much of the COVID-19 pandemic, prices for goods outweighed those for services, rising 1.3 percent and 0.7 percent respectively. Final demand for energy prices jumped 2.5 percent in January, while food climbed 1.6 percent.

Robust price gains across the board will reinforce inflationary concerns that the Fed is expected to battle this year with monetary policy. Following two years of unprecedented accommodation by the US central bank, interest rate hikes are expected to begin in March and continue throughout the year. Markets are now pricing in up to 7 rate hikes for the year.

Strong retail sales

Alongside rising inflation and the Omicron variant, American consumers kept spending. Retail sales bounced back in January with the figure rising 3.8

percent for the month versus the 2.1 percent estimate. Excluding auto, sales rose 3.3 percent after falling 2.8 percent in the previous month. The rise illustrates an economy with plentiful jobs, sizable wage gains, and consumers with cash to spend at the start of 2022. However, spending patterns have become less predictable. While holiday shopping would normally push retail sales higher in December and lower in January, this year experienced the exact opposite. It is important to note that the data is not adjusted for inflation which will continue to boost the sales figures for months to come.

UK inflation climbs to 1992 High

British consumers saw prices rise to 5.5 percent in January, marking the fastest annual pace of inflation in nearly 30 years and beating economists' forecasts for a 5.4 percent gain. Core inflation, which excludes volatile prices, rose to its highest on record at 4.4 percent in January from 4.2 percent in December. Shortly after the release of the inflation data, two-year British government bond yields hit their highest levels since 2011.

Households have been warned to expect a squeeze on their living standards after the nation's energy regulator announced a 54 percent increase in gas and electricity prices in April that will affect 15 million households - the same month that income taxes are set to rise by 1.5 percent. Unlike its peers, the Bank of England has already raised rates twice since December 2021 to 0.5 percent from 0.1 percent. Financial markets expect a further increase to 0.75 percent or 1 percent after the central banks next meeting. Earlier this month, the BoE predicted inflation would peak at around 7.25 percent in April 2022 after household energy bills are due to rise by more than half. The central bank does not expect inflation to return to its 2 percent target until early in 2024, while many economists see inflation falling faster.

Underscoring the resilience of Australia's labor market, the economy unexpectedly added 21,900 jobs in January while the jobless rate held at a 13-year low of 4.2 percent in the face of Omicron spreading fast across the nation. Most notable was the 8.8 percent drop in time worked in areas which

saw the sharpest spikes in COVID such as NSW and Victoria. Meanwhile in Western Australia which maintained its border restrictions, time worked increased by 1.7 percent. Despite the overall better than expected data, Australian bonds advanced as the weakest addition to jobs in three months held back bets on the RBA's rate-hike timing.

The robust strength of the labor market heavily supported market bets that the RBA would begin raising rates in the coming months. In contrast, Governor Philip Lowe estimates it will take some time for low unemployment to translate into faster pay gains, suggesting tightening is still far off. The RBA expects unemployment to drop below 4 percent this year, however wage growth is only seen lifting slightly to 3 percent in 2023. Expectations that the Reserve Bank would hike rates in May dropped to 60 percent from 80 percent following the release of the data.

Ukraine-Russia crisis

Oil prices briefly touched \$95 last week as investors digested developments on the Russia-Ukraine crisis. Meanwhile, the safe-haven metal gold reached \$1,900 before retreating slightly. At a time when global supply is already struggling to keep up with demand, investors have been exceedingly sensitive to the risk that an invasion of Ukraine would disrupt Russia's vast energy supplies.

President Joe Biden expressed skepticism about Russia's claims of removing troops. The President said he believes an invasion of Ukraine could happen "within the next several days", while the US secretary of state warned the UN that Russia is planning to manufacture a justification for an attack and has not withdrawn troops. Similarly, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said Wednesday that despite "signs from Moscow" that diplomacy should continue, "we do not see any sign of de-escalation on the ground." Investors were calmer after Friday's reports of planned talks between the US and Russia which provided relief prior to the weekly closing.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30245.



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 17 FEBRUARY 2022

(965) 22 675 140
Al-Safat Tower, Hawalli, Beirut St.
alsafatinvest.com
research@alsafatinvest.com
alsafatinvestment
al-safat-investment-company

Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	34,072	8,273.03	2.4%	3.2%	8.3%	563,862,561	262,512,492	33,746	29.3	2.5	76.0%
Main Market	10,759	6,376.84	1.0%	5.4%	8.3%	873,533,091	125,953,995	39,028	18.6	1.5	24.0%
All Share	44,831	7,629.09	2.0%	3.8%	8.3%	1,437,395,652	388,466,487	72,774	26.6	2.3	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
BANKS	25,975	1,748.53	2.1%	2.7%	7.7%	295,628,801	142,385,579	13,952	30.4	2.4	57.36%
BASIC MATERIALS	1,020	1,143.72	0.5%	2.9%	11.6%	19,224,581	8,421,742	1,087	27.3	1.6	2.25%
CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY	813	1,590.91	5.6%	10.9%	19.0%	19,148,813	7,234,712	2,324	42.3	7.1	1.80%
CONSUMER STAPLES	217	713.09	-2.4%	-1.5%	-2.5%	13,036,567	7,220,842	909	14.7	1.5	0.48%
ENERGY	289	1,390.03	-1.4%	-3.7%	-2.7%	35,664,942	1,337,701	1,160	12.7	1.4	0.64%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	4,422	1,554.97	0.6%	2.4%	9.2%	663,454,382	95,262,338	22,066	10.3	1.9	9.77%
HEALTH CARE	404	814.75	-0.7%	1.0%	2.2%	120	68	3	28.4	5.1	0.89%
INDUSTRIALS	4,458	1,256.72	2.6%	5.9%	10.1%	126,294,140	50,368,898	12,348	38.8	1.4	9.84%
INSURANCE	688	1,646.70	2.9%	7.8%	7.4%	2,155,411	614,930	312	8.5	1.2	1.52%
REAL ESTATE	2,899	1,348.39	-0.4%	-0.1%	1.7%	189,858,867	25,683,028	9,233	17.3	1.2	6.40%
TECHNOLOGY	10	691.85	-7.7%	-8.6%	1.2%	213,083	20,536	32	-	0.8	0.02%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	3,842	1,253.92	4.6%	14.2%	15.1%	67,649,206	48,788,889	8,876	16.2	2.3	8.48%
UTILITIES	245	586.84	0.0%	-0.4%	-2.2%	5,066,739	1,127,224	472	18.9	4.0	0.54%

Top Gainers

Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KGL	81	24.77	16,375,192	1,288,924	712
STC	1,440	23.18	17,520,753	23,685,725	5,087
KUWAITRE	407	19.71	2,014	755	6
CABLE	1,168	16.45	3,641,532	3,909,718	998
NOOR	360	12.50	3,722,515	1,280,674	278

Top Losers

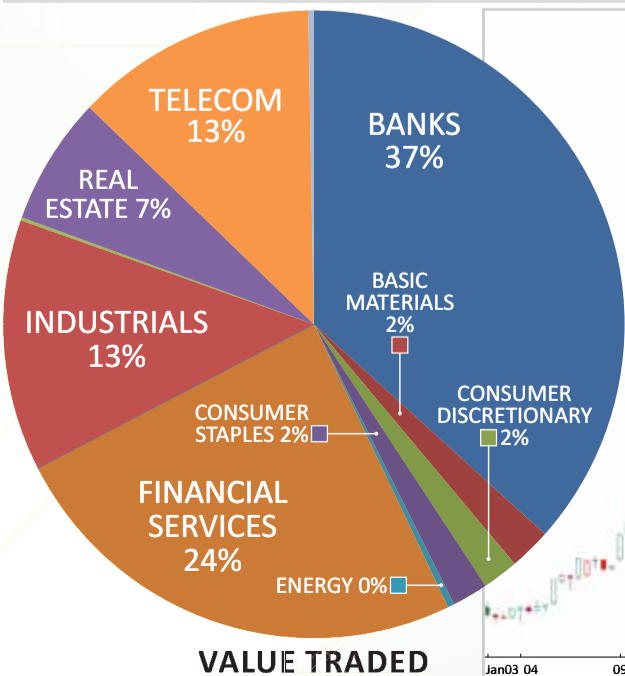
Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GPI	19.4	-14.16	28,022,702	592,253	529
FCEM	45.9	-9.47	3,191,104	145,662	182
WETHAQ	47	-8.74	442,607	20,496	66
ALAQARIA	50.4	-8.36	9,248,755	494,444	438
MUBARRAD	106	-7.83	19,827,737	2,149,051	779

Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GFH	104	2.97	190,530,139	19,218,436	3,161
AUB	294	1.73	100,941,759	29,330,870	1,587
ALSAFAT	186	8.14	54,080,292	10,046,618	1,348
ALOLA	85.8	0.35	52,311,813	4,459,549	1,45
KFH	933	3.21	49,467,123	45,011,611	4,651

Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	933	3.21	49,467,123	45,011,611	4,651
NBK	1,058	2.32	34,183,594	35,492,919	2,889
AUB	294	1.73	100,941,759	29,330,870	1,587
ZAIN	630	2.44	38,361,849	23,729,965	2,992
STC	1,440	23.18	17,520,753	23,685,725	5,087



Market Summary:

- Premier market volume and value increased 36% and 54%, respectively. Main market volume decreased 1% while value increased 1%.
- All indexes reached a new all-time new high level.
- Technically, the All-Share index registered a new all-time high-level closing at 7629, support levels at 7556, 7503, and 7481, while resistance at 7635. Premier index registered a new all-time high-level closing at 8273, support levels at 8184, 8103, and 8044, while resistance at 8283. The Main index registered a new all-time high-level closing at 6376, support levels at 6344, 6321, 6267, and 6216, while resistance at 6383.

Business

Kamco Invest reports net profit of KD 10.3m in 2021

Board of directors recommends 10 fils cash dividends

KUWAIT: Kamco Invest, a regional non-banking financial powerhouse with one of the largest AUMs in the region, announced yesterday its financial results for the financial year ended 31 December 2021 reporting a net profit of KD 10.3 million (EPS:30.14 fils) compared to a net loss of KD 2.7 million in 2020 (EPS:-7.85fils).

Total revenue increased by 99.4 percent to reach KD 30.1 million (2020: KD 15.1 million), while revenues from fees and commissions increased by 34.3 percent compared to 2020 to reach KD 20.2 million representing 67.2 percent of total revenues.

During the year, we successfully raised over \$1.1 billion for several products and transactions, distributed around \$235 million to clients (capital and income distributions) and grew our assets under management by 12.76 percent to reach \$14.6 billion by 31 December 2021. Kamco Invest's equity funds and managed portfolios continued to outperform their peers and respective benchmarks and Kamco Investment Fund emerged as the winner of the Refinitiv Lipper Fund Awards Kuwait 2021 in the categories of "Best Equity Fund Over 5 Years", and "Best Equity Fund Over 10 Years". During the year, Kamco Invest equity funds, Kamco Investment Fund, Kamco Premier Market Index Fund and Al-Durra Islamic Fund were amongst the top perform-

ing funds in Kuwait, reporting returns of 29.79 percent, 28.73 percent and 25.72 percent respectively.

The real estate investments team concluded two successful exits in the UK and Germany generating competitive returns to clients and the real estate assets under management grew to reach \$1.35 billion. The Special Situations Asset Management



Total revenue almost doubled to reach KD 30.1 million

team successfully completed several exits on behalf of clients amounting to \$51.6 million. A new foreign fund was established to invest in venture capital companies and was marketed in Kuwait after obtaining the approval of the CMA.

The investment banking team successfully managed 22 transactions in 2021 worth \$4.8 billion and

penetrated new markets including Saudi Arabia, Oman, Jordan, and Bahrain besides the previous activity in Kuwait, Egypt, and UAE. The transactions included six Mergers & Acquisitions transactions, six equity capital market transactions, and ten debt transactions. The team led nine regional bond and sukuk issuances worth \$3.4 billion across Kuwait, Saudi, Oman, and Bahrain in addition to a debt advisory transaction worth \$330 million. The team also managed the private placement and listing of a logistics company, rights issues for four listed companies on Boursa Kuwait, sale of a 26.2 percent equity stake of a listed company, in addition to advising on three buy side mandates in Kuwait and Jordan as well as three sell-side mandates in UAE, USA and Egypt.

First Securities Brokerage Company, Kamco Invest's brokerage arm, continued to attract new clients through its online trading platforms. The company successfully completed the MD3 test for netting, which now serves as a new revenue stream for the company.

The company enjoys a strong financial position with KD 60.4 million in shareholders' equity as of 31 December 2021 (an increase of 20.9 percent in comparison to end of December 2020). In its most recent review in May, Capital Intelligence main-



Faisal Mansour Sarkhou

tained its "BBB" long-term credit rating and "A3" short-term rating with a stable outlook.

As a result of the achieved profits that reflect the successful approach and strategy of the Company's management, the Board of Directors recommended to the Annual General Meeting a cash dividend of 10 fils per share. Commenting on the financial results, Faisal Mansour Sarkhou, Chief Executive Officer, said, "We are pleased with these results which reflect the team's expertise in various fields, the robustness of our strategy and the flexibility of our business model in adapting to the changes and fluctuations the world and capital markets witnessed during the last period. Many achievements were made during the year reflecting positively on our performance, growing our business activities and assets under management, attracting new clients, in addition to increasing our top and bottom lines while strengthening our financial position."

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KFH celebrates graduation of 3rd Cohort program

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) continues its outstanding efforts in cultivating and refining employee experience and proficiency at the workplace by continuously investing in leadership development programs in collaboration with the top international business schools.

Executive Manager Talent Management, Mohammed Al-Musalam stated that following the achievement of remarkable milestones in Talent Development and Succession Planning, KFH has celebrated the third cohort of graduates of the Building Leadership Excellence program delivered by Harvard Business Publishing, which was designed specifically for the needs of Middle Management staff and in accordance with global best practices.

Al-Musalam added that this program targets KFH emerging leaders and aims to support high performance and responsibility, as the program is being rolled-out for the third year in a row.

Al-Musalam pointed out that the Building Leadership Excellence program is part of a comprehensive program

designed for the middle management at KFH and is an integral part of the Succession and Leadership Development Strategy. Al-Musalam stressed the keenness to continue pushing nationals to occupy middle management and executive management positions due to the focus on promoting from within and through continuous development and preparation, which is one of the goals of Succession Planning. Al-Musalam pointed out that KFH organized intensive courses in collaboration with Harvard Business Publishing, IMD and HEADSPRING, to enhance the Leadership capabilities at KFH for the upcoming preparation stages.

Al-Musalam stated that the Building Leadership Excellence program is divided into two modules: "Leading Teams" and "Leading the Business", where "Leading Teams" module focuses on developing a culture of accountability and ownership through efficient performance management, building a high performing team through introducing them to coaching and feedback tools, and creating a culture of trust and openness within the team.

With regards to the "Leading the Business" module, Al-Musalam explained that it focuses on developing a change mindset by understanding the value of continuous change which leads to effectively leading and implementing change initiatives. It also underlines the importance of understanding the value of strategic thinking, developing a strategic mindset, stakeholder management, and developing the ability to influence and manage senior stakeholders. Al-Musalam pointed out that the program is delivered on high-end learning platforms powered by resources, recordings, case studies, and simulations.

Al-Musalam noted that the program was launched at the KFH Group level, contributing to increased harmony among group leaders. Al-Musalam added that Talent Development and honing the skills of KFH staff is essential to the success of the organization, and is a major pillar in adapting to the trends in the banking industry, raising performance indicators, and improving efficiency.

Al-Musalam noted that KFH is continuously focusing on building the capabilities and enhancing the productivity of its employees, by providing them with superior training programs while ensuring continuous development, innovation, and relevance of the training programs to solidify KFH's competitiveness and adaptation with the accelerating developments in the banking industry to maintain KFH's leadership at all levels.



Mohammed Al-Musalam

Battal Al-Mutairi wins Gulf Bank's draw of 12 times his salary

KUWAIT: Days after announcing the Al-Danah account's grand prize winner of KD 1.5 million, Gulf Bank has officially kicked off the first of its 2022 Salary Account draw series. The winner, Battal Jazi Batel Al-Mutairi, will be taking home a cash prize equivalent to 12 times his salary, joining Gulf Bank's long list of lucky draw winners.

On this occasion, the General Manager of the Consumer Banking Group, Mohammed Al-Qattan, said, "We would like to congratulate Battal Jazi Batel Al-Mutairi for winning the first salary prize for the salary account from Gulf Bank, which is the only account in Kuwait that offers special offers tailored to the customer's needs, as part of his keenness to reward his customers and achieve dreams, with generous prizes.

Al-Qattan expressed his wishes for better luck to the rest of the salary account customers in the upcoming draws, noting that the train of prizes and raffles from Gulf Bank does not stop, and more cus-



Mohammad Al-Qattan



tomers can get more chances to win.

Prizes and draws 2022

Gulf Bank also announced a new package of offers and benefits for Salary Account clients who transfer their salary to Gulf Bank in 2022. These benefits include the chance to win one of three Mercedes G500 cars, win up to 12 times their salaries, take home a cash gift of up to KD 1,000, and get a free credit card for two years.

Exclusive offers

Gulf Bank provides special offers for Kuwaitis

NBK launches its salary acquisition campaign

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues launching outstanding campaigns aiming to offer unique rewards to its customers. This year, the bank has launched a new Salary Acquisition Campaign giving customers the opportunity to get a 0 percent loan, points on the new KWT Visa Infinite Credit Card redeemable as cash, or a free iPhone 13 Pro.

NBK is committed to giving its customers the best options in the market by offering a variety of acquisition gifts to suit all customer needs and expectations. Salary acquisition benefits leave it to the customer to choose between a 0 percent loan,



Mohammed Al-Othman

exclusive eligibility for the KWT Visa Infinite Credit Card with up to 300 points, or a free iPhone 13 Pro with Ooredoo. The NBK KWT Visa Infinite Credit Card not only offers the highest cashback rates in Kuwait, but earning and using points has never been easier as cardholders receive KD 1 for each point earned. Customers can get the free iPhone 13 Pro device in cooperation with Ooredoo when signing a 2 year Postpaid Shamel package that has unlimited minutes in addition to 100 GB of data.

On this occasion, Mohammed Al-Othman, GM-Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait said: "NBK Salary Acquisition Campaign for this year is exceptional with rewards tailored to our

customers' needs and expectations according to their various lifestyles."

"Salary transfer to NBK provides customers with integrated investment and finance banking solutions as well as a rich experience including cutting-edge digital banking services and payment solutions," he added. Al-Othman affirmed that NBK is keen to strengthen its solid relationships and cooperation with leading institutions in Kuwait in an effort to introduce offers with exquisite benefits for customers.

When transferring their salary to the bank, NBK Customers get a wide range of benefits including access to the largest branch and ATM network in Kuwait, as well as the broad geographical presence across key regional and global markets. NBK Customers can make their banking transactions in a quick and easy way, anytime through the bank's digital banking channels, mainly NBK Mobile Banking, which the bank is continuously developing and enhancing making it the most popular banking option for customers.

Why crypto creators want to stay anonymous

WASHINGTON: The two lifelong friends from Florida never sought the limelight, but then they built a multi-million-dollar empire selling digital art and people wanted to know who they were.

Under the pseudonyms "Gargamel" and "Gordon Goner", they created the "Bored Ape Yacht Club", a collection of 10,000 cartoons of apes with various hairstyles and outfits. They sell these images as digital tokens (NFTs), and it is now hard to get one for less than \$280,000, thanks partly to celebrity endorsements from the likes of Paris Hilton to Serena Williams.

US news outlet BuzzFeed did some sleuthing earlier this month and uncovered their true identities-sparking an outpouring of anger among fans on social media. "Doxing is wack, putting people at risk," wrote one Twitter user, employing internet slang for identifying someone against their will.

The story has refocused attention on anonymity in the world of cryptocurrencies. While the creators of the "Bored Apes" may like to hide in the crypto world, they are owners of a business called Yuga Labs, so they have to follow all the usual rules of company filings, including providing named beneficiaries.

"Using a pseudonym does not make you anonymous," says Alexander Stachtenko, a cryptocurrency expert for the firm KPMG.

Risk of robbery

It is unclear why the Bored Apes founders wanted to stay anonymous-they had given several interviews under their pseudonyms. Critics say anyone making money from NFTs would be wise to seek anonymity as what they are selling is worthless.

Fans though revel in being part of a community where NFT ownership is often a gateway to games and other perks. Either way, anyone making serious wealth in this field has obvious reasons to stay under the radar. "I don't need the public in crypto to know who I am, what I look like, my origins," says a creator who goes by the name "Owl of Moistness". "I don't want to run the risk of having people rob me, or harm my family."

He co-founded Yield Guild Games, a startup focused on NFT video games in the Philippines, where the NFT craze has taken hold across the population. He points out that the technology that underpins cryptocurrencies and NFTs-the blockchain-is a ledger where anyone can trace transactions. So linking his crypto and real-world identities would allow anyone to find out his wealth.

But the bigger a project gets, the more complicated it is to remain unknown. "It becomes more difficult if you're going to expand your team," says Soona Amhaz of Volt Capital, a cryptocurrency-focused fund. — AFP

Burgan Bank reveals winners of Yawmi account draw

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

- The lucky winners are:
- Mohammad Neamah Ali
 - Waleed Saleh Alali
 - Maryam Majeed Behbahnpour
 - Fatemah Abdullah Alkandari
 - Nasur Alalawi

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

Business

AL-SHALL WEEKLY ECONOMIC REPORT

Kuwait's total labor force stood at 2.512 million at end of Q321

Number of Kuwaiti employees in public sector stood at 351.6 thousand at Q321

KUWAIT: The Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) issued its latest labor force statistics in Kuwait for the end of Q3 2021, distributing the data between gender, nationality, wage and age groups, etc. The labor force in Kuwait, excluding household workers, is 1.904 million employees versus 1.930 million at the end of Q2 2021. Adding the household labor (the family sector), with a size of 608 thousand workers, result in a total labor force of 2.512 million (2.569 million at the end of Q2 2021). By the end of Q3 2021, household workers constitute nearly 24.2 percent of total labor force in Kuwait (24.9 percent of total labor force at the end of Q2 2021).

The average monthly wage of Kuwaiti male workers in the public sector is KD 1878 (KD 1872 in Q2 2021) compared to the Kuwaiti female wage average of KD 1310 (KD 1304 in Q2 2021), a difference of 43.3 percent in favor of men. The monthly salary average of non-Kuwaiti males in the public sector is KD 772 (KD 769 Q2 2021) compared to KD 694 for non-Kuwaiti females (KD 688 in Q2 2021), an 11.2 percent difference in favor of males. The gender gap is more equitable in the case of non-Kuwaitis. The average monthly wage for Kuwaitis for both genders in the public sector is KD 1,539 (KD 1,533 in Q2 2021) compared to KD 732 for non-Kuwaitis (KD 728 in Q2 2021), a 110.2 percent difference in favor of Kuwaitis.

The monthly average wage of Kuwaiti males in the private sector is KD 1,529 (KD 1,519 in Q2 2021), 18.6 percent lower than that of males in the public sector. The average for Kuwaiti females in the private sector is at KD 973 (KD 958 Q2 2021), which is -25.8 percent lower than that of their female colleagues in the public sector. Undoubtedly, the government's support leads to reduce the gap between the private and the public sector wages. The monthly average wage of non-Kuwaiti males in the private sector is about KD 300 (KD 296 in Q2 2021), close to 38.9 percent of the average salaries of their colleagues in the public sector. The average monthly wage for

non-Kuwaiti females in the private sector is KD 418 (KD 411 in Q2 2021), 39.5 percent higher than the average salary of non-Kuwaiti males in the private sector, however 39.7 percent lower than the average rate of non-Kuwaiti females in the public sector.

For the overall wage average in both the public and private sectors, the monthly average wage of Kuwaiti males is KD 1806 (KD 1799 in Q2 2021) and for KD 1261 Kuwaiti females in the same sector (KD 1252 in Q2 2021), indicating a 43.3 percent difference in favor of males. The monthly average wage for non-Kuwaiti males is KD 313 (KD 309 in Q2 2021) and KD 478 for non-Kuwaiti females (KD 471 in Q2 2021), a 53 percent difference in favor of females. The monthly average wage for Kuwaiti males and females in both sectors is KD 1490 (KD 1482 in Q2 2021) versus KD 331 for non-Kuwaitis (KD 327 in Q2 2021).

Note that these figures above do not include household labor that would otherwise have a significant downward impact on the non-Kuwaiti wage rates. Moreover, the figures do not take into account the impact of governmental support allocations to Kuwaiti workers in the private sector.

According to the CSB, the number of Kuwaiti employees in the public sector is 351.6 thousand (346.6 thousand workers in Q2 2021) versus 72.6 thousand workers in the private sector (73 thousand workers in Q2 2021). This indicates that the Kuwaiti workforce is distributed as 82.9 percent in the public sector and 17.1 percent in the private sector. About 43.9 percent of Kuwaitis working in the public sector are university graduates, 4.4 percent having postgraduate degrees, 14.1 percent have diplomas above high school but below university degrees and nearly 21.4 percent are holders of high school certificates or equivalent. This entails that about 83.9 percent of government employees are holders of high school certificates and above. That being said, productivity of the public sector remains low due to a crowded and unorganized work environment, incompatible

educational and labor market requirements, poor education quality, or even the spread of fake degrees.

Household workers

Approximately a quarter of total expatriate workers in Kuwait are household workers, at total of 608 thousand (according to the CSB) at the end of Q3 2021 (639 thousand workers in Q2 2021). The numbers are divided almost equally between males and females, 301 thousand 307 thousand respectively. Male workers from India take the lead with 200 thousand workers (210 thousand workers in Q2 2021), while the Philippines take the lead in female workers by 135 thousand workers (137 thousand in Q2 2021). India leads total number of household workers both genders by 47 percent of the total, followed by the Philippines by 22.3 percent. Four nationalities namely India, the Philippines, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka capture 94.7 percent of total household workers out of 10 nationalities. The six other nationalities form the rest, 2.1 percent for the highest and 0.2 percent for the lowest contributing nationality. Three African countries are among the countries exporting household labor, led by Ethiopia at 2.1 percent, then Benin and Sudan at 0.2 percent for both.

When combining the numbers of household workers with other expats categories according to nationality, Indians total to 737 thousand workers (767 thousand workers in Q2 2021) or 29.3 percent of the total labor force including Kuwaiti employees and 35.3 percent of total foreign labor force, taking the lead in both cases. The Egyptian labor force comes second with nearly 457 thousand workers (465 thousand workers in Q2 2021), forming 18.2 percent of the total labor force and 21.9 percent of total expat labor force. The Kuwaiti workforce comes third with 424 thousand workers (420 thousand in Q2 2021) forming a 16.9 percent share of the total labor force. This share might rise if the figure includes the military.



Bangladesh comes fourth with a total of 239 thousand workers (243 thousand workers in Q2 2021) representing 9.5 percent of total labor force and about 11.5 percent of total expat workers. The Philippines occupies the fifth position with 201 thousand workers (206 thousand in Q2 2021), about 8 percent of total labor force and 9.6 percent of total expat workforce.

Total debt instruments

In the monthly statistical bulletin for December 2021, published on the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) website, the balance of total public debt instruments (including Treasury bonds, bills and Tawarruq operations initiated April 2016) has decreased by KD 250 million compared to its balance at the end of December 2020, reaching KD 800 million by the end of December 2021, 1.8 percent out of 2021 total GDP estimated

at KD 44.3 billion (EIU estimates). The average interest rate (return) profile for these instruments is described as follows: 1.375 percent for one-year maturity, 1.500 percent for two years, 1.625 percent for three years, 1.750 percent for five years, 1.875 percent for 7 years and 2.000 percent for 10 years. Domestic banks hold 100 percent of the total public debt instruments (100 percent at end of December 2020).

The CBK bulletin states that total credit facilities for residents offered by local banks by the end of December 2021 reached KD 42.287 billion, about 54.9 percent of total local banks' assets, an increase of KD 2.520 billion indicating a growth of 6.3 percent against its level in December 2020. Total personal facilities scored KD 19.432 billion, or 46 percent out of total credit facilities (KD 17.251 billion end of December 2020) grew by 12.6 percent.

AAW debuts Gaggenau's first store in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Ali Abdulwahab Al-Mutawa Company (AAW) proudly announced the launch of the first Gaggenau retail establishment, the luxury brand for professional-grade home appliances, at its Shuwaikh showroom location.

The opening was attended by the Ambassador of Germany to Kuwait Stefan Mobs, AAW Chairman and CEO Faisal Al-Mutawa, AAW Deputy CEO Ali Faisal Al-Mutawa, and German Industry and Commerce Office Representative Marion Chehab.

Gaggenau is the pioneering German high-quality home appliance manufacturer, fulfilling the many different facets of the sophisticated, contemporary home. Where space and time coalesce into a luxury afforded to the few, these appliances have been beautifully designed to sustain harmony with these restrictions. Crafted since 1683, Gaggenau has evolved with culinary excellence in mind across time. Utilising an established understanding of all things culinary and design, Gaggenau has advanced this knowledge further: subsuming the increasing consideration of space in the home. Gaggenau has been a subsidiary of BSH Hausgerate GmbH in Munich since 1995 and is currently established in over 50 countries, with 25 flagship showrooms in major cities around the world.

AAW Deputy CEO Ali Faisal Al-Mutawa said: "Over the years, German companies have won the trust of the Kuwaiti consumer and their appetite for quality products, modern designs, and innovative technologies. Understanding the Kuwaiti market, we always aim to deliver products that better the lives of our customers while remaining conscientious of sustainability and the environment.



KUWAIT: German Ambassador Stefan Mobs cutting the ribbon with Faisal and Ali Al-Mutawa



Today, we are proud to announce the addition of a new German brand, Gaggenau, which has maintained its position as the leading luxury brand of professional-grade domestic appliances."

Al-Mutawa added: "The store offers a high-end consumer journey that involves all senses and inspires the culinary-cultured and sophisticated customer to envisage Gaggenau appliances in their homes. The establishment accurately reflects the truly distinctive, purist design aesthetic and

unmatched quality of Gaggenau and its German heritage spanning over three centuries."

The new Kuwait showroom is characterized by its unique and elegant interior design, and displays an innovative range of exceptionally designed German kitchen appliances. In addition, it provides guests with a visceral and very insightful kitchen and living space experience that cannot help but exemplify the sophistication of the brand.

French state to pony up billions for cash-strapped EDF

PARIS: France announced a cash lifeline for state-owned energy giant EDF, which is buckling under massive debt just as it embarks on a new nuclear plant program pushed by President Emmanuel Macron. EDF's fortunes had already taken a hit after the government ordered it last month to cap electricity bills for French clients, even as prices have spiked on global markets.

The measure, which was enacted just weeks before Macron is expected to seek a second term in April, infuriated critics who accused him of electoral posturing that would cost the company some eight billion euros (\$9.1 billion). While EDF normally generates the bulk of its electricity from its network of 56 nuclear reactors across France, many are near the end of their 40-year lifespans and around a dozen have been shut or will be soon to carry out safety inspections over corrosion risks. That will force the group to buy power on the European market, expected to cost it some 11 billion euros this year—even as its total debt load now stands at 43 billion euros.

"EDF is experiencing problems linked to reactor outages, it's selling less nuclear power, and so its revenues are down and it needs financial support from the state," Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire told RTL radio. This month Macron announced plans to build as many as 14 new next-generation EPR2 reactors to reduce the country's reliance on fossil fuels, which EDF has said could cost some 50 billion euros. EDF has also been corralled into buying the nuclear turbine operations in France from the American conglomerate GE, which had bought the business just six years before when Macron was finance minister. —AFP

India aims to be green hydrogen hub

NEW DELHI: India has unveiled the first part of a drive to attempt to turn the world's third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases into a "hub" for green hydrogen. Green hydrogen is produced using non-fossil fuel power to then be utilized in carbon-heavy industrial processes like making steel and concrete, and for transportation.

Although the technology has been heralded as a potentially game-changing way to reduce emissions, it is beset with huge challenges—particularly the high cost of the required infrastructure. "The Mission aims to aid the government in meeting its climate targets and making India a green hydrogen hub," New Delhi said Thursday, announcing the first

phase. This would include industrial incentives like free transmission of renewable electricity between states for producing hydrogen and also ammonia, used in fertilizers, for 25 years. The country aims to produce five million tons of green hydrogen annually by 2030.

"The implementation of this policy will provide clean fuel to the common people of the country. This will reduce dependence on fossil fuel and also reduce crude oil imports," the power ministry said. Land in renewable energy parks will also be allocated for manufacturing green hydrogen and ammonia, and bunkers will be set up near ports for the storage and export of green ammonia, according to a government document.

Delhi is considering offering subsidies and requiring oil refineries and fertilizer plants to use the fuel in the second phase, which is still being prepared, Power Minister Raj Kumar Singh said Wednesday,

Bloomberg News reported. With its booming population, India is projected to become the world's most populous country in this decade, and energy demand is rising fast.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi committed in November's Glasgow climate summit to reach net-zero emissions by 2070, but wants rich nations to help pay for the transition. "Energy requirements of the people of India are expected to nearly double in the next 20 years. Denying this energy would be denying life itself to millions," Modi said earlier this week. "Developed countries need to fulfil their commitments on finance and technology transfer," he told the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) on Wednesday. Indian industrialists including Gautam Adani and Mukesh Ambani, major players in coal and oil, have also announced large investments in renewable technologies including green hydrogen. —AFP



TEXTILES FAN INFLATION FEARS AMID LONDON FASHION WEEK

Textile prices, like many raw materials, are soaring on resurgent post-pandemic demand and the rocketing cost of both energy and transport, industry experts say. Cotton, linen, silk and wool, as well as synthetic materials derived from petroleum, faced surging prices in recent months, boosted also by the global supply-chain crunch. As a result, red-hot inflation is now a major talking point at the industry's London Fashion Week showpiece, which runs until Thursday. Price hikes represent a new challenge for the industry that has already been stricken by both Brexit and the COVID-19 health emergency.

'Impressive cotton surge'

"The textile and clothing industry noticed an impressive surge in cotton prices," said the European association of textile

producers, Euratex, in a statement sent to AFP. "The restart of activity worldwide in 2021 and the increased demand from the textile industry have accelerated the mechanism of (market) tension on raw materials," it added. "This has resulted in a shortage, and rising material costs."

Cotton, which had already surged almost 50 percent last year, peaked earlier this month at \$1.29 per pound-reaching a level last seen in 2011. Organic cotton from key producer India has experienced buoyant demand due to low stockpiles. The cost of wool and flax linen meanwhile rebounded between September 2020 and June 2021, having declined for almost three years.

Impact of 'oil upswing'

The industry has also been spooked by the sky-high

cost of oil. "The increase in oil prices have affected the prices of synthetic fibres ... as these are produced from petroleum-based chemicals or petrochemicals," Euratex noted. Oil had threatened to top \$100 a barrel last week on simmering tensions between Ukraine and key crude producer Russia.

"The ongoing upswing in oil prices is lending buoyancy because it increases the price of synthetic fibres that compete with cotton," added Commerzbank analyst Carsten Fritsch. The price of man-made or synthetic fibres-like acrylics, nylon and polyester-have shot up. Textiles also face the same snarled-up supply chains that have plagued economies worldwide. Retailers and manufacturers will therefore struggle to meet rebounding demand, particularly for cotton, commentators say.

Logistical headache

"Demand is strong amid inflation concerns and logistical issues that make it harder for world buyers to source any cotton anywhere," Price Group analyst Jack Scoville told AFP. Importers and exporters face a huge spike in transport costs, as reopening economies create feverish demand for container shipping. Rogie Sussman Faber, owner of Chicago area company Vogue Fabrics, told AFP that transportation was their biggest issue.

"Here in the USA, we are more affected by the sharp rise in shipping than the price of the materials," Faber said. Onward transport from the port of Chicago compounds that heavy burden, mirroring transit problems seen elsewhere. "Since the onset of COVID, we have experienced a decline in truckers, and the transit companies have raised their prices to cover fuel costs and overtime (and) bonus incentives," noted Faber.—AFP



Models present creations by British designer Molly Goddard during the catwalk show for the Autumn/Winter 2022 collection fashion show on the second day of London Fashion Week in London. —AFP photos



Models present creations for Ahluwalia during the Autumn/Winter 2022 collection fashion show on the second day of London Fashion Week, in London.

Lifestyle | Features

BENIN EXHIBITS STOLEN TREASURES RETURNED BY FRANCE



Doors of the palace of Abomey Kingdom are displayed. —AFP photos



People stand to view the Royal throne of King Glele Kingdom of Dahomey, during an exhibition.



People look at anthropo-zoomorphic statues depicting King Glele (left) and King Behanzin (right) during an exhibition.

Benin President Patrice Talon on Saturday inaugurated an exhibition of historic treasures returned by France last year, nearly 130 years after they were stolen by colonial forces. The 26 pieces, some considered sacred in Benin, will be displayed from Sunday in a 2,000-square-metre (21,500-square-foot) space in the presidential palace in Cotonou in a show entitled "Benin art yesterday and today". The return of artefacts by France comes as calls grow in Africa for Western countries to hand back colonial spoils from their museums and private collections.

Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany have all received requests from African countries to return lost treasures. The 26 pieces returned in November after two years of negotiations between Paris and Cotonou, were stolen in 1892 by French colonial forces from Abomey kingdom located in south of modern-day Benin. This exhibition equals "pride and faith in what we once were, in what we are and in what we will be", Talon told reporters. That the exhibits were finally returning home had broken a taboo and paved the way



Metal artworks looted by French colonial soldiers displayed during an exhibition of returned seized Benin artefacts and exhibition of contemporary artworks at the presidency in Benin's capital Cotonou.

for more such repatriations, he argued. "We did it," he said.

'Part of their soul'
Benin Culture Minister Jean-Michel

Abimbola earlier told AFP the exhibition was "returning to the Benin people part of their soul, part of their history and their dignity". The objects "were taken from a kingdom, but they are

returning to a republic", he said. Before its unification Benin was made up of several kingdoms, including Dahomey, which was known for its vibrant artistic culture. In the first room of the exhibition, immense black walls form the backdrop for a display of the thrones of Dahomey, including the wood and metal sculpture throne of king Ghezo.

"Since it was installed, I haven't stopped contemplating it," said Theo Atrokpo, one of the exhibition guides. "I had already seen it in the Quai Branly museum in France, but to see it here, home with us, it brings back part of our soul and connects with our history." President Talon, who was to inaugurate the event on Saturday evening, presented the exhibition to France's Culture Minister Roselyne Bachelot before the official opening. "It's a magnificent exhibition which brings out the majesty, creativity, and the incredible historic, political and esthetic patrimony that these 26 artefacts represent," the minister told AFP.

'Very emotional'
Alongside the royal treasures, the works of 34 contemporary artists have been selected for the exhibition. "It's

very emotional to be in front of this throne," said Laeila Adjovi, a French-Benin artist whose work forms part of the exhibition. "But I never imagined it would be so large." French President Emmanuel Macron has worked to restore African heritage and Benin's culture minister said discussions were ongoing to return other objects, including the sculpture of the god Gou, which is in the Louvre Museum in Paris.

French lawmakers have passed a bill allowing Paris to return artefacts to both Benin and Senegal, another former French colony. Some were seized by colonial administrators, troops or doctors and passed down to descendants who in turn donated them to museums in Europe and the United States. But others were gifts to missionaries or acquired by African art collectors at the start of the 20th century or discovered by scientific expeditions. A report commissioned by Macron counted some 90,000 African works in French museums, 70,000 of them at the Quai Branly alone. "The work of restitution continues," said French minister Bachelot. "We are working on a law that will help facilitate this restitution." —AFP

COURTNEY COX REGRETS 'STRANGE' APPEARANCE FROM 'INJECTIONS'

Courtney Cox "didn't realise" how "strange" she looked after undergoing cosmetic procedures. The 57-year-old actress admitted she initially tried to fight looking older with various "injections" and other treatments but eventually realised she went "crazy" and is now trying to age gracefully. She said: "There was a time when you go, 'Oh, I'm changing. I'm looking older.' And I tried to

chase that [youthfulness] for years. "And I didn't realise that, I'm actually looking really strange with injections and doing stuff to my face that I would never do now." Musing on whether to post a photo on Instagram of those days compared to now, she added to Sunday Times Style magazine: "I'd say, 'The day you realise what your friends were talking about.' Because people would talk about me, I think. But

there was a period where I went, 'I've got to stop. That's just crazy.' " While she has given up cosmetic procedures, Courtney loves trying new products because she still puts a lot of "intense" pressure on herself to look good. She said: "The scrutiny is intense, but I don't know if it could be more intense than what I put on myself. The former 'Friends' star "can't believe" her next milestone birthday will be 60. She said: "Oh God, it's so hard to even hear or say. I can't believe it. There's nothing wrong with being 60, I just can't believe it. Time goes so fast. "There's no question that I am more grounded, I've learnt so much in my life - what to enjoy, what to try to do more of and what to let go of." The 'Scream' actress - who is engaged to 45-year-old Johnny McDaid and has 17-year-old daughter Coco with her ex-husband, David Arquette - still feels like she's "young" and doesn't worry about being older than so many of her friends. She said: "I feel like I'm young. I have a lot of friends in their thirties and I don't think about it. To me we're the same age until I actually study it."



JORDAN STEPHENS WANTS TO 'BAN' BILLIONAIRES

The Rizzle Kicks singer - who is in a relationship with Little Mix star Jade Thirlwall - insisted such a high level of wealth is "unnecessary" and people would question their "obsession" if it related to accumulating something other than money. Discussing what he'd do if he ruled the world, Jordan said: "I'd ban billionaires. Some people have too much money. Genuinely. It's unnecessary. "Do you know there are reasons to believe that the desire for accumulation is not actually an instinctive one? It appears to be mutation. An obsessive need to accumulate. "If you replaced money with something else, that accumulation would instantly appear unhealthy. "Look at this man who has two billion packets of crisps. Is he ok? Why has that woman got three billion leaflets?" And Jordan called to "re-engage our sense of community" and ensure wealth is distributed more evenly. He told Reader's Digest magazine: "Jokes aside, let's re-engage our sense of community. "Maintain the level of responsibility that would naturally arise with accumulation. "We live in a world of empty apartments and unhouses people. That's not right. That's all I know." The 30-year-old star is worried about "modern values" and called for more "balance" and fairness. He said: "I worry about our modern values. We appear to be the only species that believes in unfair battle. "Bring back duelling. Bring back sorting out issues through competition that can end respectfully. No ganging up. No foul play. "Restore honour in surrendering and the acceptance of loss. "There's grace in defeat but only if there's fairness to begin with. "We need to feel part of something bigger than ourselves. Understand what we're part of bigger stories. "And find peace in that realisation. "I think everybody has a part to play on this earth. There should not be a single soul on the planet that feels disorientated. We need to restore some balance."

PARIS JACKSON 'DOESN'T WRITE HAPPY SONGS'

The 23-year-old singer - who is the only daughter of late superstar Michael Jackson and Debbie Rowe, and sister to Prince, 25 and Bigi, 19 - revealed that she stays away from writing "happy" songs and most songs end up being about her death. She said: "I don't write happy songs When I do try to write a song, it usually ends up being a song about me dying." Speaking to the crowd at St. Regis Resort in Aspen while promoting her new EP 'The Lost', Paris went on to tell the audience how her song 'Yellowbird' was inspired by a break up. According to TMZ, she said: "We broke up two years ago on Valentine's Day, and then I wrote this song, so I hope you like it. I know he won't!" It comes soon after the 'let down' hitmaker - whose father Michael suffered a fatal cardiac arrest brought on by a drugs overdose aged 50 back in 2009 - admitted that she would "not be opposed" to the idea of collaborating with her superstar aunt Janet Jackson, who is known for hits such as 'That's the Way Love Goes' and 'Love Will Never Do Without You.' Back in January 2022, she said: "We haven't talked about it, but I'm not opposed to it! I love collaborating with all kinds of artists. The genre doesn't really turn me off, doesn't matter what genre it is. I can't say that I see myself doing trap music anytime in the near future, but I'm open to everything."



JESSE WILLIAMS ALMOST BECAME A SOAP STAR

The 40-year-old actor - who is known for starring as Dr Jackson Avery on hit medical drama 'Grey's Anatomy' - revealed that he was once offered a role on a Los Angeles-based soap opera early in his career, despite having had no thought of acting at that time. He said: "I was in college. I had no thoughts about acting at that time but I read for something. My agent got me an audition. They called me back and they offered it to me." However, the star went on to explain that he couldn't take the role because it would mean that he would have to quit at school and move from his native Philadelphia for the "short stint". Without naming the soap opera in particular, he added: "I would have to move from Philadelphia, drop out of school, go to Los Angeles [and] explain to my parents that I'm quitting school to do a short stint on some soap opera. So, it was lovely of them to offer, but I knew that was not my path." Jesse - who has children Sadie, eight and Maceo, six with ex-wife Aryn Drake-Lee - took a variety of low-paid jobs in his early twenties and quipped that he only regretted turning down the job when he was struggling financially. Speaking on 'Live with Kelly and Ryan', he added: "I was bartending and waiting tables, just New York hustling while I was figure out what I was gonna do with my life, having that quarter life crisis you have in your twenties. [I thought about the soap opera] when that unemployment cheque [ran] out. Like, 'How much were they gonna pay me?'" —Bang Showbiz



Sports

Real Madrid bounce back from PSG disappointment

Asensio's stunning goal lifts Real over Alaves 3-0

PAMPLONA: Real Madrid put their defeat by Paris Saint-Germain behind them on Saturday by beating Alaves 3-0 in La Liga as Marco Asensio's stunning goal helped send Carlo Ancelotti's side seven points clear at the top of the table. But the result flattered Madrid, who struggled to break down Alaves until Asensio unleashed from distance at the Santiago Bernabeu, where the disgruntled fans had whistled with the score goalless at half-time.

"We agreed with the fans," said Carlo Ancelotti. "Nobody in the dressing room was happy with how we played in the first half." Asensio's goal opened the floodgates as Vinicius Junior finished off Karim Benzema's cut-back before Benzema converted a late penalty after Rodrygo was brought down in the area. Sevilla can reduce the gap to four points again by winning away at Espanyol on Sunday but Madrid remain the clear favourites to regain the Spanish title, despite their dip in form.

Luis Suarez had earlier lifted the mood at Atletico Madrid after his phenomenal long-range strike helped Atleti to a 3-0 win over Osasuna, ahead of Wednesday's crunch Champions League game against Manchester United. Real Madrid had managed only one goal in their previous four games—another Asensio stunner against Granada—and there was particular criticism after the passive performance against PSG last week brought a 1-0 defeat in Paris.

There was frustration again against Alaves and Ancelotti will hope Vinicius' first goal in seven matches and Benzema's first since returning from injury can now reignite the spark. "We needed this match," Ancelotti said. They were whistled at half-time after a weary, error-strewn performance that could have left Alaves in front had Jason capitalized on Casemiro giving the ball away in the penalty area.

Madrid started the second period with renewed intent to play quicker but their efforts were laced with nerves, while around them the fans were increasingly agitated. Vinicius created the best opening when he nipped round the outside only to see his shot saved by Fernando Pacheco, with Benzema's follow-up hacked off the line by Florian Lejeune. The were still moments of sloppiness and Asensio was jeered when his backpass was read by Pere Pons, who rounded Thibaut Courtois but failed to steer in from the angle.

The reaction seemingly stayed with Asensio because he celebrated his goal by making a gesture to suggest he wanted more support. It was a brilliant strike, the Spaniard collecting off Benzema on the right, cutting in onto his left foot and arcing a dipping effort into the far corner. Benzema almost made it two from a Vinicius cut-back, his finish on the turn dribbling up against the post. Moments later the same combination came in reverse, Benzema supplying Vinicius, who this time slotted in. Rodrygo, on as a substitute, was then tripped by Lejeune, allowing Benzema to make it three from the spot in injury-time.

Spectacular Suarez

Atletico did not have to wait so long against Osasuna. Joao Felix smashed his team into a third-minute lead in Pamplona before driving a superb pass downfield for Suarez to chase after, with the Uruguayan firing in a second before Osasuna goalkeeper Sergio Herrera could scramble back.

Angel Correa tucked in a third late on to round off a convincing win for Atletico, who climb back into the top four and head into the last-16 tie against United with a spring in their step. The only blot on a satisfying afternoon for Diego Simeone



PAMPLONA: Atletico Madrid's Uruguayan forward Luis Suarez (right) vies with Osasuna's Spanish defender David Garcia during the Spanish league football match between CA Osasuna and Club Atletico de Madrid on February 19, 2022. —AFP

was an injury to central defender Jose Gimenez, who had to be substituted at half-time and could now miss the meeting with the likes of Cristiano Ronaldo and Bruno Fernandes this week.

Barcelona are only three points behind Atletico with two games in hand while Villarreal look increasingly like serious contenders for

Champions League qualification after they secured an impressive 4-1 win away at Granada, Arnaut Danjuma scoring a hat-trick. Unai Emery's side, who host Juventus at La Ceramica on Tuesday, are also three points adrift of Atletico, having played the same number of games as Diego Simeone's side. —AFP

Mendis slams 69 as Sri Lanka win 5th and final T20

MELBOURNE: Kusal Mendis hit an unbeaten match-winning 69 and skipper Dasun Shanaka blasted 35 as Sri Lanka won the fifth and final Twenty20 against Australia by five wickets on Sunday to prevent a series whitewash. The home side won all four previous games, three of them convincingly, and when skipper Aaron Finch won the toss and batted they were eyeing a big total. But they were exposed early on by some impressive Sri Lankan bowling.

Australia struggled to 58 for three off 10 overs before late fireworks from Matthew Wade (43 off 27 balls) and Daniel Sams (18 off 15) ensured a competitive 154 for six. With nothing to lose, Sri Lanka were up to the task. Mendis and Shanaka shared an 83-run stand to send the game to the wire with nine needed off the last over from Kane Richardson, which they achieved with a ball to spare in a thrilling finale.

"The boys played really well throughout the series," said Shanaka. "There was a clear statement that when it comes to the World Cup (in Australia this year) we will be really prepared." Sri Lanka batted without fear early in the run chase, slapping 21 in the first three overs. But it was a risky approach and Pathum Nissanka holed out to Glenn Maxwell off Richardson for 13 then debutant Kamil Mishara was run out for one in the same over.

Charith Asalanka made a quickfire 20 before Janith Liyanage was also run out for eight after an inexplicable miscommunication with Mendis to leave them at 71 for four after nine overs. But Mendis was batting beautifully and with Shanaka steadied the ship to move within 41 runs off the final five overs, bringing up his sixth career half-century off 43 balls. They reduced the gap to nine off the last over.

Dangerous

Shanaka hit a two then a huge six, but in a dramatic finish was then out before Richardson went off with a hamstring injury. It left Daniel Sams to bowl the last two balls with Chamika Karunaratne getting the winning run. "I think it's been a fantastic series for players individually," said Finch. "To keep growing as a team has been fantastic as well. Sri Lanka are a very dangerous side," he added. "To win four games in a row was really good, to win five in a row really is tough in a format of the game that can be so fickle at times."

Earlier, Sri Lanka bowled impressively to stymie Australia. Under pressure to get the scoreboard moving, Finch swung his bat at Dushmantha Chameera in the fourth over and was caught for eight by Lahiru Kumara—another failure for the captain. Ben McDermott soon followed, out for three after slogging at Praveen Jayawickrama to leave Australia on 13 for two off five overs. Josh Inglis and Maxwell got the scoreboard moving before the dangerous Inglis suffered a blow to the helmet from Chameera. He was fine, but a replay showed the ball clipped his glove on the way through and he was given out caught and bowled after a fiery 23. Australia crawled to the half-way mark at 58 for three before Kumara bagged the key wickets of Marcus Stoinis (17) and Maxwell (29) in the same over, leaving it to Wade and Sams to hit out and add vital late runs. —AFP



Sixth Kuwait Special Bowling Tournament

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The Sixth Kuwait Special Olympics Bowling Tournament organized by Tumouh Sports Club with the participation of 40 players of both genders, from Tumouh and Warba Disabled clubs in addition to players from the American military club included in the presence of Tumouh Club Chairwoman Rihab Buresli and other officials. The results of the tournament were as follows:

Men's (mixed) doubles: First group:

- (1) Ahmad Nasrallah and Abdelwahab Essa.
- (2) Saif Al-Mutairi and Abdelaziz Al-Qassar.
- (3) Youduf Salem and Barrak Al-Ajmi.

Second group:

- (1) Mohammad Al-Tarkeet and Fawzan Al-Qassar.
- (2) Fahad Al-Mulla and Musaed Al-Shimmari.
- (3) Sami Sultan and Saleh Ghunaim.

Men's Doubles:

- (1) Bader Suwaidan and Brock.



- (2) Ali Abdallah and Tim.
- (3) Mohammad Al-Shawaf and Abdelaziz Saleh.

Women doubles first group:

- (1) Hanadi Abdelaziz and Zainab Al-Duraie.
- (2) Iman Al-Khaldi and Hind Al-Khaldi.
- (3) Loulwa Al-Hajji and Sharifa Al-Ibrahim.

Second group:

- (1) Hajar Al-Dhafiri and Shahad Al-Tattan.
- (2) Ayat Al-Tulaihi and Mariam Al-Hindi.
- (3) Sheikha Al-Hindi and Birtha.

Chairwoman Rihab Buresli was happy with the success of the tournament as it coincides

with Kuwait's celebrations of National and Liberation days.

She said that the tournament reflects the interest and care the state affords to the disabled. She said this tournament is within the inclusion of the disabled sports activities to prepare them physically, psychologically and socially, to release their energy and develop their skills. She lauded the support of the Public Authority for Sport and the parents' interest as well as the Bowling Club cooperation that made its facilities available to carry on with the championship activities.

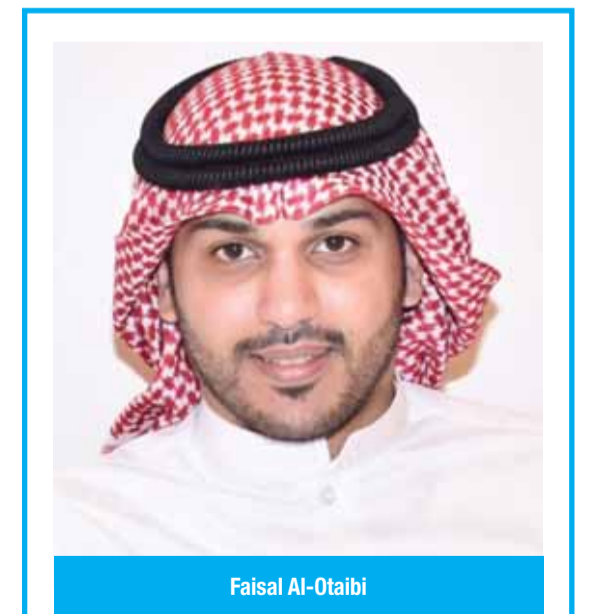


Tennis National Days Festival

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Board of Kuwait Tennis Federation said it is necessary to continue broadening the base of the Juniors by spreading the game

around the country through the organization of championships and festivals as the federation seeks to increase the number of players and discover new talents. Al-Jaber attended the closing ceremony of the Tennis National Days Festival that was held at Mishref Oasis courts. Rafa Nadal Academy Kuwait, Check Bom Tennis Life, Kuwait Tennis Academy and Top Spin Tennis Academy participated in the event. Al-Jaber thanked the partners for the success of the festival.



Faisal Al-Otaibi

KUWAIT: The first women Karate championship will start today with the participation of 150 players of various ages from Nasr, Tadhamon, Arabi, Yarmouk and 10 private academies. A member of the Board of Karate Federation and the head of competitions committee Faisal Al-Otaibi said the participation from various age groups will boost the tournament and it is a clear evidence on the popularity of Karate among women.

Sports

AC Milan held 2-2 by rock-bottom Salernitana; Door opens for Inter

Teens rescue Mourinho's Roma; 39-year-old Quagliarella shines

ROME: AC Milan were held to a 2-2 draw by rock-bottom Salernitana on Saturday which kept them top of Serie A but also handed the title advantage to city rivals Inter. Seven-time European champions AC Milan have a two-point lead. However, Inter, still smarting from a midweek Champions League home loss to Liverpool, have two games in hand and can reclaim pole position if they defeat Sassuolo.

Brazilian midfielder Junior Messias gave Milan a fifth-minute lead before Federico Bonazzoli leveled with an overhead kick on the half-hour mark. Giant Bosnian striker Milan Djuric headed Salernitana in front on 72 minutes before Milan salvaged a point thanks to a long-range effort by Ante Rebic five minutes later. Salernitana, with their third coach of the season in Davide Nicola in charge, are still seven points from safety. "When there is a change of coach, we too have to look at ourselves. The club made this choice, and we will give 100%," said Djuric of Nicola who succeeded the sacked Stefano Colantuono in midweek. Teenagers Cristian Volpato and Edoardo Bove came to Roma's rescue as Jose Mourinho's side drew 2-2 with Verona. With Verona 2-0 up, 18-year-old Volpato scored in the 65th minute, just three minutes after coming off the bench when he reacted fastest to a half-cleared corner. Bove, 19, was then introduced in the 78th minute and six minutes later secured a point with a shot in off the post, again following a corner from Jordan Veretout. Verona, coached by Igor Tudor, had been worth their 2-0 lead. A free-kick, well-rehearsed on the training ground, from Czech star Antonin Barak gave them a

fifth-minute lead. It was his 10th goal of the season.

Mourinho red card

They doubled their advantage on 20 minutes through French midfielder Adrien Tameze. Mourinho was sent off in stoppage time for an angry outburst at the referee. He later posted a series of photographs of himself on Instagram, holding and then kicking the ball. "Picture 1 ball possession, picture 2 direct football, picture 3 I love this people and for them I fight, picture 4 I dont talk, is better to go home and have a nice dinner. Have a good Sunday," he wrote after opting to skip his post-match media duties. A third successive draw for Roma left them in seventh place, six points off the Champions League spots.

Meanwhile, Fabio Quagliarella made light of his 39 years to score twice as Sampdoria defeated Empoli 2-0 to boost their Serie A survival hopes. Before Saturday, former Juventus striker Quagliarella had only scored once this season, a penalty in October, but he rediscovered his form at a crucial time with goals in the 14th and 29th minutes against Empoli. Sampdoria are now in 15th place in the table, five points above the drop zone.

"These are three very important points. There's a long way to go in the championship but this victory gives us confidence," the veteran striker told DAZN. "I realise that I am a certain age but I will give everything and my last drop of sweat for this shirt," added Quagliarella who has been on the scoresheet for the last 18 consecutive seasons in Serie A. With 180 goals in the league from a career which has also



SALERNO: AC Milan's French forward Olivier Giroud (left) fights for the ball with Salernitana's Argentinian defender Federico Fazio (right) during the Italian Serie A football match between Salernitana and AC Milan on February 19, 2022. —AFP

taken in Torino, Ascoli, Udinese and Napoli, he is Serie A's leading active scorer. Ciro Immobile, 31,

who has 19 goals this season for Lazio, is not far behind on 174 goals. —AFP

Kuwait's Women Football League



By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Fatayat Al-Oyoun and Juventus Academy Women Football teams added to the already fierce competition in the first women football league in its fourth round as Fatayat Al-Oyoun defeated Tadhamon 3-1 and moved in first place for the first time with 7 points, while Juventus



Academy defeated the School Sports Association team 5-1.

In the third match, Salwa Al-Sabah team defeated Gulf Academy 1-0. This brings the 'point difference' to 1 point. Al-Oyoun top the table with 7 points on goal difference; Schools Association moved to second with 7 points; Salwa Al-Sabah grabbed third with 6 points while Juventus

Academy have 6 points.

Coach of Fatayat Al-Oyoun Nouran Abdelhameed said her team are seeking to win the first league title adding "we have many talents, besides, Fatayat Al-Oyoun have the youngest team as far as age average is concerned. We enjoy major support from the Club's board headed by Fatima Al-Shimmari and other officials.

Fulham shocked by Huddersfield

LONDON: Fulham crashed to a shock 2-1 defeat against Huddersfield as the Championship leaders missed the chance to extend their advantage at the top on Saturday. Second-placed Bournemouth's match against Nottingham Forest was called off after Storm Eunice caused damage at Dean Court on Friday and third-placed Blackburn's clash with Millwall on Saturday was also postponed because of the weather. That gave Fulham an opportunity to pad their lead in the race for automatic promotion to the Premier League.

But Marco Silva's side could not take advantage as Huddersfield struck twice in the first half at Craven Cottage. Danny Ward put the fifth-placed Terriers ahead in the 31st minute before Duane Holmes doubled the lead from the penalty spot two minute before the break. Bobby Decordova-Reid pulled a late goal back, but Fulham suffered a first league defeat since December 20. Fourth-placed QPR left it late to draw 1-1 against Hull at Loftus Road.

Marcus Forss, on loan from Brentford, fired Hull into the lead in the 26th minute. There was a lengthy delay just after the hour when Hull goalkeeper Matt Ingram needed treatment following a collision with QPR's Albert Adomah and eventually was taken off on a stretcher. Ilias Chair then struck

from close range with 15 minutes left to save QPR. Sheffield United swept past Swansea 4-0 at Bramall Lane, while Middlesbrough saw their play-off ambitions stall after losing 2-1 at Bristol City. West Brom also lost ground on the top six following a 2-0 defeat at Luton.

At the other end of the table, Louie Sibley hit a stoppage-time winner as Derby beat relegation rivals Peterborough 1-0, with both sides finishing with 10 men. Reading kept themselves five points clear of Derby after beating Preston 3-2 in their first Championship win since November. Bottom of the table Barnsley lost 1-0 at Coventry, where Dominic Hyam struck in the third minute of stoppage time. Cardiff and Blackpool drew 1-1, while Stoke were held to a 2-2 draw by Birmingham. —AFP

Raja Casablanca win as other CAF giants struggle

JOHANNESBURG: Raja Casablanca, captained by 35-year-old Mohsine Moutaouali, were the only club among eight seeded to reach the CAF Champions League knockout stage who won on a goal-shy second matchday. The Moroccan outfit, who last lifted the marquee African club trophy in 1999, edged Entente Setif of Algeria 1-0 through a second-half goal from Mohamed Zrida in Algiers.

Of the seven other first and second seeds in action, defending champions Al Ahly and Zamalek of Egypt, Esperance and Etoile Sahel of Tunisia and Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa drew. Wydad Casablanca of Morocco and Horoya of Guinea, the lone team among 16 contenders not to earn at least one point during the first two matchdays, lost in a round where eight matches produced just nine goals. Seeking a fourth title, Raja are the only team boasting a perfect record from qualifying and group matches and are also the only side not to concede.

The Green Eagles top Group B with six points having beaten South African visitors AmaZulu 1-0 last weekend in the Moroccan commercial capital. Group debutants AmaZulu remained in contention for a top-two finish and a quarter-final place by winning 1-0 against Horoya in Durban through a back-heeled Luvuyo Memela goal on 31 minutes. AmaZulu and Setif, the sole former champions not among the seeds, have three points each while Horoya appear out of the running following two losses.

Ahly, chasing a record third straight title, belatedly began their Group A campaign with a 0-0 draw against Al Hilal of Sudan in the 31 degrees Celsius (88 Fahrenheit) heat of Omdurman. In a match of few scoring chances, Ahly nearly snatched victory in added time when substitute Mohamed 'Afsha' Magdy struck the woodwork. "It was an okay rather than a good result," said South Africa-born Ahly coach Pitso Mosimane, the second most successful coach behind Portuguese Manuel Jose in African club competitions with six titles. —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

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Amiri Hospital	22450005	Adaliya	22517144
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Khaldiya	24848075
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Kaifan	24849807
Chest Hospital	24849400	Shamiya	24848913
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Shuwaikh	24814507
Adan Hospital	23940620	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Nuzha	22526804
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Qadsiya	22515088
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I, Mohammed Wahid Ali Badruddin Khan Sarguroh (Old Name) S/o Khan Sarguroh Budruddin Khurshid, A-1/305 Noble Height, near Kalsekar College, Kausa, Thane, Maharashtra 400612, have changed my passport (T6759924) name correction as Abdul Wahid (Given Name) Khan Sarguroh (Surname) S/o Khan Sarguroh Badruddin Khurshid. (C 0859)

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

EMERGENCY 112



BEIJING: Fireworks spell out "One World" during the closing ceremony of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games, at the National Stadium, known as the Bird's Nest, in Beijing yesterday. —AFP

Curtain falls on Beijing Olympics

Olympics closes after sporting drama, doping and golden Gu

BEIJING: A Beijing Winter Olympics which saw sporting drama and milestones but was tarnished by a Russian doping scandal ended yesterday with an uplifting closing ceremony. The Games will be remembered for new stars such as Eileen Gu but also for the doping controversy which engulfed 15-year-old figure skater Kamila Valieva and because they took place inside a vast COVID-secure "bubble".

The "Bird's Nest" stadium, which also took centre stage when Beijing hosted the 2008 Summer Games, was the scene for a celebratory, snowflake-themed closing ceremony attended by President Xi Jinping and a socially distanced crowd seated among red lanterns. Declaring the Games closed and handing over to 2026 hosts Milano-Cortina, International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach hailed an "unforgettable Olympic experience".

There was no feared mass outbreak of COVID at the Games or in the wider community in the Chinese capital, but Bach said: "If we want to finally overcome this pandemic, we must be faster, we must aim higher, we must be stronger—we must stand

together. "In this Olympic spirit of solidarity, we call on the international community: give equal access to vaccines for everybody around the world." Fireworks lit up the night sky as the ceremony reached its crescendo, spelling out the words "ONE WORLD".

Doping overshadows Games

Since the opening ceremony on February 4, a new global star emerged in the form of 18-year-old freestyle skier Gu, who was born in California but switched to China in 2019 and became the unofficial face of the Games. There was a new men's figure skating champion in 22-year-old Nathan Chen of the United States, who dethroned two-time Olympic champion Yuzuru Hanyu, in what could be the Japanese legend's final appearance at a Games.

Another iconic figure of winter sports, the American snowboarder Shaun White, will definitely not return to competition of any sort after calling it quits. The 35-year-old's last event ended agonizingly out of the medals and he was in tears as he bid farewell to snowboarding—"the love of my life". There was bitter disap-

pointment for his fellow American, the alpine ski star Mikaela Shiffrin, one of the biggest names at the Games but who went home without a medal.

There were tears from Valieva after it emerged that she had failed a drugs test prior to the Games, catapulting her to the forefront of yet another Russian doping controversy to mar an Olympics and piling intense pressure on the teenager. In what will go down as a notorious episode in the history of the Winter Olympics, the pre-tournament favorite for singles gold fell several times on the ice in the finals, to audible gasps from the socially distanced crowd of hand-picked spectators.

Her doping case looks certain to drag on in the coming months, long after the Games have packed up. She was allowed to skate in the Chinese capital but has not been cleared of doping. In a Games first, the skating team medals were not awarded after Valieva played a starring role in propelling the Russians to gold, ahead of the United States and Japan. The American skaters made an 11th-hour court bid on Saturday to get their hands on their medals before they went home, but the Court of Arbitration for Sport rejected it.

Milestones

China and its ruling Communist Party will look back on a soft-power success. Fears about a mass COVID outbreak in the "closed loop" bubble sealing the nearly 3,000 athletes and about 65,000 others never materialized. Some athletes did though catch the illness and the pandemic was never far away—Russia and Canada's women ice hockey teams played each other wearing medical masks after the results of their daily PCR tests failed to arrive in time.

Concerns about human rights had dominated the build-up, with the United States leading a diplomatic boycott by its closest allies over China's rights record, especially the fate of the Muslim Uyghur minority in Xinjiang. Their athletes did however compete. China warned in the fraught lead-up that foreign athletes criticizing the authorities could face consequences, but in the end, any protests against the hosts were extremely muted. There were numerous records—among them American bobsleighter Elana Meyers Taylor becoming the most decorated Black athlete in the history of the Winter Olympics. —AFP



CATALONIA: Sevilla's Argentinean midfielder Lucas Ocampos reacts on the ground during the Spanish league football match between RCD Espanyol and Sevilla FC yesterday. —AFP

Sevilla stumble again in Spanish title race

MADRID: Sevilla stumbled again in the Spanish title race yesterday as a 1-1 draw away at Espanyol left Real Madrid with a six-point lead at the top of La Liga. Another slip means Sevilla have now won only once in their last five league games, allowing Madrid to maintain a commanding advantage, despite Carlo Ancelotti's side suffering a dip in form themselves. Rafa Mir put Sevilla in front at Cornella but Sergi Darder equalized for Espanyol early in the second half.

Sevilla's pursuit of a winner was made harder by Jules Kounde being sent off with 14 minutes left, although Youssef En-Nesyri had a golden opportunity in injury time, only to see his finish saved. Anthony Martial, who joined Sevilla on loan from Manchester United in January, went off injured in the first half and could now miss next weekend's crunch derby at home to Real Betis.

Julen Lopetegui's team still have to play Real Madrid at home in April, two weeks after visiting Barcelona at Camp Nou, but they are in danger of letting Madrid drift through the second half of the season, without a serious rival to challenge them. Martial had to go off in the 26th minute and was replaced by Papu Gomez, who 10 minutes later provided the assist for Sevilla's opener. Diego Carlos started it by stepping into midfield to intercept before spraying a ball out to Gomez on the left. Gomez weaved inside and floated a cross to the back post, where Mir squeezed a finish inside the post.

Espanyol equalised shortly after half-time as Darder sent a superb header into the top corner from Oscar Gil's cross and Sevilla's problems grew when Kounde was sent off, the defender reacting petulantly to being grappled by Javi Puado. Raul de Tomas almost snatched Espanyol a winner but his shot was excellently blocked by Diego Carlos before En-Nesyri sped clear for Sevilla, only to be denied by Diego Lopez. —AFP

Man Utd survive Leeds storm 4-2

LEEDS: Manchester United survived blowing another half-time lead to open up a four-point advantage in the race for a top-four finish in the Premier League with a thrilling 4-2 win at relegation-threatened Leeds. Harry Maguire responded to questions over his status as captain of the Red Devils by opening the scoring on 34 minutes before Bruno Fernandes added a second on the stroke of half-time.

Lost leads have been a feature of Ralf Rangnick's interim spell in charge and United were punished by another slow start to a second half as Rodrigo's fortunate cross and substitute Raphinha brought Leeds level. However, United this time bounced back to find a winner when Fred smashed in 20 minutes from time before Anthony Elanga sealed the points late on.

This was United's first league visit to Elland Road in front of a capacity crowd in 19 years and the visitors were met with a hostile atmosphere and a tricky pitch due to incessant rain. Leeds boss Marcelo Bielsa described keeping his club in the top-flight as "an obligation" this week but took the bold decision to drop top scorer Raphinha to the bench after subbing the Brazilian at half-time in last week's 3-0 defeat at Everton. Another ragged defensive display leaves Bielsa's men still just

five points above the relegation zone and with a daunting trip to Liverpool to come in midweek.

Maguire responds

Stories that Cristiano Ronaldo was set to replace Maguire as United captain for the rest of the season were dismissed as "nonsense" by Rangnick this week. Ronaldo ended his worst goal drought for 13 years in midweek against Brighton and missed a glorious chance to open the scoring when Ilan Meslier spread himself brilliantly to deny the Portuguese a tap in from point-blank range. Instead it was Maguire who broke the deadlock and United's run of failing to score from a corner for over a year with a powerful header from Luke Shaw's delivery.

Leeds have conceded 11 goals in their two visits to Old Trafford in the past two seasons and their wide open style was allowing United to slice through with ease on the counter-attack once more. Five minutes into time added on at the end of the first half for a head injury to Robin Koch, the visitors doubled their lead when Jadon Sancho's inviting cross found Fernandes unmarked to head down past Meslier. United had blown a half-time lead in three of their last four games, but on each occasion it had been a single-goal advantage.



LEEDS: Manchester United's Swedish striker Anthony Elanga (left) fights for the ball with Leeds United's Spanish defender Junior Firpo during the English Premier League football match between Leeds United and Manchester United yesterday. —AFP

Bielsa swallowed his pride at the break to introduce Raphinha and Leeds were level within nine minutes of the restart thanks to two goals in 60 seconds. Firstly Rodrigo's cross flew over the head of David De Gea into the far corner. With the crowd still on their feet, Leeds scored again when Adam Forshaw's strong challenge on Bruno Fernandes was not penalized and Daniel James' cross was swept home by Raphinha at the back post.

As conditions continued to worsen

under a torrential downpour, Rangnick turned to his bench in what appeared a bid to tighten up his midfield with the introduction of Fred for Paul Pogba. But it was the Brazilian who struck the winner as a wild game had another swing when he drilled home Sancho's pass at the near post. Another of Rangnick's substitutes then ensured there would not be a second Leeds comeback with a calm finish after Fernandes had robbed Pascal Struijk on the edge of his own box. —AFP