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Kuwait Times Special Supplement Inside

KUWAIT NATIONAL & LIBERATION DAY



UN Security Council ends Iraq invasion reparations to Kuwait

Otaibi hails efforts to close compensation file • More than \$50bn recovered in damages

Amir, Crown Prince meet Algerian President



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday received visiting Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, accompanied by senior officials. The meeting was also attended by HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA

NEW YORK: The UN Security Council voted unanimously Tuesday to wrap up the three-decade program which has allowed Kuwait to recover more than \$50 billion from Iraq for damages caused by its 1990 invasion. Members approved a resolution to "terminate the mandate" of the United Nations Compensation Commission, concluding that the operation has "fulfilled" its purpose of adequately remunerating Kuwait.

The measure, drafted by Britain, says it "confirms that the government of Iraq is no longer required to deposit a percentage of proceeds from export sales of petroleum, petroleum products and natural gas into the fund". The claims process "is now complete and final", having recovered some \$52.4 billion in total from Iraq for Kuwait, it adds.

Kuwait hailed the UN Security Council's efforts on ending the Kuwaiti-Iraqi compensation file and the firm will and strong determination that it showed to complete the implementation of this commitment. This came during Kuwait's speech delivered by the Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the UN, Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi, at the Security Council session in which it unanimously adopted Resolution 2621, which ended the mandate of the UN Compensation Commission.

"We are fully aware that compensation does not aim to punish the aggressor as much as it is keen to hold him accountable after the conflict ends by addressing the effects of the aggression and bear-

ing legal responsibility for the losses and damages he caused and achieving justice for the affected governments and individuals," Otaibi said.

He also welcomed the Security Council's unanimous adoption of Resolution 2621 at the beginning of the session, which ends, after 31 years, the mandate of the committee, which was mandated in accordance with Resolutions 687 and 692 to consider claims for compensation for damages and losses incurred by governments, companies and individuals caused by Iraq's illegal invasion and occupation of Kuwait in 1990.

Furthermore, Otaibi added that the committee considered nearly 2.7 million claims submitted by more than 100 governments and a number of international organizations, with a total value of \$352.5 billion. However, it approved around 1.5 million claims worth \$52.4 billion, which confirms the conservative and cautious approach in examining the evidence available to verify all the claims due for compensation.

Otaibi noted the introductory paragraph contained in the decision, in which the Council expresses its appreciation for Kuwait's cooperation with the committee and the Iraqi government, and praises Kuwait's good intentions by agreeing to suspend the payment of compensation for three consecutive years for the years 2014, 2015 and 2016. This was in consideration of the circumstances and conditions

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News in brief

Turkey seeks crime boss

ISTANBUL: Turkey has asked the United Arab Emirates to extradite a convicted crime boss who fled prosecution and accused the allies of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of serious misdemeanors, state news agency reported yesterday. The justice ministry has asked the UAE to "temporarily arrest Sedat Peker for his eventual extradition to Turkey", the Anadolu news agency reported. In June, Peker said he had been warned by UAE authorities about the "high security risk" of his videos filled with bombshell accusations. — AFP

Tunisia bans film

TUNIS: Tunisia has withdrawn from cinemas a new Agatha Christie adaptation starring Zionist actress Gal Gadot, following protests over "normalization" with the Zionist entity. British director Kenneth Branagh's "Death on the Nile", already banned in Kuwait and Lebanon for the same reason, will no longer be shown in cinemas across the North African country. Movie theatres had been showing the film since Feb 9 but, following protests, the authorities agreed to ban it. — AFP

UAE to buy Chinese jets

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates said yesterday it plans to buy a dozen Chinese L15 aircraft, as it seeks to bolster its defenses after a series of attacks by Yemeni rebels. The UAE defense ministry said it intended to sign a contract with China National Aero-Technology Import & Export Corporation (CATI-IC) to purchase 12 of the L15 training and light combat aircraft, with the option for 36 additional jets of the same type, the official Emirati news agency WAM reported. — AFP

Lebanon foils IS plot against Hezb bastion

BEIRUT: Lebanon has thwarted a plan by the Islamic State group to carry out three suicide bombings targeting Shiite religious compounds in Beirut's southern suburbs, the interior ministry said yesterday. "A terrorist group had recruited young Palestinian men in Lebanon to carry out major bombing attacks using explosive belts" and other munitions, Interior Minister Bassam Mawlawi told a press conference.

"Three separate targets were to be hit at the same time," the ministry said, in an operation Mawlawi said would have caused significant loss of life. Lebanon's Internal

Security Forces (ISF) said the instructions for the bomb plot came from an IS operative based in the Palestinian refugee camp of Ain al-Hilweh, who is in touch with fellow Sunni extremists in Syria.

The instructions were passed to an undercover agent recruited by the ISF to infiltrate IS networks in Lebanon. On Feb 7, the agent was instructed to prepare attacks on a Shiite religious compound in the Al-Laylaki neighborhood, the Imam Al-Kazem compound in Haret Hreik and the Al-Nasser religious center in Beirut's Ouzai suburb, the ISF said. He was given three explosive vests and other weapons to conduct the attacks on Feb 16, the ISF added.

Security forces have since identified four suspected militants residing in the Ain al-Hilweh camp who are believed to have been involved in the bomb plot. Mawlawi said two suspects had been arrested, although he did

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BEIRUT: Lebanese Internal Security Forces show weapons seized from the Islamic State group, which was planning attacks on targets in Beirut's southern suburbs, during a press conference yesterday. — AFP

9,000-year-old ritual complex found in Jordan

AMMAN: Archaeologists deep in the Jordanian desert have discovered a 9,000-year-old ritualistic complex near what is thought to be the earliest known large human-built structure worldwide. The Stone Age shrine site, excavated last year, was used by gazelle hunters and features carved stone figures, an altar and a miniature model of a large-scale hunting trap.

The giant game traps the model represents - so-called "desert kites" - were made of long walls that converge to corral running gazelles into enclosures or holes for slaughter. Similar structures of two or more stone walls, some several kilometers long, have been found in deserts across Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey and Kazakhstan. The Neolithic-era ritual site was discovered inside a larger campsite last October by a joint French-Jordanian team called the South Eastern



A handout picture shows recently-discovered antiquities linked to hunter-gatherers and dating back to the Neolithic era in the Jordanian Badia. — AFP

Badia Archaeological Project.

The nearby desert kites in Jibal al-Khashabiyeh are "the earliest large-scale human built structures worldwide known to date," said a statement by the SEBA Project. It hailed the "spectacular and unprecedented discovery" of the ritualistic site, believed to date to about 7000 BC.

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Sweden denies 'kidnappings' of Muslim children

STOCKHOLM: Swedish authorities are fighting back against claims its social services are "kidnapping" Muslim children, denouncing a "disinformation campaign" of viral videos spreading mistrust among immigrant families. Videos began appearing on Arabic-language social media sites in late 2021 of real interventions by child welfare services, showing crying children being separated from distraught parents.

With limited context about the situations portrayed, the videos accuse Sweden of being a fascist state where social services place Muslim children in Christian homes with pedophiles or where they are forced to drink alcohol and eat pork. After Mideastern media outlets reported on the claims, Swedish government officials and



GOTHENBURG, Sweden: Photo taken on Feb 13, 2022 shows protesters demonstrating against the Swedish social services. — AFP

social services have come out in force to deny the allegations.

"We absolutely do not do that," Migration and Integration Minister Anders Ygeman told AFP, stressing the main goal was to support families. Ygeman said the campaign was being fueled in part by "frustrated parents who have failed in their parenting" and were projecting their anger at authorities.

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Local

Dhaman CEO: Public-private health partnership integral to Kuwait Vision

First facility in Middle East to offer plan based on annual or monthly fee

KUWAIT: The beginning of operations at the Health Assurance Hospitals Company (DHAMAN) before the end of this year reflects the integrality of the partnership between the public and private sectors to the Kuwait Vision 2035 (New Kuwait), said an official yesterday. Dhaman Hospitals Company CEO Thamer Arab revealed in an interview that the Ministry of Health had pushed for the establishment of the company, which was viewed as part of the development of an integrated and high-quality health service in Kuwait. He went on to say that Dhaman hospitals reflected a comprehensive partnership between the public and private sectors with the Kuwaiti government owning around 24 percent of the shares, while the private sector — through strategic investors — own 26 percent. The rest of the shares, at 50 percent, will be offered through an Initial Public Offering (IPO) — already paid for by the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) on behalf of the citizens — until the offering occurs, revealed Arab, indicating that the capital of the company stood at KD 230 million (approximately \$759 million).

Regarding the inclusion of the private sector in Kuwait's development plans, Arab stressed that it was of paramount importance to apply the best of international standards when seeking overall-com-



Dhaman CEO Thamer Arab

prehensive development, noting that Dhaman hospitals would be the first facility in the Middle East to offer a Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) system, a health plan based on an annual or monthly fee. He pointed out that Dhaman would also aim at providing top-notch healthcare services via implementing Joint Commission International (JCI) accreditation standards. Arab said that Dhaman hospitals were working on being listed in Boursa Kuwait, the stock exchange, after it begins operation hopefully this year. The company would provide preliminary and secondary health offer services to some two million residents working in the private sector and their families, added the CEO who revealed that the cost of health insurance would be set initially at KD 130 (around \$430).

Over 7,000 jobs 'up for grabs'

Arab noted that while the Ministry of Health covered around 80 percent of health services in the country, the beginning of the Dhaman hospitals company's operation would aim at lessening the burden on the public sector to around 60 percent, pointing out that insurance would cover the needs of residents over 60 years of age. Touching on the impact of the coronavirus on the launch of Dhaman hospitals services, Arab said that partial operations were in motion during the pandemic with facilities of the hospitals put in use by the staff of



KUWAIT: One of Dhaman's hospitals under construction. —KUNA

the Ministry of Health namely in Hawali and Farwaniya areas.

On job opportunities, Arab affirmed that over 7,000 jobs were "up for grabs", adding that currently, the staff consisted of 400 employees, physicians, and medical staff. He revealed that two health clinics were being established in Fahaheel and Al-Jahra in addition to 600-bed capacity hospitals in

Al-Jahra and Al-Ahmadi. The main Dhaman hospital building consisted of five floors and a basement built on 82,000 square meters with a bed capacity of 300, 14 operation theaters, 21 ICUs, premature care units, in addition to laboratories, an ER, a heliport, and pharmacy. The parking lot accommodates 500 vehicles, said Arab, adding that the main hospital construction was at 62 percent. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Waleed Al-Khashti with Zain's team at the company's booth.

Zain strategic sponsor of Bugsha Market at Green Island

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, continued its strategic sponsorship of Bugsha Market, Kuwait's biggest outdoor market for local SMEs. The event, held at the Green Island throughout the weekend, offered a unique social environment for visitors to socialize, connect, and enjoy the spring season while exploring the best of what local talents have to offer.

By partnering with Bugsha Market, Zain continued its ongoing efforts of shouldering local talents as part of its solid and well-focused Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility

strategy. The company continuously works towards identifying initiatives that empower the next generation of Kuwaiti businesses that are well-capable of contributing to national economy. The event featured a great number of local SMEs that represented many sectors to serve the needs of visitors.

For the third consecutive month, Zain was present at Bugsha Market in the Green Island via its dedicated booth, where the company offered many social and entertaining programs to visitors in an open area, sharing the wonderful positive atmosphere that the Kuwaiti community

enjoys nowadays as normal life gradually returns after the pandemic. Zain also held exciting competitions at the event and presented valuable prizes to winners.

Bugsha Market offers a unique opportunity for visitors to gather and connect by hosting many social and entertainment activities, including restaurants, cafes, local SMEs, winter market, farmers market, recreational programs, and more. The first edition of the event was held at Adaliya Park, while the second was held at Wahran Park in Shamiya, and both witnessed tremendous success and huge crowds.

Kuwait prepares for national celebrations

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti state authorities and associations have been preparing for the national days falling on February 25-26. Kuwait Fire Force announced yesterday that it had finalized preparations for securing the celebrations, erecting 14 makeshift fire stations in all the governorates for rapid intervention in case unfortunate accidents happen. Colonel Mohammad Ibrahim, Kuwait Fire Force Public Relations Director, said in a press statement that all these stations had been staffed and equipped to deal with any mishap.

Kuwait Fire Force will help to ease off any traffic congestion that may occur during the celebrations and will partake in the activities by displaying its state-of-art equipment and engines, he said, urging revelers to equip their cars with fire extinguishers and abstain from tossing fireworks amid the celebrators. Earlier yesterday, the Kuwaiti Ministry of

Interior marked the upcoming national occasions with a declaration, pardoning policemen who have been held in disciplinary cases. They will go free starting today. An identical initiative was declared by Kuwait National Guard that said in a statement that the detainees would be released upon directions by Kuwait National Guard Chief, His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, and his deputy, Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) marked the forthcoming occasions with a celebratory gathering, involving the personnel and their families including youth. Also, the Public Authority for Minors Affairs celebrated the happy days at Jamal Abdul-Nasser public park in Rawdha, where lecturers and banners brought into recollections sacrifices and great deeds of the ancestors. —KUNA



KUWAIT: An event organized by the Public Authority for Minors Affairs at Jamal Abdul-Nasser public park yesterday. —KUNA

UN Security Council ends...

Continued from Page 1

that Iraq was going through and the serious security and economic challenges it was facing during that period, he added. The ambassador congratulated Iraq for fulfilling its obligations stipulated in Security Council resolutions related to the file.

"Today Iraq turns a page that has lasted 30 years," Iraqi Foreign Minister Fouad Mohammad Hussein told the Security Council. "It opens a new chapter" in which Iraq will seek to develop its relations and cooperation

with the United Nations, the minister pledged, as he welcomed the commission's success.

The unprecedented panel is considered a model for reconciliation that could help resolve future conflicts if necessary. Created in May 1991 by Security Council Resolution 692, the commission managed Iraq's financial compensation which featured a five percent tax levied on its oil sales.

The funds have been distributed to individuals, companies, governmental agencies and other organizations that suffered losses when Saddam Hussein's Iraqi forces stormed across the border into its small, oil-rich neighbor in Aug 1990 and established a provisional government. The invasion prompted a series of biting UN sanctions and triggered the Gulf War which included a massive US-led ground and air offensive that ousted Iraq from Kuwait in early 1991. —Agencies

and 2015 carried out by Sunni extremists in retaliation for Hezbollah's intervention in the civil war in neighboring Syria on the side of the Damascus government.

In 2015, twin suicide bombings claimed by IS killed more than 40 people in the area. The latest IS plot came after the group's leader Ibrahim Al-Hashimi Al-Qurashi was killed in a US raid on his home in rebel-held northwestern Syria earlier this month. IS operatives asked for a video to be recorded ahead of the planned attack, in which militants said they were carrying it out in Qurashi's honor, the ISF said.

IS is believed to be exploiting an unprecedented financial crisis in Lebanon to lure recruits with the promise of hefty salaries. A security source told AFP this month that around 48 Lebanese from the impoverished northern city of Tripoli have joined IS ranks in Iraq since August. At least eight Tripoli men have been reported killed in Iraq since December. —AFP

Sweden denies 'kidnappings' of...

Continued from Page 1

"There are also malevolent forces that want to exploit these parents' frustration to spread mistrust and division," he said.

Sweden's newly created Psychological Defense Agency has described many of the videos as old, presenting a false context with a "purpose to polarize". Magnus Ranstorp, a terrorism expert at the Swedish Defense University, told AFP the campaign was primarily based on a Facebook group called "Barnens Rattigheter Mina Rattigheter" (Children's Rights My Rights), where parents share experiences of having their children "unfairly" removed

from their care.

Imams in Sweden and abroad picked up on the stories, as did a new fringe political party Nyans (Nuance), which has made the forced removal of children a rallying cry ahead of the general election in September. Muslim online influencers with millions of followers also joined the fray, as well as Arabic site "Shuoun Islamiya" ("Islamic Affairs"), which has published around 20 videos. Several protests have also been held across Sweden.

Ranstorp said that while there may be some legitimate criticism against social services, the harsh rhetoric in the media posts was "inciting". Julia Agha, head of the Arabic-language news outlet Alkompis based in Stockholm, has followed the campaign closely. "Starting out, it was probably intended as a campaign where families of those whose children have been taken into custody have felt unjustly treated and wanted to criticize social services," she told AFP. —AFP

Lebanon foils IS plot against...

Continued from Page 1

not specify whether they were among the four identified in Ain al-Hilweh. The camp outside the main southern city of Sidon is the largest Palestinian settlement in Lebanon.

It has gained notoriety as a refuge for extremists and other fugitives. By longstanding convention, the Lebanese army does not enter the country's camps, leaving security inside in the hands of Palestinian factions. Beirut's southern suburbs, a stronghold of Shiite militant group Hezbollah, saw a wave of bombings between 2013

9,000-year-old ritual complex...

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It featured two steles with anthropomorphic features, the taller one 1.12 m high, other artefacts including animal figurines, flints, and some 150 arranged marine fossils.

The wider, decade-old research project aims to study "the first pastoral nomadic societies, as well as the evolution of specialized subsistence strate-

gies". The desert kites suggest "extremely sophisticated mass hunting strategies, unexpected in such an early timeframe," said the project's statement. The sacred symbolism was most likely meant "to invoke the supernatural forces for successful hunts and abundance of prey to capture," it said.

The teams of researchers have also found campsites with circular dwellings and large numbers of gazelle bones. The project is a collaboration of Jordan's Al Hussein Bin Talal University and the French Institute of the Near East. French ambassador Veronique Voulant-Aneini hailed the "outcome for both the scientific world and Jordan", saying "it provides us with a priceless testimony of the historical life in the Middle East, its traditions and rituals". —AFP

Local

Kuwait's Amir, Algerian President discuss means of cementing ties

Amir, Crown Prince meet visiting Algerian President



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, in the presence of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan photos



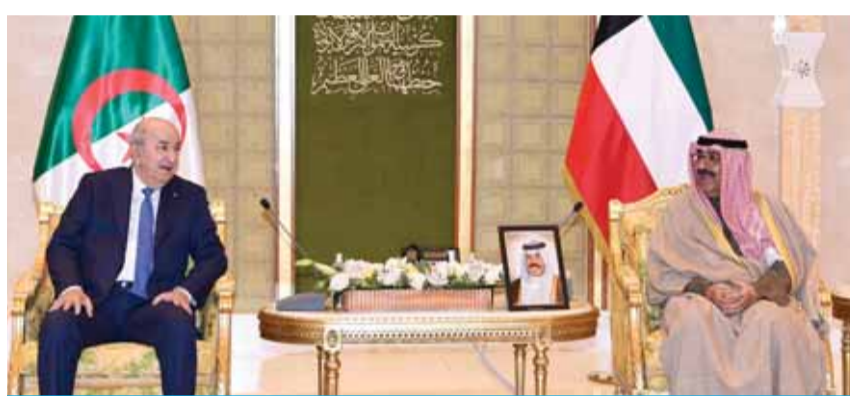
His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah welcomes Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah welcomes Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sees off Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune at the airport.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday received the visiting Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, accompanied by senior officials. The audience was attended by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Amir and the Algerian President held cordial conversations depicting the solid and brotherly relations between the two brotherly countries and peoples. They also dealt with means of boosting these relations at various levels. The summit meeting was also attended by Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and

Head of the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Mubarak Faisal Saud Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace Algerian President Tebboune and the delegation accompanying him, on his official visit to Kuwait. The two sides had official discussions, as the Kuwaiti side was chaired by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and senior state officials, and the Algerian side was chaired by President Tebboune and senior government officials. Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah

said that they reviewed the bilateral relations between the two countries and ways to enhance and expand cooperation between them in all fields to best serve their common interests, as well as discussing issues of common interest and the latest regional and international developments. Furthermore, His Highness the Crown Prince hosted a luncheon at Bayan Palace in honor of the Algerian President Tebboune and the official delegation accompanying him.

Algerian President Tebboune later concluded his official visit to Kuwait. He was seen off at the airport by His Highness the Crown Prince, His Highness the Prime Minister and senior state officials. — KUNA

Palestine envoy greets Kuwait on national holidays

KUWAIT: Ambassador of Palestine to Kuwait Rami Tahboub released the following statement to congratulate Kuwait on its national holidays: "As we approach Kuwait's 61st independence and 31st liberation anniversaries, I am honored in the name of the State of Palestine's President Mahmoud Abbas, and on behalf of the Palestinian community in Kuwait, to convey congratulations on these two dear occasions to HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem, HH the Prime Minister Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and to the Kuwait people.



Palestinian Ambassador Rami Tahboub

"On these two occasions, I recall the stands of the State of Kuwait and its rulers towards the Palestinian cause and people and their deep-rooted belief in the just Arab cause: the Palestinian cause, as well as the unlimited support given by the State of Kuwait to help the Palestinian people in all fields and at various levels,

be them regional or international out of love of Jerusalem and Palestine. "I pray to Allah Almighty to protect Kuwait, its leadership and people from all evils and to preserve the bounty of security and safety and more prosperity under the wise leadership of HH the Amir and HH the Crown Prince. Long live Kuwait as a symbol of humanity and Arabism."

Kuwait Airways announces operations to Madrid

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways announced the operation of its scheduled commercial flights to Madrid, Spain, starting from June 11, 2022, with three flights per week on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. In this regard, Kuwait Airways Chairman, Captain Ali Al-Dukhan stated, "Madrid is one of the most important new destinations for Kuwait Airways. The selection of Madrid is a result of systematic research, in view of its demand from our valued passengers for this destination which is an excellent touristic location as well as related to historical, and cultural aspects and other attractions featuring new and diverse options to meet the requirements of passengers."

Dukhan added, "Kuwait Airways is keen to assist its passengers and provide them with all means of comfort during their travel on its aircraft; in addition to providing its services in an integrated manner, as well as eliminating any hindrances during their travel, beginning with providing reservations for customers through all available channels and offering them appropriate services, to the check-in at Terminal 4 and completing their travel procedures with ease. Customers can book their tickets through several different methods by visiting the Company's offices at the Avenues Mall, the Ministries Complex, the Farwaniya Office and Terminal 4, which provide numerous services, including reservations, amending, upgrading and ticket cancellations, as well as assisting with all inquiries, complaints and comments from customers and working to assist them or by contacting the Call Center on 171 or by downloading KAC's application or by visiting the Kuwait Airways website."

In the same context, Kuwait Airways Chief Executive Officer, Engineer Maen Razouqi stated, "Kuwait Airways was honored to receive the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain to the State of Kuwait Miguel Jose Aguilar and discussed with the Ambassador methods to enhance joint cooperation



(From left) Kuwait Airways CEO Maen Razouqi, Spain's Ambassador Miguel Jose Aguilar and Kuwait Airways Chairman Ali Al-Dukhan.

tion and bilateral relations between the two countries and to develop them in all areas related to the aviation sector. We also discussed the extent of relations between the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Spain and the convergence of views between them in the public interest of both parties and achieving the desired objectives in consolidating and strengthening the bonds of relations between the two countries."

From his side Ambassador Miguel Aguilar expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation to Kuwait Airways for this important step, expressing happiness for launching the Blue Bird to the destination of Madrid and including Madrid in its permanent schedule of flights, thus making it convenient for passengers to travel to Spain directly and providing a suitable opportunity to understand the ancient historical aspects of Spain.

Aguilar added that launching of the Madrid destination contributes to strengthening relations between the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Spain, pointing out that this broadens the prospective for strengthening the bonds of relations between the two countries in various political, cultural, social, economic, and other fields, especially with the long-standing relationship between the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Spain and will always strive to develop it, for the benefit of both partners.

On the occasion of the



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Conference discusses effect of drug use, addiction on youth

KUWAIT: Kuwait recently hosted a conference on fighting drugs with the theme "means of social and psychological support in raising children as a prevention from misuse of medicines". Specialists and doctors from Kuwait and Egypt participated in the conference that was chaired by Head of the International Relations to Prevent Addiction Dr Hussa Majid Al-Shaheen. Shaheen said the meeting was important to shed light on dangers of drugs targeting youth, saying that 90 of people who die of drug overdoses in Kuwait are youth.

Associate Psychological Medicine Professor at Cairo University Rania Mamdouh spoke about the international programs to boost the psychological health of adolescents and reduce demand for drugs and nicotine. She presented successful experiments in this field in Egypt, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. Psychological consultant in Kuwait Nadia Al-Obaidi spoke about the importance of psychological support for the youth, saying ill psychological conditions may lead to drug use. "It is important to realize the psychological needs of our young that the drugs pushers take advantage of," she added. Obaidi pointed to the important role of family, school, media and the choice of friends because they are the elements that form the individual's personality.

Meanwhile, Dr Khaled Al-Saleh spoke about the physical and psychological effects on the youth resulting from misuse of medicines. He explained addiction's effect on the human body, saying that it affects bodily functions in addition to psychological health, which means that addiction can become physical and psychological illness simultaneously.

On the second day of the conference, Addiction Treatment Practitioner in Kuwait Fatima Ismail spoke about the means of preventing drugs and the treatment stage of addiction. President of the Arab Federation for the Prevention of addiction Dr Ahmad Jamal Abu Al-Azm spoke about the social aspects of drug use and addiction as far as prevention and treatment are concerned. He warned against risk waves targeting the youth, and called for confronting them to protect young people "who are the hope of the future."

The conference recommended introducing life skills training in school curricula and prepare a study on the effects of lockdown due to COVID-19 and the drug use percentages. The conference commended Kuwait's efforts to fight drugs and called for forming again the national committee for the fight of drugs in order to continue with awareness.

Mubarakiya Market celebrates Kuwait's National Days



KUWAIT: Kuwait's historic Mubarakiya Market, decorated with the Kuwaiti flags and beautiful lights, celebrates the 61st National Day and the 31st Liberation Day of Kuwait. Citizens and residents visit the historic market in February every year to enjoy the national days' celebrations. — KUNA

Health ministry, blood bank organize blood donation campaign



KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Ministry of Health and Kuwait Central Blood Bank have launched a blood donation campaign coinciding with the national days. The campaign, themed "Kuwait in my blood," was launched yesterday at the blood bank's headquarters. It will proceed throughout the official holiday marking the national days. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Abdullah Al-Salem Center announces holidays events

KUWAIT: Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center will carry out several activities in museums and outdoors during the national day celebrations starting today. In addition, it will host contests that will be announced on the center's official account on Instagram, including "words in love of Kuwait" contest where those aged 13-17 years compete to write a poem expressing their love to Kuwait, be it in classical Arabic, local dialect or English and should be 250-350 words long. The poem should be sent by e-mail, and participants will be asked to recite the poem on stage, as the top three winners will receive prizes. Another contest is for photography lovers aged 18 and above. Participants will submit a photograph of any of wild animals that exist in Kuwait. The winners will be declared at the theater and the top three will be awarded.

There will also be "let us sing for Kuwait" contest,

which is for those aged 5-10 years. During the contest, the best voice among participants will be selected. Participants can send video clips singing national songs at the theater and the winner will be declared on Monday Feb 28 at 5:00pm at the center. The deadline to receive all participations will be Thursday Feb 24th at 8:00 pm on: academy@asckw.com.

As for displays and activities outdoors, there will be several various works for all ages and various interests including barcode, the first type of its kind in Kuwait, laser displays, then the owls' team of Kuwait will have live show during the event. A workshop for children drawing will also be held with the theme "wildlife in Kuwait", in addition to an awareness workshop of "safety from fires" for all ages and the "searchers for the treasure" activity. There will also be a dinosaurs show and fossils search held in the backyard prepared for this purpose.

The museum guides will hold several workshops for children at the science laboratories such as an art environment workshop on "oil leakage", "hurricane inside a jar" and "make your own turbine". As for space lovers, they are invited to watch the "from the land of Europe to the stars", and "Arab nights" films at the sky dome round the clock in Arabic and English.

LuLu Hypermarket launches national celebrations

KUWAIT: LuLu Hypermarket, the retail-leader in the region, which launched its annual LuLu Hala February celebrations on February 1, is offering double excitement for shoppers on the National and Liberation Days that fall on February 25 and 26 respectively.

Special celebrations dedicated to the country's national day began on February 23 with an event at Al-Qurain outlet that was inaugurated by Mahmoud Abdul Samad Bushehri, the Governor Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate, in the presence of top LuLu management and a gathering of shoppers.

In addition to all outlets of the hypermarket being decked-up in glittering lights, decorative arches and colorful bunting as part of the Hala February celebrations, Al-Qurain outlet wore a singular look that added to the festive ambience, with large cut-outs of iconic structures and colorful

images of buildings and places in Kuwait.

The artistic themes and backdrop images reflect the two commemorative days with small and large national flags fluttering everywhere, and color combinations of the Kuwaiti flag setting the tone for many of the decorations visible around the hypermarket's outlets. Adding excitement to the event there were artists applying face paint to create the national flag on the cheeks of children.

A very special attraction this year at Al-Qurain outlet is a seven-meter-tall display of the iconic Kuwait Towers, crafted artistically by stacking more than 17,000 tetra packets of KDD milk and fruit juices one on top of the other. Understandably, a large crowd of shoppers stopped to click 'selfies' in front of this amazing sculpture.

Stupendous discounts on all categories of products are being offered to mark the national holidays, with especially attractive prices on all Kuwait produced products. In addition, a slew of promotions are being held throughout the month of February, starting with the 'Voucher' promotion that began on February 3. During this promotion, every purchase worth KD5 enters the shopper in a draw with the chance of winning 131 gift vouchers worth a total of KD15,000.





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International

Ukraine mobilizes reserves as Moscow doubles down on demands

Ukraine urges its citizens living in Russia to leave

KYIV: Ukraine mobilized its military reserve yesterday and urged its citizens to leave Russian territory as Moscow sharpened its demands, increasing fears of all-out war. Kremlin chief President Vladimir Putin has defied an avalanche of international sanctions to put his forces on stand-by to occupy two rebel-held areas of eastern Ukraine.

In response, Kyiv's President Volodymyr Zelensky has put Ukraine's more than 200,000 reservists on notice that they will receive summons to return to their units.

Ukraine's security council also called for a state of emergency in the country — a measure that still needs to be formally approved by parliament.

Meanwhile, Ukraine urged its approximately three million citizens living in Russia to leave, as the crisis deepened despite intense international pressure on Moscow, backed by new economic sanctions.

Western capitals say Russia has amassed 150,000 troops in combat formations on Ukraine's borders with Russia, Belarus and Russian-occupied Crimea and on warships in the Black Sea.

Ukraine has around 200,000 military personnel and yesterday's call up could see up to 250,000 reservists aged between 18 and 60 receive their mobilization papers. Moscow's total forces are much larger — around a million active duty personnel — and have been modernised and re-armed in recent years.

High cost of war

But Ukraine has received advanced anti-tank

weapons and some drones from NATO members. More have been promised as the allies try to deter a Russian attack or at least make it costly. Shelling has intensified between Ukrainian forces and Russia-backed separatists, and civilians living near the front are fearful. Dmitry Maksimenko, a 27-year-old coal miner from government-held Krasnogorivka, told AFP that he was shocked when his wife came to tell him that Putin had recognised two Russian-backed separatist enclaves.

"She said: 'Have you heard the news?'. How could I have known? There's no electricity never mind internet. I don't know what is going to happen next, but to be honest, I'm afraid," he said.

Washington and Britain say Russia's force is poised to strike Ukraine and trigger the most serious war in Europe for decades, but Putin says he is open to negotiation — within limits. Russia has demanded that

Ukraine be forbidden from ever joining the NATO alliance and is seeking to roll back the advance of Western influence in eastern Europe since the Cold War.

"The interests of Russia, the security of our citizens, are non-negotiable for us," Putin declared, in a video address to mark the Defender of the Fatherland Day, a public holiday.

On Tuesday, the Federation Council, Russia's upper house, gave him unanimous approval to deploy troops to two breakaway Ukrainian regions now recognised by Moscow as independent, Donetsk and Lugansk. Russia said it had established diplomatic relations "at the level of embassies" with



WASHINGTON: Secretary of State Antony Blinken (R) joined by Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, speaks during a news conference at the State Department in Washington, DC. — AFP

the separatist statelets, which broke away from Kyiv in 2014 in a conflict that cost more than 14,000 lives. Moscow also said it would evacuate diplomatic personnel from Ukraine to "protect their lives."

Speaking to journalists, Putin on Tuesday set out a number of stringent conditions if the West wanted to de-escalate the crisis, saying Ukraine should drop its NATO ambition and become neutral.

US President Joe Biden later announced tough new sanctions against Russia for "beginning" an invasion of Ukraine, but said there was still time to avoid war. Japan and Australia followed suit early yesterday with their own stringent penalties for Moscow and individuals connected with the

aggression against Ukraine.

Biden announced what he called the "first tranche" of sanctions, including steps to starve Russia of financing and target financial institutions and the country's "elites".

But he left the door open to a final effort at diplomacy to avert a full-scale Russian invasion. "There's no question that Russia is the aggressor, so we're clear-eyed about the challenges we're facing," the US leader said.

Biden's address followed a wave of sanctions announced by Britain and the European Union, after Putin recognised the self-declared Donetsk and Lugansk separatist regions this week. — AFP

Disinformation on Ukraine resonating in eastern Europe

PRAGUE: In eastern Europe, a region once ruled by Moscow with deep resentment against Russia, unverified claims and anti-Western disinformation are making surprising inroads as the regional crisis deepens. In Slovakia, which neighbours Ukraine, disinformation about the situation has been widely shared even by some members of parliament.

Lubos Blaha from the leftist opposition Smer party, who has over 170,000 Facebook followers, posted after Putin's speech questioning Ukraine's existence that "I'm convinced [Putin] wants peace". Blaha claimed that Ukraine "provoked and threatened Russia" while "the West was hectoring it". He added that the country is "controlled by oligarchic clans, neonazism and russophobia are on the rise, and corruption is in full bloom".

'Czech Elves'

Slovakia seems to have been particularly susceptible to pro-Kremlin disinformation. The country of 5.5 million, which shares a 97-kilometre (60-mile) border with Ukraine, signed a defence pact with the United States this month, allowing US troops to operate on its territory. That agreement provoked fierce opposition from the government's political rivals as well as a sizeable part of Slovakia's population and became a favorite target of disinformation and propaganda.

As a result, anti-US, anti-NATO and even anti-EU sentiments are on the rise in Slovakia. An opinion poll last month by the Slovak Focus agency found that 44 percent of respondents believed the US and NATO were responsible for the escalating tensions between Russia and Ukraine, while only 35 percent held Russia responsible.

The anti-NATO narrative is particularly significant as one of Russia's demands has been for the withdrawal of additional NATO forces sent to the region in the wake of Moscow's annexation of Crimea. "Already in January, there was a massive increase in disinformation aimed at justifying Russia's aggression against Ukraine," said Bohumil Kartous, a spokesman for the Czech Elves, a network of several hundred online vigilantes.

"This topic now far outweighs any other, including COVID," said Kartous, whose group publishes monthly reports about fake news being shared in the Czech Republic and the wider region. False posts seek to paint Ukraine as a "corrupt failed state" governed by "fascists" and practicing "genocide on its Russian-speaking population", the Elves wrote in one of their reports on the conflict. Roman Maca, an analyst at Prague-based think tank Institute for Politics and Society said there had been "a huge uptick" in disinformation in the region.

Maca said it was "interesting to see how many people and groups which have in the past two years fought against COVID measures now jump on the pro-Russian propaganda and start spreading this type of misinformation". In the weeks leading up to Putin's decision to authorise Russian troops to enter eastern Ukraine, various videos circulated online in the region, supposedly showing Ukrainian troops getting ready for invasion or entering Russian territory. —AFP

Author who fled Uganda 'relieved' to be in Germany

KAMPALA: An award-winning Ugandan author who fled the country after being charged with insulting President Yoweri Museveni and his son told AFP yesterday that he was "relieved" to be in Germany for medical treatment after being "tortured" in jail.

Kakwenza Rukirabashaija was detained shortly after Christmas and later charged with "offensive communication" in a case that has raised international concern, with the European Union and the United States calling for his release.

After arriving in Germany yesterday, the novelist told AFP about his relief at being saved "from the mouth of the crocodile." "I wasn't safe in Africa since dictators work together to deport dissidents. Now that I'm in Germany, I feel really protected," he said in a WhatsApp message.

Rukirabashaija, 33, slipped out of Uganda two weeks ago — after a court denied his application to have his passport returned — ahead of a criminal trial that was due to begin yesterday.

He said he was tortured in custody and appeared on television earlier this month to reveal painful-looking welts criss-crossing his back and scars on other parts of his body.

Rukirabashaija, who was released on bail last month, fled Uganda by walking into neighbouring Rwanda and

then travelled to a third country.

The UN Refugee Agency then facilitated his journey to Germany, according to his lawyer Eron Kiiza.

The charges against Rukirabashaija relate to unflattering comments on Twitter about Museveni, who has ruled Uganda since 1986, and his powerful son Muhoozi Kainerugaba.

In one post, he described Kainerugaba, a general who many Ugandans believe is positioning himself to take over from his 77-year-old father, as "obese" and a "curmudgeon".

'Ugandans must be free'

The novelist told AFP earlier this month that he had "been diagnosed with damaged kidneys, bruised ribs and post-traumatic stress disorder." He has described being beaten with batons, forced to dance for hours at time, attacked with pliers used to tear at his flesh and injected repeatedly with an unknown substance.

"I'll get the medical attention I need, then after recovery, decide on the next course of action," he said yesterday. "I'll have to join the vanguard and we send the dictator and his son — who thinks that he's entitled to proliferate his father's barbarism — packing. Ugandans must be free in our country."

Since he fled, Rukirabashaija has been tweeting relentlessly, even becoming embroiled in a Twitter spat



KAMPALA: File photo shows Kakwenza Rukirabashaija, a prominent Ugandan satirical writer and an outspoken government critic appears in court on charges of offensive communication involving insulting the country's ruling family in Kampala, Uganda. —AFP

with Kainerugaba and branding him a "baby despot."

Rukirabashaija has accused Kainerugaba of being "in charge" of his torture and instructing him to stop writing, but the general denied the claim. "I've never met him or talked to him and I have no desire to do so," Kainerugaba tweeted.

Crackdowns

Uganda has witnessed a series of crackdowns aimed at stamping out dissent, with journalists attacked, lawyers jailed, election monitors prosecuted and opposition leaders violent-

ly muzzled.

Activists have been repeatedly targeted using the strict Computer Misuse Act which was used against Rukirabashaija and which carries heavy penalties, including jail time.

Outspoken Ugandan activist and writer Stella Nyanzi, who fled to Germany earlier this year, was imprisoned in 2019 under the same law after posting a profane poem about Museveni. Rukirabashaija won acclaim for his 2020 satirical novel "The Greedy Barbarian", which describes high-level corruption in a fictional country. —AFP

Brazil's Bolsonaro turns to Telegram as vote nears

BRASILIA: Like millions of Brazilians, @mara, a fervent fan of far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, has turned to the messaging app Telegram as the country heads toward a deeply divisive election: "There's no censorship here," she says. Similar to the 2018 election that brought Bolsonaro to power, this October's edition is shaping up as an all-out war on social media, with disinformation as a powerful weapon.

Bolsonaro, who has had various posts blocked on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube for violating their rules on misinformation, is eagerly encouraging his base to follow him on Telegram as the vote nears. Founded by Russian-born tech entrepreneur Pavel Durov in 2013, Telegram is a crypted messaging app with virtually no restrictions on what users can say in messages.

That has won it fans in Bolsonaro's camp, where other social media companies face accusations of censoring right-wing views. It has also earned it scrutiny from the Brazilian authorities, notably the Superior Electoral Tribunal, which has tried in vain to get Telegram to cooperate in fighting disinformation in the run-up to the elections.

"Here, you can express your opinions freely," said @mara, a 60-year-old teacher who asked her real name not be used. The pressure on Telegram, she said, is "RI-DI-CU-LOUS." "That's a DICTATORSHIP, it only happens in countries governed by dictators," she told AFP via the app, which has been

hugely successful in Brazil, downloaded on 53 percent of all cell phones.

Bolsonaro is facing an uphill battle to win reelection, currently trailing leftist ex-president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in polls. Like his political role model, former US president Donald Trump, Bolsonaro is adept at rallying his base on social media, where the Brazilian leader has more than 45 million followers in all.

He faces a series of investigations for spreading false information on social networks, notably over his repeated claims of rampant fraud in Brazil's electronic voting system, for which he has provided no evidence. Bolsonaro has more than one million followers on Telegram, not including numerous fan groups with names like "Reelect Bolsonaro 2022." Lula, for his part, has just 47,000.

'Cowardly'

Dubai-based Telegram proudly explains on its website that its chat data and encryption keys are deliberately spread around the world, in what is known as "distributed infrastructure." "Thanks to this structure, we can ensure that no single government or block of like-minded countries can intrude on people's privacy and freedom of expression," it says. Its refusal to block content some consider dangerous has sometimes gotten it in trouble, including suspensions in several countries.

And its largely unmoderated platform, which allows groups of up to 200,000 members, is a potential viral breeding ground for false information. Earlier this month, the Superior Electoral Tribunal signed an agreement with eight leading social networks to combat disinformation during the elections, including Twitter, TikTok, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and YouTube. Telegram was notably absent.

The court's president, Luis Roberto Barroso,



BRASILIA, Brazil: File photo shows Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro extends his hand with a mobile phone during the launching ceremony of a new registry of professional fishermen, at Planalto Palace in Brasilia. —AFP

wrote to Telegram headquarters in December, asking for a meeting and warning that the app was rife with "conspiracy theories and false information about (Brazil's) electoral system." He went on to threaten Brazil would suspend Telegram, "plain and simple." Bolsonaro said any such move would be "cowardly."

Brazilian prosecutors are also investigating Telegram on allegations of spreading disinformation and hate speech. "It's a platform designed to dodge the law. Messages are stored on multiple servers, each in a different jurisdiction," said Pablo Ortellado, a digital communications expert at the University of Sao Paulo. Bolsonaro's repeated allegations against the electronic voting system used in Brazil since 1996 are raising fears he will reject the election result if he loses, like Trump. The specter of the January 6, 2021 attack on the US Capitol by Trump supporters—who were riled up in part on social media—looms large in Brazil. —AFP

International

Philippine torture victim relives horror as dictator's son rises

The Philippine government acknowledged abuses in a 2013 settlement

MANILA: Ferdinand Marcos Junior's quest for the Philippine presidency has Loretta Rosales recoiling in horror remembering the nightmare she went through standing up to his late father's brutal rule. Tortured and gang-raped by the elder Marcos' troops under martial law in the 1970s, the former history professor, now 82, told AFP she fears history will repeat itself. "I don't want this to happen again to my people," said Rosales, an activist turned politician who has asked the government to disqualify the younger Marcos, nicknamed "Bongbong", from the May 9 poll.

She fears he would take after his late father, who shut down Congress and other democratic institutions as well as media outlets while ruling by decree. Bongbong, 64, is the clear leader in the polls, running on a campaign that steers public discourse away from the crimes of his father's dictatorship while preaching unity and mapping a path out of the pandemic.

Amnesty International estimates the late strongman's security forces either killed, tortured, sexually abused, mutilated or arbitrarily detained about 70,000 opponents, according to its Philippine vice chairperson Aurora Parong.

Rosales took part in street protests during the period as an activist with the Humanist League, a group aligned with the Philippines' Communist Party that was the only serious opposition after Marcos crushed most opponents.

In 1976 she was secretly arrested and taken to an unmarked detention house, the former teacher said. Boiling-hot candle wax was poured on her arms and she was waterboarded as well as strangled with a belt.

Her abusers delivered electric shocks to her fingertips and toes, leaving her trembling uncontrollably, and stripped off her clothes, she told AFP. "Then they started playing protest songs that we sang at our street marches, to taunt you, to dehumanise you," she recounted. Rosales said her torturers wanted her to lead them to Jose Maria Sison, founder of the Communist Party which had begun waging a Maoist armed insurgency, as well as her fellow activists.



'I don't want this to happen again to my people'

'Gutter politics'

The younger Marcos has downplayed or disputed accounts of abuses committed under the rule of his father. "I do not know how they (Amnesty) generated those numbers and I haven't seen them,"

he said in an interview with a television channel that aired on January 25. "Let us ask Amnesty International to share that information that they have and maybe it will help us make sure that the system works and alleged abuses that occurred should not occur again."

Asked about Rosales' specific allegations, Marcos spokesman Vic Rodriguez told AFP: "There goes Ms Etta Rosales again, pushing very hard her lies to further her group's gutter politics." The



MANILA, Philippines: This photo taken on February 9, 2022 shows Loretta Ann P. Rosales, a victim of the country's martial law in the 1970s, gesturing during an interview with AFP at her residence in Quezon City, suburban Manila. — AFP

Philippine government acknowledged abuses in a 2013 settlement that awarded 9.8 billion pesos (\$190 million) in reparations to more than 11,000 victims out of about 75,000 claimants.

The settlement cited "the heroism and sacrifices of all Filipinos who were victims of summary execution, torture, enforced or involuntary disappearances and other gross human rights violations". Payouts were funded from nearly \$700 million held

by the elder Marcos in secret Swiss bank accounts that was handed over to Manila in 1995 after authorities concluded the money was plundered from the Philippine treasury.

Rosales said her abusers were plainclothes "agents" who kept an eye on anti-Marcos groups. Some had even enrolled in classes she taught at a Manila university. After her torture she was moved to a military prison and freed a month later. — AFP

HK parents decry child separations during virus surge

HONG KONG: Hong Kong parents are being separated from children and babies who test positive for the coronavirus, compounding public anger over the financial hub's lack of readiness for a major outbreak now sweeping the city. The densely populated metropolis is in the throes of its worst-ever COVID wave, registering thousands of cases every day as hospitals and isolation units run out of space.

A strict China-style zero-COVID policy kept the virus mostly at bay the last two years at the expense of marooning the city internationally. But when the highly contagious Omicron variant eventually broke through earlier this year, authorities were caught flat-footed.

Hong Kong has been ordered by China to stick to its zero-COVID policy and aim to isolate anyone who tests positive even though the number of daily cases has soared far beyond capacity. Some parents have complained of being unable to accompany children in hospital while others have flocked to social media to voice fears of separation if they seek treatment for themselves or sick young ones.

The revelation has sparked dismay, including among health professionals. "If a child requires hospitalisation due to COVID, it should be made possible for one parent to stay in the same room unless the child's condition is very serious," Siddharth Sridhar, a microbiologist at the University of Hong Kong, wrote on Twitter. "In times like these, staying rational and compassionate is more important than ever."

'I'll sleep on the floor'

Laura, a 32-year-old British-born permanent resident, told AFP her daughter Ava tested positive after she was admitted to hospital on Sunday night with a fever and laboured breathing. Ava is now stable in the intensive care unit and will soon be moved to an isolation ward but she will have to recover without her parents for at least seven days. "I've said I'll sleep in the corridor, on the floor, anywhere," she said, fighting back tears.

Laura and her husband Nick managed to share a quick video call with Ava on Tuesday. "It was devastating,"



HONG KONG: People queue up for COVID-19 tests outside a community vaccination centre especially for children and the elderly in Hong Kong yesterday, as the city faces its worst coronavirus wave to date. — AFP

Laura recalled, asking to use just her first name. "She's 11 months, she's aware of her surroundings, separation anxiety is at an all-time high at this age, she was inconsolable, just crying 'Mamma, Mamma'."

Online parent groups have filled with angst, fear and confusion this week. Kunj Gandhi, the administrator of a popular Facebook support group for people going through quarantine, wrote that many hospitals had stopped letting parents stay

with children as wards filled beyond capacity.

"Many (parents) tried to fight or rationalise it but in the end had to make the heartbreaking decision of leaving their child in hospital so the child could get the treatment he/she needs," she wrote. On a 17,000-strong mostly Cantonese-speaking Facebook group for mothers looking for coronavirus treatment, many said they had sick children but feared going to hospital. — AFP

UN urges vaccines to help N Korea end COVID isolation

SEOUL: The world should provide millions of doses of COVID-19 vaccines to North Korea, where "draconian" anti-pandemic measures are worsening an already-severe food crisis, a UN human rights expert said yesterday.

The impoverished nation has been behind a rigid self-imposed coronavirus blockade since early 2020 to protect itself from the pandemic, with the economy suffering and trade all but stopped. The country's "draconian" anti-COVID measures, including border closures and further limits on domestic freedom of movement, have worsened the food crisis, Tomas Ojea Quintana, UN special rapporteur on human rights, said.

Crucial domestic market activity has been cut off, and international aid workers have been forced to depart, with humanitarian operations all but halted, he said, adding that vulnerable populations were at

risk of starvation.

The international community should "agree on a strategy to provide the DPRK with 60 million doses of vaccination to cover at least two shots for the entire population," Quintana said at a press briefing in Seoul Wednesday. Vaccinations are "the key to opening the DPRK's border... and bringing it out of isolation," he added, using the acronym for North Korea's official name.

North Korea has yet to confirm a single case of the novel coronavirus. According to the World Health Organization, North Korea had by the end of 2020 conducted 13,259 COVID-19 tests, which all came back negative. It had been due to receive more than 1.7 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine through the Covax programme last year, but rejected them due to concerns over side effects, Yonhap reported at the time.

It has also rejected offers of vaccines from allies Russia and China, local reports say. In January, North Korea conducted a record seven weapons tests, including firing the most powerful missile since 2017, as it ignored US offers of talks. Pyongyang is under multiple sets of international sanctions over its nuclear and ballistic



SEOUL, South Korea: United Nations special rapporteur on human rights in North Korea, Tomas Ojea Quintana, speaks during a press conference wrapping up his nine-day visit to South Korea, in Seoul yesterday. — AFP

missile programmes. Quintana again called for such restrictions to be eased to protect the country's most vulnerable in the face of a severe food shortage. — AFP

arrested on Tuesday along with two other people accused of trafficking, authorities said. Investigations are ongoing against six others allegedly involved in trafficking her, while eight local officials have been dismissed from their posts and nine others handed various punishments.

The case continued to generate anger yesterday, with a related hashtag on China's Twitter-like Weibo platform attracting 580 million views shortly after the news of the punishments came. "The credibility of our government has long been lost," one user said of the latest statement. "You haven't shown us evidence." Others called for a national crackdown on trafficking. China's one-child policy-only relaxed in 2016 — has led to a shortage of women due to a traditional preference for boys. The resulting gender imbalance is believed to have fuelled human trafficking, according to a United States congressional report. — AFP

Husband arrested in China chained woman case

BEIJING: Chinese authorities said yesterday they had arrested a man accused of keeping his wife chained in a shack and punished at least 17 local officials over a case that has sparked viral outrage. The incident triggered intense debate on mental health and human trafficking in January after a blogger's video showed her with a chain and padlock around her neck in freezing weather in Jiangsu province.

Provincial authorities said the woman was found to have schizophrenia and had been sold several times, including once in 1998 for 5,000 yuan

(\$790), after being taken from her village in southwestern Yunnan province. Officials said "special actions to comprehensively and thoroughly investigate and rectify the violation of rights" were being taken. They added that the woman-known as "Xiaohuamei", which means "little plum blossom" and is likely a nickname—is a mother of eight children and is receiving hospital treatment. Officials in the area where she was found had initially denied allegations of any abduction and trafficking but higher-level investigations were launched after a public outcry.

Xiaohuamei is said to have disappeared after living for a few months with a man in Jiangsu who had bought her, and was soon taken in by a couple who operated a hotel, the probe found. She was then sold again to two other people before being bought by her current husband's family.

The husband, surnamed Dong, was formally

News in brief

Journalist rejects espionage charge

CASABLANCA: Jailed Moroccan journalist and rights activist Omar Radi, appealing a conviction for espionage, denied on Tuesday delivering sensitive information to two British consultancy firms. Radi was sentenced in July to six years in prison for espionage and rape. His trial had begun in 2020 just days after rights group Amnesty International charged that Moroccan authorities had planted Jewish-made Pegasus spyware on his cellphone. Moroccan authorities denied the report and "categorically rejected" using Zionist entity spyware to monitor critics at home and abroad. Radi — who has protested his innocence throughout — faced charges of rape and "undermining the internal security of the state" in two separate cases investigated separately but judged together. — AFP

Mali kill 19 'terrorists'

BAMAKO: The Malian army said it had killed 19 jihadists in operations northeast of the capital Bamako that were supported by European special forces. A statement by the armed forces chief of staff late Tuesday said operations in the Timbuktu, Segou, Mopti and Bandiagara areas successfully targeted "terrorists" — a term typically used to designate jihadists who have led a bloody decade-old insurgency. Fifteen "bases" were broken up, 34 motorbikes were seized and 15 were destroyed, and 37 mobile phones were taken, it said. Eight people in the Timbuktu area were arrested, it said, adding that the operations had unfolded over several days. — AFP

India sends wheat to Afghanistan

WAGAH: India has sent 50 trucks carrying 2,500 tonnes of wheat for crisis-hit Afghanistan after Pakistan gave "exceptional" permission for the shipment to pass through, officials said yesterday. Western countries sharply reduced aid after the Taliban takeover last year, leaving Afghanistan facing a "devastating" humanitarian crisis with a majority of the 28 million population in need of help, according to the United Nations. In response to an appeal from the UN, India decided to gift 5,000 tonnes of wheat and the first convoy of lorries was flagged off by officials on Tuesday at a ceremony in Amritsar near the border with Pakistan. India's arch-rival said Pakistan said that it "agreed on an exceptional basis" to allow the shipment to traverse through its territory. Islamabad had suspended trade with India in 2019 after New Delhi rescinded the partial autonomy of Indian-administered Kashmir, which both countries claim in full. — AFP

Hostage drama ends

THE HAGUE: A man with a firearm who held several people hostage at Apple's flagship store in central Amsterdam was overpowered late Tuesday after a siege lasting several hours, police said, adding that the last of the hostages had been freed. Police had deployed several special units to "get the situation under control" after being alerted of an armed robbery at 5:40 pm (16:40 GMT) which had rapidly transformed into a hostage situation. Police said the gunman was "lying on the street and a robot was examining him for explosives" in front of the store in Leidseplein in the heart of the Dutch city. — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2022

Boursa Kuwait, Kuwait Clearing Co sign agreement with Abu Dhabi Exchange

Alliance to help broaden Kuwait-UAE cooperation, attract more investors



Hisham Khalid Malak



Fahad Abdulrahman Al-Mukhaizeem



Dr Matar Hamed Al-Neyadi



Hamad Meshari Al-Humaidhi



Saeed Hamad Al-Dhaheeri

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait and Kuwait Clearing Company signed a joint agreement of understanding with Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange to standardize and define operational, administrative and technical procedures as well as achieve effective cooperation and coordination with regards to listing, trading and joint central depository operations to enhancing liquidity and expanding investment opportunities in both markets. Under the terms of the agreement, the parties agreed to take necessary measures to encourage and facilitate cooperation in the areas of data exchange, the standardization of legislative regulations, and enhancing the financial acumen of investors in both countries.

Commenting on the signing, Dr Matar Hamed Al-Neyadi, the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to the State of Kuwait, pointed out the importance of the signing between the two markets to enhance the existing strategic partnership to achieve mutual benefits and contribute to the facilitation of trading procedures and the registration of investors from both the United Arab Emirates and the State of Kuwait as well as regulating business procedures for double-listed companies and regulating the process of profit distribution. The ambassador also emphasized on the increased economic cooperation between the two countries.

Commenting on the agreement, ADX Chairman

- To standardize and define operational and technical procedures
- To enhance existing strategic partnership to achieve mutual benefits
- To contribute to the facilitation of trading procedures and registration of investors
- To regulate business procedures for double-listed companies
- To regulate the process of profit distribution

Hisham Khalid Malak, said: "The alliance between ADX, Boursa Kuwait and Kuwait Clearing Company will help strengthen the relationship between the UAE and the State of Kuwait by highlighting the unique investment opportunities that are available to investors in our markets. The agreement will also create new revenue streams for both exchanges, contributing to the sustainable growth of both our economies."

Both Boursa Kuwait and Kuwait Clearing Company hailed the tremendous efforts undertaken by the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Kuwait and Dr Matar Hamed Al-Neyadi in the coordination of all parties and encouraging this alliance, which aims to increase cooperation between the countries, specifically in the field of capital markets.

Boursa Kuwait Chairman Hamad Meshari Al-

Humaidhi also commented on this occasion, saying, "Boursa Kuwait has been committed to the development and enhancement of the Kuwaiti capital market since its inception, in an effort to highlight the investment opportunities and solutions it has to offer. Through this agreement, we hope to broaden the cooperation between Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, and attract more investors - whether on the local, regional or international levels - to both capital markets, and contribute to the wider national economies of both countries."

From his end, the Chairman of Kuwait Clearing Company, Fahad Abdulrahman Al-Mukhaizeem, had this to say: "We are ecstatic about this partnership between Kuwait and the UAE, which we definitely consider to be the beginning of a fruitful relationship to exchange knowledge, experiences and

business outlooks for the development of both capital markets in Kuwait and Abu Dhabi, in spite of the circumstances brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The KCC has long sought to broaden commercial cooperation and establish long-term partnerships with its peers, both regionally and internationally.

Saeed Hamad Al-Dhaheeri, CEO of ADX, added: "We are excited to begin working with our counterparts at Boursa Kuwait and Kuwait Clearing Company. Our cooperation and the transfer of knowledge will strengthen the dynamism of both of our trading platforms as we work towards greater market integration. Partnerships with international exchanges are central to our 'ADX One' strategy and will help us to further improve market efficiency, bringing about mutually beneficial results."

Since its inception, Boursa Kuwait has worked diligently to create a credible exchange built on efficiency and transparency, creating a liquid capital market, a progressive exchange platform and developing a comprehensive set of reforms and enhancements that allow it to compete on an international level. Over the past several years, the company has rolled out numerous market reforms and new initiatives as part of its comprehensive multi-phase market development (MD) plans.

Nord Stream 2 stop leaves German Russia policy 'in pieces'

FRANKFURT: After President Vladimir Putin's latest move to escalate tensions in Ukraine, Germany is facing up to its dependence on Russian gas and the failure of its decades-long attempts to cooperate with Moscow. Putin's recognition of two breakaway regions in Ukraine prompted Western countries to respond with a raft of sanctions, with Chancellor Olaf Scholz pulling the plug on the controversial Nord Stream 2 pipeline from Russia. Moscow's aggressive steps had "changed" the situation, Scholz said, and thrown into question Germany's energy security if it continued to rely on Russia.

Amid growing friction with the West over the last year, restricted deliveries of gas from Russia sent prices for energy to multi-year highs. Having announced a stepwise withdrawal from nuclear energy after Japan's Fukushima disaster in 2011,

Germany is highly reliant on gas, with the fuel making up 26.7 percent of its mix. The majority of those supplies, in turn, come from Russia over pipelines running through Ukraine, Poland and under the Baltic Sea. When asked on Wednesday on public radio whether Europe's largest economy could do without Russian gas should the taps be turned off as tensions climb, the minister for economy, energy and climate, Robert Habeck, said "yes, it can".

Ending the dependence would however "drive prices higher", Habeck said, causing a serious headache for consumers who have already seen their energy bills rise precipitously.

'Fatal mistake'

Despite opposition from the United States and other allies, Germany stood firmly behind the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project until recently. As tensions mounted at the start of the year, Scholz was reproached for failing to explicitly name a stop to the controversial project among possible sanctions.

But he called time on the project's approval process on Tuesday, and with it Germany's more sympathetic diplomatic stance towards Moscow, which held out the possibility of working together.

The Russia policy pursued during former Chancellor Angela Merkel's 16 years in office until

2021 was a "fatal mistake" the tabloid-style Bild said after the reversal. Instead of taking Putin's aggression seriously, Merkel and her foreign minister, now president, Frank-Walter Steinmeier had "let everything go", the paper said.

With the recognition of the breakaway regions, "decades of German foreign policy lay in pieces", the daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung wrote. The "special role" that leaders in Berlin had assumed in negotiations with Russia while trying to broker a solution with Ukraine had produced little. The economic carrots—such as Nord Stream 2 approval—that had been dangled in front of Moscow came to look like a stick for Germany's own back.

Renewables shift

The latest crisis leaves not only Germany's diplomatic stance towards Moscow but also the government's key priority of energy policy ripe for reevaluation. The coalition between the Social Democrats, Greens and the liberal FDP had resolved to make massive investments in the move towards renewable energy, while using gas to bridge the gap.

Germany's gas supplies were "assured" in the short term despite the halt to Nord Stream 2, Claudia Kemfert from the DIW think-tank said.



However a total end to gas deliveries from Russia would require "considerable efforts to make up the difference", she said.

A possible alternative was to build terminals for the delivery of liquefied natural gas directly from countries such as the United States, Qatar or Canada, Kemfert said. No such installations exist at the moment, though Habeck has previously raised the possibility of expediting the approval of their construction to diversify gas supplies.

"The best answer is the build-up of renewables and significant energy-saving measures," Kemfert said. — AFP

Workers across Turkey go on strike as inflation bites

ISTANBUL: Soaring inflation in Turkey has propelled a wave of strikes unlike any the country has seen since the 1970s, as workers demand more money to counter the shrinking value of their pay.

Supermarket warehouse worker Bekir Gok was sacked this month-alongside 256 of his colleagues—for demanding an extra four Turkish liras (30 US cents) per hour, the equivalent of a loaf of bread.

However after the workers at the Migros supermarket chain went on strike, they won back their jobs as well as salary rises and other demands, giving inspiration to dissatisfied employees across the country. "We were asking for the price of a loaf of bread! It's nothing compared to what we've helped them earn since the pandemic began," Gok said. Turkey's annual inflation rate officially reached 48.7 percent in January, and workers have struggled to keep up with the skyrocketing cost of living. Industrial action is rare in Turkey, where the major strikes that marked the 1970s remain a distant memory

for most—a military coup in 1980 led to a crack down on union activities.

However the country has seen more than 60 strikes, factory occupations, protests and boycott calls involving at least 13,500 workers in less than two months, according to the independent Labor Studies Group. One of the most prominent recent strikes was launched on February 1 by motorcycle couriers for the food delivery company Yemeksepeti Banabi. "We put our own lives in danger doing this work. We're not working in a four-walled office, we deliver packages in snow and rain," said Izzet Baskin, a 27-year-old delivery worker for the company in the capital Ankara.

His colleague Ferhat Uyar said that "we can't think or see ahead". "We have no hope left. We continue this resistance to try and get ahead of the issues," the 27-year-old said. After paying his rent and energy bills, Uyar said he is unable to afford the products he delivers, such as takeaway coffee from Starbucks.

Yemeksepeti Banabi delivery couriers currently receive 4,253 liras (\$305) a month, now the minimum wage after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan increased the rate by 50 percent for 2022.

But the Turk-Is union said last month the poverty level was 13,844 liras. The Banabi workers are on strike demanding less than



ANKARA: Ferhat Uyar, 27, a worker for Yemeksepeti Banabi motorcycle couriers speaks at the offices of Freight workers' union Nakliyat-Is in Ankara.— AFP

half that figure: 5,500 liras. German company Delivery Hero bought Yemeksepeti Banabi for \$589 million in 2015. Freight workers' union Nakliyat-Is, which is supporting the delivery workers on strike across Turkey, said nearly 100 couriers were killed in the past three months, compared with 190 deaths in all of 2020.

"These are workplaces where there is no supervision of employees' health or security," the union's Ankara representative Bayram Karkin said. To make their demands heard, the riders—instinctly recognizable in their fluorescent pink jackets and helmets—blocked roads with their motorcycles. — AFP

Heathrow airport posts big loss on UK COVID curbs

LONDON: London's Heathrow airport announced yesterday it narrowed annual losses only slightly in 2021 despite the reopening of global air travel, blaming what it said were stricter passenger curbs in Britain compared to the neighboring EU.

Heathrow recorded pre-tax losses totaling £1.8 billion (\$2.4 billion) last year, it said in a statement. Passenger numbers slumped 12.3 percent to 19.4 million—the lowest annual total since 1972.

The airport, one of the world's busiest hubs, had already suffered a £2 billion loss in 2020 as the pandemic grounded flights worldwide. "Heathrow was the only European hub to see a reduction in traffic last year, due to tighter travel restrictions than EU countries," the airport said.

The UK aviation sector had strongly criticized the British gov-

ernment over its long-lasting travel curbs that especially hit the tourism industry. However Prime Minister Boris Johnson has decided to scrap all pandemic legal curbs in England from today, urging a shift from government intervention to personal responsibility. Heathrow said that despite "a slower start to" the new year owing to the emergence of the Omicron variant at the end of 2021, the group was sticking to its forecast of a large rebound in annual passenger numbers to 45.5 million.

Heathrow welcomed 81 million passengers in 2019 before the onset of the pandemic. The total slumped to 22 million in 2020, mirroring huge falls elsewhere, forcing airlines to slash tens of thousands of jobs. The aviation sector has recovered gradually as skies reopen and economies emerge from lockdowns. — AFP

Business

Mazda (Al-Shaya & Al-Sagar) launches first fully electric car MX-30 in region

Mazda's MX-30 will be on display at the 360 Mall



KUWAIT: Mazda's first all-electric vehicle is the MX-30 SUV, combines all the benefits of Mazda's electrification technology with a rotary generator to charge the battery, providing more range for even more enjoyment behind the wheel.

Embodying an expanded expression of our Kodo design, the Mazda MX-30 has been meticulously sculpted into a stunning yet straightforward form. It features a pillarless freestyle door system, providing a greater sense of openness and a wide range of possibilities for experiencing the vehicle.

The MX-30 brings together intricate detailing, select materials, and the latest technology to create an interior that feels open and inviting. Our commitment to the environment and comfort, and craftsmanship is evident in the unique use of cork, recycled fabrics, and other sustainable materials.

Mazda's electrification technology offers a smooth and seamless performance while directly responding to the driver's intentions. In addition, the electric G-Vectoring Control Plus delivers precise and responsive steering to form a strong connection between car and driver.

Ashish Tandon, General Manager of (Al-Shaya & Al-Sagar) stated, "From the outset, the development

team behind the Mazda MX-30 wanted to create a car that would become a partner to its owner. We are happy to be the first in the region to test its performance".

It should appeal to be driven daily, and every time a customer gets behind the wheel, their affection for it should grow, and they can be more true to themselves. Everything about the model, from the styling that breeds a sense of familiarity, to the open-feeling cabin that sets the mind free, is uncompromisingly designed around the user.

Mazda wants people to purely enjoy driving in any situation, and that applies as much to a BEV as it does to any other kind of car. The MX-30 incorporates further-evolved Mazda-unique Jinba-Ittai driving performance, achieved through our human-centric development philosophy. Every time you drive the MX-30, you can experience an enjoyable everyday driving experience.

Waleed Alqahtani, Mazda Brand Manager, "Team Mazda is enthusiastic about trying and testing the all-new Mazda MX 30 EV. We are looking forward to adding new products, technologies, and experiences to meet and exceed our customers' expectations."

Hong Kong unveils \$22bn budget for virus-hit economy

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's finance chief yesterday unveiled a costly HK\$170 billion (\$21.79 billion) budget, including tax breaks and consumer spending vouchers, as the city reels under its worst coronavirus outbreak to date. While rival finance centers emerging from pandemic isolation and reopening to the world, Hong Kong has found itself overwhelmed by the highly infectious Omicron variant after the city's previously successful zero-COVID strategy crumbled.

The surge has prompted the reimposition of painful curbs that have shuttered many businesses, closed schools, pushed authorities to order multiple rounds of mass testing and compounded the city's international isolation. Finance Secretary Paul Chan released the taps in his 2022/23 budget speech with a series of handouts.

"Our economy and people's livelihoods have been under immense pressure in recent months," he told legislators in a speech that was live-streamed because of the pandemic.

"Economic performance in the first quarter is not optimistic."

Among the measures are HK\$10,000 electronic spending vouchers for some 6.6 million people, double the amount offered last year. As with previous rounds, the vouchers will not be available to foreign domestic workers or non-permanent residents.

The budget also included salary tax reductions, electricity bill subsidies and the continuation of a loan scheme for small and medium businesses.

Anniversary plans

This year is a politically sensitive one for both

China and Hong Kong. President Xi Jinping, China's most authoritarian leader in a generation, is paving the way for a third five-year term at a major Communist Party meeting towards the end of the year.

July also marks the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's handover to China by Britain.

Those celebrations now face being undermined by the coronavirus surge and China has ordered Hong Kong to stick to its zero-COVID strategy. Some 62,000 cases have been recorded in the current wave, compared with just 12,000 for the two years before, but health experts fear the real number is far higher because of a backlog.

Most of those who have died in the current wave were elderly and unvaccinated. City leader Carrie Lam on Tuesday admitted that her administration was unable to deal with the surge and had called for help from the mainland, which will build a series of temporary hospital wards and isolation units.

All 7.4 million residents will have to undergo three rounds of compulsory testing in March.

Hong Kong is also sticking to its policy of trying to isolate anyone who tests positive for the coronavirus but it is not clear whether enough units can be built to deal with the exponential caseload. Hong Kong's economy fell into a two-year recession in 2019 and 2020 thanks to massive democracy protests followed by the emergence of the coronavirus.

It rebounded in 2021 with growth of 6.4 percent as zero-COVID largely kept the virus at bay.

But that recovery now looks shaky. Fitch Ratings recently slashed Hong Kong's 2022 growth forecast from three percent to 1.5 percent, making the city among the worst-performing economies worldwide.

Chan offered a more optimistic take in his budget speech. "I forecast that Hong Kong's economy will put up a better performance in the second half of this year and achieve growth of 2.0-3.5 percent in real terms for the year as a whole," he said. — AFP



BAIDOA: Mothers wait for high nutrition foods and health services at Tawkal 2 Dinsoor camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Baidoa, Somalia. —AFP

Horn of Africa drought drives 13m to hunger

NAIROBI: Vast swathes of land stretching from southern Ethiopia to northern Kenya and Somalia are in the grip of a severe drought that has left 13 million people facing hunger. Across these regions, where people eke out a living from mainly agro-pastoral activities, the three rainy seasons since the end of 2020 have been marked by low rainfall, exacerbated by a locust invasion that devastated crops between 2019 and 2021.

"The population of the Horn makes up only four percent of the global population, but it represents 20 percent of the population that is food insecure," Michael Dunford, World Food Programme (WFP) regional director for eastern Africa, said earlier this month. According to the UN agency, 5.7 million people need food aid in southern and southeastern Ethiopia, including half a million malnourished children and mothers.

In eastern and northern Kenya, where the presi-

dent declared a state of national disaster in September because of the drought, another 2.8 million people need assistance.

In Somalia, the number of people classified as severely hungry could rise from 4.3 million to 4.6 million by May if urgent action is not taken. The authorities there declared a "state of humanitarian emergency" in November.

'Brink of catastrophe'

"Malnutrition has reached crisis levels," said Victor Chinyama, a spokesman for UNICEF in Somalia. "The time to act is now." "If you wait until things get worse or until famine is declared, it may be too late," he warned.

In 2017, early humanitarian action prevented a famine in the troubled country. But in 2011, 260,000 people-half of them children under the age of six-died of hunger, partly because the international community did not act fast enough, according to the UN. Currently, the UN's annual appeal for \$1.46 billion (1.23 billion euros) for Somalia has scraped in just 2.3 percent of the target.

Beyond the direct and potentially deadly consequences on the people affected, the shortage of water and grazing land is a source of conflict, particularly among herders. — AFP

nearly five percent on the London Stock Exchange as of 0845 GMT. The group said in a statement it had "posted record results for 2021, accelerating the realization of merger synergies and building solid commercial performance, driven by a clear focus on speed of execution from day one".

It said its adjusted operating profit margin was 11.8 percent in 2021, and forecast another double-digit margin for this year. While shipments were down by three percent in its main market in Europe, revenue there rose by five percent due to an increase in hybrid and electric car sales, which are more expensive. Shipments fell in North America by two percent, but revenue surged by 15 percent, thanks partly to strong results from Jeep SUV and Ram trucks. Stellantis CEO Carlos Tavares said that "today's record results prove that Stellantis is well positioned to deliver strong performance, even in the most uncertain market environments." The board of directors will propose a dividend of 1.05 euros per share, or 3.3 billion euros. — AFP

Stellantis shares surge after posting record results

PARIS: Shares in US-European automaker Stellantis jumped yesterday after it posted record 2021 profits despite producing 1.6 million fewer cars than planned due to a semiconductor shortage.

The group, which was formed in January last year when Fiat-Chrysler and PSA merged, reported sales of 152 billion euros (\$172 billion) — up 14 percent on the two combined figures of the two groups in 2020. Stellantis, which also includes the Jeep, Peugeot, Alfa Romeo and Citroen brands, saw net profit jump to 13.4 billion euros, nearly tripling the previous year's number, it said in a statement yesterday.

After the announcement, its shares jumped by

HAPPY NATIONAL & LIBERATION DAY

CELEBRATING KUWAIT

ABK extends its congratulations to HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and to the Kuwaiti government and its people, on the occasion of Kuwait's National and Liberation days.

On this occasion, ABK will be closed for business from Sunday 27th February to Tuesday 1st March 2022. The Bank will partially operate on Wednesday 2nd and Thursday 3rd March 2022 with the following branches open to serve customers:

- Head Office branch
- New Jahra branch
- Farwaniya branch
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Business

US consumer confidence falls as expectations grow tepid

Home prices saw biggest jump in 34 years in 2021

WASHINGTON: US consumer confidence fell for the second straight month in February, a survey said Tuesday, as Americans' feelings about the economy's present and future health cooled. The Conference Board said its consumer confidence index declined to 110.5, a drop of less than a point from January and better than analysts expected.

The data showed consumer expectations for the economy's future performance declined slightly, but there also was a small uptick assessments of its present condition, "suggesting the economy continued to expand in (the first quarter) but did not gain momentum," said Lynn Franco, senior director of economic indicators at The Conference Board. After declining in December, consumer expectations for inflation 12 months ahead rose again to seven percent.

"While they do not expect the economy to pick up steam in the near future, they also do not foresee conditions worsening," Franco said. "Nevertheless, confidence and consumer spending will continue to face headwinds from rising prices in the coming months."

A wave of price increases has sent inflation world's largest economy to the highest level in 40 years, battering American households and businesses that also are struggling to find workers. And conflict with Russia over Ukraine are sending fuel prices higher. "It remains doubtful that consumer attitudes will experience a material improvement until inflation dynamics start to normalize in (the second quarter)," Mahir Rasheed at Oxford Economics said.

"In the meantime, geopolitical tensions in Europe will keep uncertainty elevated while price increases continue to outpace wage growth and erode household purchasing power." Meanwhile, the survey showed fewer consumers viewed jobs as

"hard to get," while the percentage describing jobs as plentiful dropped just over a point to 53.8 percent, which the survey described as "still a historically strong reading."

The share of consumers describing current business conditions as "good" fell just over a percentage point to 18.7 percent. Those describing them as bad fell almost three points to 24.7 percent.

There was a slight dip in the percentage of consumers expecting business conditions to improve, while those expecting them to worsen fell to 18.1 percent from 19.7 percent in January.

Meanwhile, US home prices in 2021 saw their biggest increase in at least 34 years, according to data released Tuesday, as buyers spent the year snapping up homes and builders struggled to keep up. Home prices surged 18.8 percent last year, according to the S&P CoreLogic Case-Shiller US National Home Price index, the biggest jump in its existence and much more than the 10.4 percent jump seen in 2020.

The US real estate market last year saw the most existing homes sold in 15 years, with sales topping six million even as supply sunk to an all-time low by the close of the year. Builders have had to deal with double-digit increases in material costs as well as a shortage of workers.

That pushed home prices higher, and played a role in consumer prices experiencing their largest jump in decades. The inflation wave is expected to ease this year as the Federal Reserve raises interest rates and global supply chain snarls ease, and Craig J. Lazzara, Managing Director at S&P Dow Jones Indices, predicted higher lending rates may also cool the housing market.

"In the short term... we should soon begin to see the impact of increasing mortgage rates on home prices," he said. The home price increases were



CHICAGO: In this file photo, a home is offered for sale by owner in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

most severe in Phoenix, where they rose 32.5 percent. In Tampa, the jump was 29.4 percent, and in Miami 27.3 percent.

Lazzara said jump in prices compared to 2020 appeared to be moderating near the end of the year, but in December, they ticked upwards again. As for the causes of the house-buying boom, "We have previously suggested that the strength in the US

housing market is being driven in part by a change in locational preferences as households react to the COVID pandemic," he said.

"More data will be required to understand whether this demand surge simply represents an acceleration of purchases that would have occurred over the next several years rather than a more permanent secular change." — AFP

NBK launches photography competition themed 'My Country Through My Eyes'

KUWAIT: As part of its activities marking the celebration of the national days, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) launched the biggest photography competition in Kuwait titled "My Country Through My Eyes".

The competition targets professionals and amateurs to participate in capturing the best of Kuwait City monuments and NBK headquarters iconic architecture. It will last until 28 February, and the winners will be selected by a jury of professional photographers including Faisal Al-Bishr, Ali Younes and Abdulaziz Al-Sorayia, and rewarded with total prizes worth KD 6,600 during the first week of next March.

Individuals wishing to participate in the competition can visit the website www.nbkcompetition.com and enter their personal details to be enrolled as contestants, in addition to choosing one of the three categories of the competition they would like to participate in: Landscape Photography, Drone, and Video (Timelapse or

Hyperlapse).

The first three winners from each category will be rewarded with KD 1,000 for 1st place, KD 700 for 2nd place, and KD 500 for 3rd place. On this occasion, Yaqoub Al-Baqer, Public Relations Manager at National Bank of Kuwait said: "NBK's launch of the photography competition, which is the biggest of its kind, comes in line with its endeavors to encouraging creative talents and showcasing the cultural and aesthetic side of Kuwait."

The competition aims to give Kuwaitis the opportunity to express their love, loyalty and belonging to our bountiful homeland, and to show the beauty of Kuwait to the region and the whole world through a variety of amazing photos, he added. Al-Baqer pointed out that NBK is always keen to organize activities and events reflecting the celebration of National Days, being a core social commitment in the bank's culture throughout its history.



Yaqoub Al-Baqer

Organizing these activities and events demonstrates NBK's active participation in the various occasions and national days, in line with its CSR and community service commitments. It has been the tradition of NBK to launch a variety of social initiatives during February every

year on the occasion of the National and Liberation Days, as well as patriotic songs that stimulate national pride in local culture and social traditions, underscoring the significance and historical connotations of this occasion. This year, NBK released a song titled "Water is Kuwait's Past and Future... Conserve it," marking the launch of a national initiative for water conservation, which comes in line with its strategy to achieve sustainability.



Ooredoo's 'Kuwait's Good Jealousy' shares children's voices

KUWAIT: This year, Ooredoo Telecom, the first to introduce innovative digital services in Kuwait, stands out from the annual competition in February and on the occasion of the country's National and Liberation anniversaries, through the launching of its National Day TVC as a commemorative gift to Kuwait and its people titled "Kuwait's Good Jealousy".

Given the key role children play in determining social progress, and in view of the national focus on building generations adhering to national identity, listening to them and preparing them to be active citizens and ambassadors of the State of Kuwait is essential and a core value of Ooredoo Kuwait.

"Kuwait's Good Jealousy" comes as part of Ooredoo's corporate social responsibility program, and in its constant efforts to enhance the feeling of belonging to the community through sharing the dreams and voices of its children. Hence, fostering active and responsible citizens contributes to the process of developing a sustainable future and better Kuwait.

The national TVC intended to ignite the feelings of good and positive jealousy for their homeland among members of society, making children its main character, and encouraging them to dream, innovate and vision. The ambitious children of Kuwait are the next generation who will contribute efficiently and effectively to the future quality of their communities locally, nationally and globally. The TVC also promotes a sense of social responsibility.

Commenting on the launching of the TVC, Naser Al-Abdullah - Manager-Advertising and Branding at Ooredoo Kuwait, said: "Kuwait has always been known for its heroes who raised its name in various fields and events held locally, regionally and internationally. They have always been the loudest voice in events worldwide. Today, Ooredoo carefully listens to these children and sheds light on their aspirations and passionate dreams. Today, Ooredoo confirms that dreams are the first step towards success, that the will is fueled by encouragement, and that children are the future."

"We seize every opportunity to share the community's pride in their homeland. Today, we celebrate the independence of the State of Kuwait, appreciating the country we live in, and honoring youth," Al-Abdullah added. It is worth noting that Ooredoo has also launched a website link that allows each person to register and share his dream and vision for the future Kuwait, www.ooredoo.com.kw/portal/ar/kuwaitgoodjealousy.



Naser Al-Abdullah

US opposes Canada's digital services tax proposal

WASHINGTON: The United States on Tuesday announced its opposition to Canada's proposed tax on the largest tech firms, warning it "would examine all options" should Ottawa go ahead with the levy.

The United States Trade Representative (USTR) said Canada should instead work towards implementing a global taxation agreement that Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries announced last year to defuse the global tech tax row. "As Canada is fully aware, the United States has serious concerns about measures that single out American firms for taxation while effectively excluding national firms engaged in similar lines of business," USTR said. It called for Ottawa to "focus efforts on engaging constructively" with the OECD negotiations, "instead of pursuing a counterproductive unilateral measure that risks encouraging other countries to follow suit." Should Canada go ahead with the tax, "USTR would examine all options, including under our trade agreements and domestic statutes."

Washington has hit out at digital services tax proposals globally, which it says impose discriminatory fees on American tech giants like Amazon, Apple and Google. In response to USTR, the office of Canadian Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland said Canada's preference has always been a multilateral pact. "Canada has a clear national interest in this multilateral agreement, which protects against erosion of the tax base and will generate additional revenue" for the country, her office said, in an emailed response to AFP.

"We sincerely hope that the timely implementation of the new international system" will make Ottawa's proposed tax "unnecessary" to ensure the protection of Canadian interests, it added. In October, nearly 140 countries reached an agreement on a 15 percent minimum tax under OECD auspices, leading the United States to remove punitive tariffs on several countries ahead of the global tax's imposition, which is expected in 2023. Those levies were never imposed, but served as a threat to those countries which go ahead with their digital services tax. Canada's proposed three percent tax "on revenue from certain digital services" would affect companies with at least \$850 million in gross revenues and apply retroactively to the start of this year, though it would not come into effect until 2024, USTR said. — AFP

UK bank Barclays profit quadruples on recovery

LONDON: British bank Barclays announced yesterday that its 2021 net profit more than quadrupled as the economy recovered from coronavirus fallout. Profit after tax surged to almost £6.4 billion (\$8.7 billion), helped by the release of £700 million that had been set aside for bad loans during the pandemic, Barclays said in a statement.

That compared with a £1.53-billion profit the prior year, when Barclays had taken a vast £4.8-billion charge to cover potential COVID-19 fallout. The 2021 performance was "driven by an improved macroeconomic outlook" and buoyed also by reduced unsecured lending balances and a benign credit environment. Pre-tax profit more than doubled to £8.4 billion, aided by record earnings at its investment banking arm. "Barclays demonstrated a clear and sustainable path to growth over the course of 2021," said chief executive C.S Venkatakrishnan.

"I am proud that we have delivered this resilient



performance while continuing to support our clients and customers through another year of COVID-19 related challenges," he added. "We recognise that the economic environment is more than usually uncertain, with rising inflation rates and tighter monetary policy, while many parts of society continue to recover from the severe social and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic." The group added however that it was well positioned for rising interest rates, echoing remarks from rival NatWest. "Barclays' diversified income streams position the group well for the ongoing economic recovery and rising interest rates," it noted. — AFP

Energy sector methane emissions underreported

PARIS: The energy sector's overall emissions of methane are massively underreported, the IEA said Tuesday as it promoted cuts to the most potent greenhouse gas as a quick way to make a major impact on global warming. The International Energy Agency said its latest annual Global Methane Tracker had found that emissions by the energy sector were about 70 percent higher than official government figures.

It said this showed the need for greater transparency as well as "stronger policy action to drive down emissions of this potent greenhouse gas," responsible for some 30 percent of the rise in global temperatures since the Industrial Revolution. While methane dissipates faster than carbon dioxide, it has a much more powerful warming effect in the atmosphere.

Humans are responsible for about 60 percent of methane emissions, and cutting these could have a quick and major impact. "Cutting global methane emissions from human activities by 30 percent by the end of this decade would have the same effect on global warming by 2050 as shifting the entire transport sector to net zero CO2 emissions," IEA chief Fatih Birol said.

The tracker, which for the first time includes country-by-country emissions from coal mines and bioenergy, showed methane emissions from the energy sector grew by just under five percent last year. The IEA logged "significant emissions" in Texas and parts of Central Asia, with Turkmenistan alone responsible for one-third of "large emissions events" logged by satellites last year.

The energy industry is a major source of methane emissions from leaks and operations. Many older oil wells flare off unwanted methane-which is essentially natural gas used to heat homes-as building infrastructure may have originally cost too much. But with gas prices soaring, the costs of investments to capture methane and reduce leaks will quickly pay for itself, and would help reduce tight supplies. — AFP

Traditional Palestinian dresses and accessories by Palestinian designer Khawla Al-Tawil



A woman poses for a picture dressed in Palestinian designer Khawla Al-Tawil's pieces of traditional Palestinian dresses and accessories near her shop in Beit Sahour, south of Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank. — AFP photos



An employee chooses thread for sewing at Palestinian designer Khawla Al-Tawil's shop for traditional Palestinian dresses and accessories in Beit Sahour.



An employee embellishes embroidered strips of fabric at Palestinian designer Khawla Al-Tawil's shop for traditional Palestinian dresses and accessories in Beit Sahour.



Palestinian designer Khawla Al-Tawil draws designs at her shop.



Palestinian designer Khawla Al-Tawil arranges displays at her shop.



Palestinian designer Khawla Al-Tawil dresses a woman in a traditional Palestinian dress and accessories.



Fashion set heads to Milan for live shows - for real this time

The who's who of Italian fashion retakes the runway with the return of Milan women's shows yesterday which organizers hope will boost an industry stifled by two years of coronavirus. Back are the leggy models, the paparazzi and the Prosecco-fuelled parties as the international jet-set ready for live shows from the likes of Fendi, Giorgio Armani and Gucci, including a debut for Ferrari. This season, for the first time since COVID-19 erupted in Italy in February 2020, in-person shows with audiences will outnumber pre-taped shows and films streamed for home-bound fashionistas.

Those proved a pale substitute for the runway extravaganzas that are a major advertising weapon for luxury brands. Now, Milan is hoping for an event worthy of the return of hundreds of buyers, journalists and fashion executives to the city. Carlo Capasa, chairman of Italy's national fashion chamber (CNMI), acknowledged during a press conference last week the "uncertainty" that still weighed over the sector. But the 58 physical shows and nine digital offerings for Fall/Winter 2022/2023 are "a strong sign of optimism and positivity, which infuses new momentum into the industry", he said. "Everything is heading towards recovery in 2022." Attracting the most attention among the ready-to-wear shows is Gucci, today's "It" label, with its green and red stripe. It returns to the Milan calendar after a two-year absence. Designer Alessandro Michele is fresh from November's "Gucci Love Parade" show that replete with satin, spangles and ostrich feathers-turned Hollywood's Walk of Fame into the flashiest of catwalks.



Clawing back

Two years ago this week in Milan, Moschino presented a Versailles-worthy collection of embroidered silk confections on models in towering hairdos. The care-free, "Let them eat cake" vibe was soon brought to a brutal halt by the pandemic. Since then, after a period of factory closures, plummeting sales and a sea change in how people dress (sweatpants, anyone?), the industry has sought to claw its way back to pre-COVID levels. "After nearly two years of disruption, the global fashion industry is once again finding its feet," wrote consultancy McKinsey in a December report.

Italy's fashion and related sectors are expected to post revenue of 83 billion euros (\$95 billion) in 2021, up 20.9 percent year-on-year, according to CNMI. That is still 7.8 percent shy of 2019 levels, however. Exports, up 16.4 percent in the first 10 months of 2021, were fuelled by a 50-percent rise in sales to China, and a 31.8-percent increase to the United States. Chinese buyers will still be absent this week due to restricted entry into Italy, but a government measure intended to spur tourism means foreign buyers who received non-EU approved vaccines, in particular Russia's Sputnik, are welcome. A surge of Omicron cases resulted in a

scaled-down Milan men's fashion week in January, and anxiety continues to hang over the show circuit, which began this month in New York and, following shows in London and Milan, wraps up in Paris on March 8. In New York, Tom Ford cancelled his highly anticipated runway show, blaming an unfinished collection on Omicron cases among US design staff and Italian factory workers.

Cars and corsets

More at home on the racetrack than the runway, Ferrari makes its Milan debut Sunday, eight months after designer Rocco Iannone presented the first fashion collection for the luxury sports car brand, using its assembly line as a catwalk. Returning to Milan yesterday is Diesel, marking Belgian designer Glenn Martens' second collection for the Italian denim brand.

Martens, who continues to serve as artistic director of Y/Project, presented a resplendent haute couture collection in Paris last month as Jean Paul Gaultier's guest designer, garnering rave reviews for his deconstructed take on the French designer's signature corseting. Fashion watchers are also eager for Matthieu Blazy's debut Saturday as new creative director of Bottega Veneta, following the surprise exit of Daniel Lee in November. — AFP



Models present a collection for Italian designer Ennio Capasa during the catwalk show for the Fall/Winter 2022/2023 collection on the first day of the Milan Fashion Week in Milan. — AFP photos



Michelangelo's three 'pietas' united in historic first

It is admired the world over as an exquisite depiction of maternal grief. But Michelangelo's "Pieta" has overshadowed two other moving sculptures on the same subject by the Renaissance giant. That is why Florence's Opera del Duomo museum in Italy is putting on display together for the first time all three versions of the Virgin Mary mourning over the body of her son Jesus Christ.

The Tuscan museum's original "Bandini" goes on show Thursday alongside casts of the "Pieta" and "Rondanini", which are on loan from the Vatican Museums. Positioned to face each other in an intimate setting, there are striking contrasts between these variations, which mark different phases in the life of the artist, who died aged 88 in 1564. The museum's director, Timothy Verdon, said it was a unique opportunity to "observe Michelangelo's intellectual maturation on the theme of the sacred". The exhibition, which runs until August 1, "highlights the link between life and art in this religious sculptor, who served the popes for most of his career".

Purity

The "Pieta" housed at the Vatican-masterfully executed when Michelangelo was not yet 25 years old-amazed his contemporaries, who were dazzled by the beauty of this virgin, clothed in billowing drapery. The artist rejected criticism that his Mary was too youthful, saying purity kept women beautiful. Mary cradles her 33-year old son, whose serene expression suggests he could almost be sleeping in a nod to the coming resurrection—the rising of Jesus from the dead in Christian belief.

This sculpture was damaged by a Hungarian hammer-wielding attacker in 1972, and the restored work of art is now



Michelangelo's cast of the Vatican Pieta is seen during a preview of the exhibition "The three Michelangelo's Pieta" at the Cathedral Museum in Florence. — AFP

protected behind bulletproof glass. Centuries earlier, Michelangelo himself-dissatisfied with the "Bandini", his second pieta-attacked it with a hammer, leaving marks which can still be seen today on Jesus' shoulder and Mary's hand. This version was done when the then-72-year old artist was suffering from depression. Convinced death was near, Michelangelo took a vow of poverty and placed religion at the centre of his life. He lent his own features and beard to the character of Nicodemus, who dominates the "Bandini", shielding Jesus, Mary Magdalene and Mary, who here has lost her earlier timeless beauty.

Evolution of style

The "Rondanini" is without doubt the most surprising: stunningly modern, this stripped-down sculpture, about two meters high, was begun around 1552, when the artist was nearly 80 years old. It

was found in his home in Rome, where he worked until his death. Juxtaposing the three works "allows us to measure the evolution of Michelangelo's style over the 50 years that separate the first pieta from the other two, and the even more drastic and striking change between the last two," said Verdon.

The last pieta feels unfinished and far removed from the aesthetic canons of the time, but experts also see it as a message of faith and the importance of looking beyond appearances to the essential. Gone is the rich drapery, gone are the supporting characters. Mary and her son, whose faces and bodies are reduced to sketches, are once again represented alone in an extreme simplicity that reinforces the spiritual power of Michelangelo Buonarroti's last work. — AFP

Grunge pioneer Mark Lanegan dies at 57

Mark Lanegan, whose dramatic baritone vocals fronted the proto-grunge band Screaming Trees, died Tuesday at his home in Killarney, Ireland. He was 57 years old. The statement posted on the artist's official Twitter account did not specify a cause of death, though Lanegan reportedly was suffering from COVID-19 and kidney disease last year. The singer with uniquely scratchy vocals was born November 25, 1964 in Ellensburg, Washington. He made a name for himself in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the band Screaming Trees, a forerunner of the grunge movement that would come to define the American northwest.

The closest the band came to mainstream success was with the album "Sweet Oblivion," which included their biggest hit "Nearly Lost You" and sold some 300,000 copies. The band split in 2000, after which Lanegan began a solo



Mark Lanegan

career and did vocal features for bands including Queens of the Stone Age. The artist was open about his struggles with drugs and alcohol, which he wrote in his 2020 memoir left him at periods experiencing homelessness.

He was sober in the final decades of his life, after receiving help from the Musicians Assistance Program. He lived with his wife, Shelley Brien, who survives him. "I wanted excitement, adventure, decadence, depravity, anything, everything," the artist wrote in the memoir, entitled "Sing Backwards and Weep." "I would never find any of it in this dusty, isolated cow town. — AFP

Daft Punk returns to social media, releases deluxe 'Homework' album

Exactly one year after French duo Daft Punk shocked fans by announcing an unceremonious split, they've returned to social media and are hosting a one-day-only livestream of a 1997 show on Twitch. The era-defining dancefloor act began the livestream at 2:22 Pacific time and on 02-22-22 no less-sharing rare footage from their December 12, 1997 show in Los Angeles when they played the set without their iconic helmets.

Daft Punk also released a deluxe anniversary edition of their debut album "Homework," which came out 25 years ago. From "Da Funk" in 1995 to "Get Lucky" in 2013, Daft Punk became the torch-bearers for French house music across the globe, winning six Grammy awards and pioneering the monumental sound-and-light shows that came to characterize the electronic dance movement

Oscars to pre-tape some awards in bid for 'tighter' show

The Oscars next month will pre-tape the announcements of eight winners in an attempt to make the televised ceremony "tighter and more electric," organizers said Tuesday. The decision, made to "prioritize the television audience," will free up more time for musical performances, comedy and tributes, Academy president David Rubin said in an email to nominees and members. Television ratings for the Oscars have dramatically declined in recent years. Last year's edition was watched by just over 10 million viewers—a 56 percent decline from 2020, which was already a record low.

Eight awards "will initially be presented in the Dolby Theatre in the hour before the live broadcast begins," and edited highlights will be "folded seamlessly into the live televised show," the email seen by AFP says. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has mulled reducing the number of categories in the live broadcast before, and recently merged its "sound mixing" and "sound editing" awards into a single Oscar. But previous attempts were unpopular, particularly among members working in craft categories—from film editing to makeup and hairstyling—who fear missing out on what is often a career-highlight moment.

Those categories will now be pre-taped, along with awards for original score, sound, production design, documentary shorts, animated shorts and live-action shorts. Rubin's email emphasizes that "every awarded filmmaker and artist in every category will still have the celebratory 'Oscar moment' they deserve on the stage of the Dolby, facing an enrapt audience." The streamlining measure will

leave "more time and opportunity for audience entertainment and engagement through comedy, musical numbers, film clip packages and movie tributes," he said. "For the audience at home, the show's flow does not change, though it will become tighter and more electric with this new cadence."



One Academy member, who asked not to be named, told AFP that they "understand" the decision announced by Rubin, due to the proviso that all winners' speeches will still be featured on the broadcast. "Considering the recent ratings decline of the Oscars telecast, the show must evolve with having the best interest of the future of the show, as well as the Academy itself, in mind," said the member. It is the Academy's latest move to boost interest and viewership in its flagship event.

The 94th Academy Awards telecast will also include a new "fan favorite" prize for the year's most popular film, as voted for by Twitter users. Several of last year's crowd-pleasing blockbusters including "Spider-Man: No Way Home" and "No Time to Die" had failed to earn Oscar nominations in major categories, including best picture. After going three years without a host, the Oscars on March 27 will be helmed by three doyens of comedy, Wanda Sykes, Amy Schumer and Regina Hall. — AFP



In this file photo Nominee For Best Album Of The Year "Random Access Memories" Daft Punk arrive on the red carpet for the 56th Grammy Awards at the Staples Center in Los Angeles.—AFP

(EDM) of recent years.

They did so while almost never revealing their faces: the ubiquitous helmets became another much-copied trope of EDM stars, but also afforded Thomas Bangalter, 47, and Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo, 48, freedom from the fame that quickly encircled them. Their fourth and last album, 2013's "Random

Access Memories", was a phenomenal success, winning them four Grammys the following year including best record for "Get Lucky", the millions-selling lead single featuring Pharrell Williams and Nile Rodgers. — AFP

Mexican town toasts tequila fish saved from extinction

Residents of a small town in western Mexico are celebrating the reintroduction into the wild of the tequila fish—an endemic species saved from the brink of extinction. The fish, whose scientific name is Zoogoneticus Tequila, was rescued in the 1990s by US and British conservationists who kept it in aquariums and helped it return to its original habitat in the Teuchitlan river. Children in Teuchitlan, home to about 10,000 people, have been at the forefront of efforts to inform visitors not only about the importance of keeping their habitat clean, but also about the tequila fish.

"The children are the ones who approach people on the river bank and tell them that in this river lives a little fish that is unique in the world... and that they par-

ticipated in its reintroduction," said Consuelo Rivera, a 70-year-old retired teacher. The tequila fish was reported to be extinct in 1998, possibly due to fragmentation of its habitat, pollution and competition from non-native species, according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The species survived only in captivity for several years until conservationists, led by Michoacan University, began the process in 2014 to reintroduce it into the wild. Since then the fish has gone from strength to strength, helped by the last major release of fish in 2018, said project leader Omar Dominguez.

'Little rooster' resurrected

The tequila fish grows to around seven

centimeters (2.7 inches) and the male has a bright reddish-orange tail. It shares the name of the world-renowned Mexican liquor originating in the town of Tequila, which like Teuchitlan is located in the state of Jalisco. The species has unique characteristics such as giving birth to well-developed fetuses, which it feeds through a kind of umbilical cord similar to that of humans, Dominguez said. "It's an important part of the ecosystem. It's a carnivorous species and it feeds, for example, on mosquito larvae, which keeps ecosystems healthy for humans," he added.

There are now estimated to be between 1,500 and 2,000 tequila fish in the wild, and the species is listed as endangered by the IUCN. The civil society group Guardians of the River carries



A biologist weighs and measures a Tequila fish (zoogoneticus tequila) during a survey.

out educational campaigns and workshops for children and adults to show them the flora and fauna of the area.

Tourism also plays an important role in the initiative. Local visitors bathe in spa pools around the river said to have therapeutic properties, and swim with the fish—also known as "gallito" (little rooster) because of its colorful tail.

"There are a lot of little fish. They swim together with people and sometimes the little fish also start to bite people, to caress them," said Maria Aurea Martinez, a spa employee. Jaime Navel, a local parish priest, sees the species as "the little fish that was resurrected, that came back to life." "There's awe and joy in the community," he said. — AFP



A fisherman works at the Teuchitlan dam where the Tequila fish (zoogoneticus tequila) returned for successful reintroduction to its natural habitat after disappearing for twenty years from the Teuchitlan River, in Teuchitlan, Jalisco state, Mexico. — AFP photos



Children belonging to the Guardians of the Teuchitlan River attend a workshop to learn more about the Tequila Fish (zoogoneticus tequila) during a survey.



Biologists conduct studies in the area where the Tequila fish (zoogoneticus tequila) lives during a survey.



PALESTINE'S PAVILION AT EXPO DUBAI TAKES VISITORS TO MULTI SENSORY TOUR



Palestine's pavilion at Expo Dubai 2020 lets visitors get to know Palestine through their five senses, by looking at its features, touching the materials that formed Palestine, hearing its tunes, smelling the fragrance of its crops as well as tasting it. The pavilion presents scenes from Old Jerusalem

with its streets, neighborhoods and religious landmarks through three-dimensional screens. It shows the Palestinian identity through the dress of officials inside the pavilion along with the dishes served in its restaurant. — KUNA



Brown says the 80s were her 'favorite period' for fashion

Millie Bobby Brown thinks the 1980s were her "favorite" era for fashion. The 'Stranger Things' star doesn't think "you can get better than the 80s" when it comes to all things style, hair, beauty and music, and she referenced her work on Netflix's sci-fi series as her window into that world. The 18-year-old actress told Elle.com: "I don't think you can get better than the 80s. I think the 80s are probably the best period for hair, make-up, fashion and music. But specifically for beauty the colors are amazing

and so bold and flawless. The hair, it's insane, the huge blowouts. "It's my favorite period that I've personally worked in and also, you know, I've experienced it for seven years and still love it." The 18-year-old actress has played the character Eleven on the supernatural show - which is set in the 80s - since its release in 2016. Meanwhile, 'Enola Holmes' star cited Audrey Hepburn as a woman who she sees as "everything I strive to be" for both her style and charity work. She added: "I think women represent beauty. Someone

I look up to is Audrey Hepburn, for all the work she put into humanitarianism and also her acting work. Who she was and what she represented is everything I strive to be - I love her make-up, her beauty and her fashion, everything about her. "But also women in general inspire me. Sometimes I walk past a shop and look at a woman in the window and I think, 'Wow.' "Women in general have everything going for them and I think if we are given the right opportunities and the right tools, we can fulfill our dreams what-

ever they may be." Millie admitted to be "obsessed" with HBO show 'Euphoria' and the styles of the characters - particularly Maddy Perez, played by Alexa Demie, who is known for her bold looks. She said: "I'm obsessed with 'Euphoria' and I feel like I haven't done my 'Euphoria' moment yet so I'm really hoping we get to do that. I'm so obsessed with Maddie, I'm a big fan and I love all their beauty, their hair and their fashion."



Sam Hunt's wife has withdrawn her divorce petition

Hannah Lee Fowler - who is pregnant - submitted documents to end her marriage to the 37-year-old country singer in Tennessee on Friday but she withdrew the complaint just a few hours later and requested the petition be "voluntarily nonsuited without prejudice", meaning she could file for divorce again in the future. However, according to state laws, she will not have the opportunity to withdraw a second complaint against the 'Body Like A Back Road' singer. The petition has not yet been dismissed as it must be signed off by a judge. In her original filing, Hannah - who is pregnant - accused the 'Take Your Time' singer of "inappropriate marital" behavior and adultery and declared Sam was "guilty of such cruel and inhuman treatment or conduct toward the spouse as renders cohabitation unsafe or improper". She added: "All hopes of reconciliation are exhausted." The pair - who married in 2017 - hadn't publicly announced they were expecting a

baby but Hannah's documents noted she is due to give birth in May and asked for her to be named the primary residential guardian of their child. She also sought child support and "transitional alimony, rehabilitative alimony and alimony in [the] future". The paperwork suggested the pair have a pre-nuptial agreement in place because Hannah requested "the parties [to] be awarded their respective separate property." Last summer, the 'House Party' singer revealed he and Hannah were trying for a baby. He said in July 2021: "We've really started thinking about it seriously here these past few months, so that's on the agenda right now, and I'm hoping that we'll have some good news sooner than later." Last August, Sam pleaded guilty to two misdemeanor DUI charges stemming from a 2019 arrest in

Nashville and was sentenced to 11 months and 29 days in Jail, but all but 48 hours of the term was deferred and he was to serve the remaining time in the DUI Education Centers, an alternative facility, rather than in prison. He was also required to complete an alcohol safety course and pay \$1,599 in fees and install an interlock device in his car after having his license suspended for a year. After his arrest, Sam apologized for his "poor and selfish decision". He tweeted at the time: "Thursday night I decided to drive myself home after drinking at a friend's show in downtown Nashville. "It was a poor and selfish decision and I apologize to everyone who was unknowingly put at risk and let down by it. (sic)"



Farrell teases upcoming Penguin spin-off series on HBO Max

Colin Farrell has teased 'The Penguin' TV series will be set "a little short time" after 'The Batman'. The 45-year-old actor will portray the villain, aka Oswald Chesterfield Cobblepot, opposite Robert Pattinson as the Caped Crusader in the upcoming movie and he confirmed plans are underway for an HBO Max spinoff series, which will explore "what made him the man he is". He said: "They are still early in the process of creating this world. "We have to get into what made him the man he is. And also, it will pick up where this film finished off I think. I think it'll pick up a little short time after the last frame of this film. "We'll get to go on a little kind of left turn off to the world of Oz and how he's beginning to kind of dream of filling a potential power vacuum that may exist." Although it is still "early days" Colin is delighted about the idea of the spin-off because he's found it "so much fun" to play The Penguin and loves the thought of investigating where his alter ego's vulnerabilities are. He added to 'Entertainment Tonight': "It's a lovely, lovely character, and explores vulnerabilities." His violence is apparent, his propensity for violence and

his ability to use it as a tool is apparent, but [also] to see we all have soft spots. Every single person. And to be able to find that location, dig around it would be fun." 'The Penguin' is the second proposed spin-off from 'The Batman' for HBO Max as the streaming service have already commissioned a drama set within the Gotham Police Department, which will have Joe Barton serve as showrunner. In addition, the network has other live-action DC shows in the works, including 'Peacemaker', a John Cena-starring 'Suicide Squad' spin-off, a 'Green Lantern' series, and 'Justice League Dark'.



Sports

Zverev thrown out of Acapulco tournament

Olympic champion smashes his racket on the umpire's chair

ACAPULCO: German Olympic tennis champion Alexander Zverev has been expelled from the Mexican Open in Acapulco after smashing his racket on the umpire's chair several times and directing a foul-mouthed rant at the official, the ATP announced yesterday. "Due to unsportsmanlike conduct at the conclusion of his doubles match on Tuesday night, Alexander Zverev has been withdrawn from the tournament in Acapulco," the governing body for men's tennis tweeted. Zverev-ranked number three in the world lost his cool when he and doubles partner Marcelo Melo of Brazil were beaten 6-2, 4-6, 10-6 by Britain's Lloyd Glasspool and Harri Heli'vaara of Finland.

The 24-year-old defending champion smashed his racket three times just below umpire Alessandro Germani's feet before taking his seat and then rising again to verbally abuse the official and smash the chair one last time. He had apparently been irked by a line call during the match. Zverev had been involved in a marathon first-round singles clash with American Jenson Brooksby that had finished early Tuesday morning—the latest-ever finish to a professional tennis match. Zverev saved two match points before completing a 3-6, 7-6 (12/10), 6-2 win at 4:54 am local time (10:54 GMT).

The first-round tie at the ATP event lasted three hours and 19 minutes. Zverev's mood may have been affected by fatigue after another long match in the doubles defeat, but he nevertheless risks further punishment from the ATP. "If the Senior Vice President Rules & Competition determines that the default was particularly injurious to the success of the tournament or detrimental to the integrity of the

sport, he may consider additional penalties (fines and/or suspensions)," reads the ATP rule book.

'Always got to watch the ball'

Zverev is no stranger to controversy—he is still being investigated by the ATP over allegations he was violent towards a former girlfriend. He has repeatedly denied the claims. In June 2020, he was heavily criticised after being seen partying in a bar, when he had promised to self-isolate for two weeks, following his competing in a tournament organised by Djokovic in front of spectators flying in the face of medical advice on the Covid-19 pandemic.

Several players including Djokovic contracted COVID-19. Zverev's expulsion is a relatively rare occurrence on the men's circuit. The famously temperamental John McEnroe was disqualified from the 1990 Australian Open for insulting the umpire as was Argentinian David Nalbandian in the 2012 Queen's final for kicking out and unintentionally connecting with a line judge.

World number one Novak Djokovic was disqualified from the 2020 US Open for having by accident rather than design hit a lineswoman. Others to fall foul of officials were maverick Australian Nick Kyrgios expelled from the Rome tournament in 2019 for throwing a chair and Canada's Denis Shapovalov was defaulted in the Davis Cup tie with Britain in 2017 after inadvertently hitting the umpire in the face with a ball.

Zverev's tantrum was not the only notable incident on Tuesday in a tournament that has attracted world number two Daniil Medvedev and Rafael Nadal, who beat the Russian in an epic Australian Open final to become the record holder for Grand Slam singles



ACAPULCO: Germany's Alexander Zverev hits a return against Jenson Brooksby of the US (out of frame) during their Mexico ATP Open 500 men's singles tennis match at the Arena GNP in Acapulco, Mexico.—AFP

titles with 21. Australian John Millman had to retire from his match after being hit in the eye by a ball as he tried to hit it over his head. The 32-year-old made

light of it later in an Instagram post with a patch over the eye that had been hurt and the tag "Always got to watch the ball." —AFP

British champion flat-racing jockey banned

LONDON: British champion flat-racing jockey Oisin Murphy has been banned for 14 months after admitting breaching coronavirus protocols, misleading the British Horseracing Authority (BHA) and prejudicial conduct, plus two alcohol breaches. The 26-year-old Irishman admitted all the charges at an independent judiciary panel hearing on Tuesday.

His suspension has been backdated to December 8 as Murphy handed in his riding licence to seek support when he was charged that same month. It means Murphy cannot reapply for his licence until February 16, 2023. Among the charges brought by the BHA, UK horseracing's governing body, were misleading or attempting to mislead officials regarding his true location between 9-12 September 2020 when he had gone on holiday to Mykonos.

The Greek island was on Britain's COVID 'red-list' at the time but Murphy tried to say he had been at Lake Como in Italy instead. He was also found to have twice been over the permitted threshold of alcohol when breathalysed before race meetings at Chester (May 5) and Newmarket (October 8). Announcing the verdict, the BHA said Murphy's breaches of the rules were "extremely serious, reckless and potentially incredibly damaging for the sport," as he had potentially compromised the safety of his fellow jockeys.

'Support'

The BHA added the independent panel had concluded Murphy's conduct "was unworthy of a sportsman". But they also acknowledged the talented jockey had made "full, public admissions regarding these offences" and did not contest the rule breaches at Tuesday's hearing. The BHA said Murphy's revelations about his physical and mental well-being were worthy of "respect" and they would offer him "any support he requests" in his rehabilitation.

Murphy's ban follows a superb season in which he claimed a third successive British title and his first win in the United States' prestigious Breeders' Cup meeting, riding Japanese outsider Marche Lorraine to victory in the \$2 million Distaff race at the Del Mar track in California on November 7. In December, Murphy acknowledged his multiple rule breaches by relinquishing his licence, apologising for his conduct and admitting that "it became obvious to me and to everyone else that I needed to seek serious help".

He added: "I'm deeply embarrassed and regret my actions." This is not the first time Murphy has fallen foul of racing authorities. In November 2020, he received a three-month ban from the French governing body for testing positive for metabolites of cocaine at a meeting in Chantilly, northeast of Paris, in July of that year. Murphy maintained he did not take the drug, which investigators accepted. He testified he had sex with a woman on the eve of racing and later discovered she was an occasional cocaine user. —AFP

New captain Rohit happy to groom future leaders

LUCKNOW: Rohit Sharma said yesterday he was happy to help train possible successors following his recent appointment as India's cricket captain across all formats in place of Virat Kohli. The star batsman was named Test captain on Saturday—he was already white-ball skipper—but since he will turn 35 in April pundits do not expect his tenure to be a long one. India's cricket board has identified three possible candidates all in their 20s to follow him eventually—Jasprit Bumrah, KL Rahul and Rishabh Pant.

"I won't have that much of a role of telling them each and everything, obviously they are all mature cricketers but someone needs to be around them to help and guide them in difficult situations and (I am) more than happy to do that," Rohit told his first press conference after taking over the Test job. "We were groomed by someone else, so it's a natural process. If you talk of Bumrah, KL, Pant, they have a big role to play in India's success at the same time they are looked upon as leaders as well." India's pace spearhead

Bumrah, 28, has been appointed vice-captain in the upcoming series of three T20s and two Tests at home to Sri Lanka beginning Thursday.

KL Rahul, 29, who captained the ODI team in South Africa in January, remained unavailable due to injury. The 24-year-old Pant, a wicketkeeper-batsman who leads Indian Premier League team Delhi Capitals, has also been earmarked as a future captain by pundits including batting great Sunil Gavaskar. "Again we don't want to put pressure on these guys," Rohit said. "They are very critical to us and at the moment we just want them to enjoy their game, come out freely and execute (their) skills."

'Great mind'

On Bumrah's elevation to the deputy's job in T20 and Tests, Rohit said the role would only add to his promise as a lethal fast bowler—with 113 Test wickets since his 2018 debut. "It doesn't really matter too much if it's a batter or bowler as the vice-captain, it's the mind that matters of that individual. And I think Jasprit Bumrah has a great mind of the game," Rohit said. "It's a good way to step into the leadership role now. Obviously he has taken his game to the next level and I am sure he will continue to do that even further. But this is only going to add and get him more confident in whatever he wants to do on the field." Bumrah was named vice-captain for the first time in the ODI series in South Africa earlier this year. —AFP



KOLKATA: India's captain Rohit Sharma celebrates with the trophy after winning the third and final international Twenty20 cricket match against West Indies. —AFP

Finance, ice hockey and judo: Oligarchs hit by UK sanctions

LONDON: The three Russian oligarchs targeted by fresh British sanctions over Ukraine are billionaires who got rich under Russian President Vladimir Putin, for whom they are key financial conduits as well as personal sporting partners. Gennady Timchenko, Boris Rotenberg and his nephew Igor will be barred from entering the UK and all British individuals and entities will be banned from dealing with them. All three were first hit with US sanctions after Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, and the UK sanctions will "have quite a significant impact on their ability to lead the international lifestyle that they may like to live," a Western official said.

"We have a much longer list," added the official, who asked not to be named. "We'll be looking at those oligarchs of strategic significance and of interest to the Kremlin who are complicit by their

association with the Kremlin." British authorities have been criticized for not clamping down enough on dirty Russian money being invested in the City or luxury properties in London, earning it the name of "Londongrad".

Gennady Timchenko, 69

Timchenko is a founder of Gunvor, one of the world's largest commodity trading companies involved in oil and gas, but withdrew after US sanctions imposed in 2014. According to the US Treasury Department, "Timchenko's activities in the energy sector have been directly linked to Putin." Forbes estimates Timchenko's wealth at 23.5 billion dollars (euros), making him the sixth richest man in Russia. His daughters attended British universities, at Oxford and Edinburgh.

An ice hockey fan, he has played with President Putin and remains chairman of the Russian national hockey league KHL, and is president of the SKA Saint Petersburg Hockey Club. He is also vice president of the Russian Olympic Committee. Imprisoned Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny has said that Timchenko is one of the wealthy businessmen who paid for Putin's alleged luxurious palace on the Black Sea via shell companies. Timchenko was also

named in the investigative journalism "Pandora Papers" as having helped hide piles of cash belonging to the Kremlin's inner circle in offshore accounts.

The Rotenbergs

Boris Rotenberg, 65, and his nephew Igor, 48, are from a family that is considered very close to Putin. They are the brother and son of Arkady Rotenberg, 70, already hit by UK sanctions. The two brothers are childhood friends of Putin, with whom they train in judo. Boris is the vice-president of the Russian Judo Federation, of which Arkady is the president.

They also play ice hockey with Putin, and Boris' son Roman was recently named as head coach for SKA Saint Petersburg, presided over by Timchenko, without ever having been a professional player. Boris and Arkady got rich from state construction contracts, notably for the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. They were also involved with the construction of the bridge linking Russia with the Crimean peninsula after Moscow annexed the territory. Arkady has said that he is the real owner of the Black Sea palace allegedly built for Putin. —AFP

Pogacar rises to top in first climb of UAE Tour

PARIS: Tadej Pogacar made an early-season statement when he sprinted away from an elite group yesterday to win the first climbing stage of the World Tour season in the UAE Tour. A powerful bunch was still together as the 181-kilometre fourth stage slogged up Jebel Jais, the highest point in the Emirates. Even though the gradient steepened to 7 per cent in the last 200 metres, the Slovenian, led out by two of his UAE team-mates, charged away.

Briton Adam Yates of Ineos and Russian Aleksandr Vlasov of Bora gave chase in a frantic uphill sprint, but could not close the gap. The trio finished three seconds ahead of the next group of the shattered bunch. Pogacar, the defending UAE champion, took the overall lead from Swiss rider Stefan Bissegger who was dropped earlier on the climb. Pogacar, a double Tour de France winner, leads Filippo Ganna of Ineos by two seconds.

The Italian time-trial specialist managed to stay with the leaders on the climb and surged to the line in a desperate attempt to close the gap Pogacar had created. Vlasov is 13 seconds off the lead in third with Yates another two seconds back. Thursday's fifth



FUJAIHRAH: UAE Team Emirates' cyclist Tadej Pogacar wins stage 4 of the United Arab Emirates cycling tour, from Fujairah Fort to Jebel Jais yesterday. —AFP

stage will cover 182 kilometres from Ras Al Khaimah Corniche to Al Marjan Island and is likely to end in a

sprint. The race ends Saturday with another stage that finishes with a potentially decisive climb. —AFP

Sports

Barcelona-Napoli Europa League tie finely poised

Rangers look to finish job against Dortmund

PARIS: Barcelona's Europa League tie against Napoli is finely poised heading into the return in Italy today as Rangers look to finish the job against Borussia Dortmund following their stunning 4-2 win in the first leg last week. Barca needed a Ferran Torres penalty to draw at home to Napoli in the first leg of their knock-out round play-off tie after Piotr Zielinski put the Serie A side in front at the Camp Nou.

However, with the away goals rule having been dispensed with this season by UEFA, the heavyweight tie remains very much in the balance going to the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona. Barcelona are enduring a troubled season, but Xavi Hernandez's side still cross the Mediterranean in good form having gone five

unbeaten and not lost in 90 minutes since Bayern Munich dumped them out of the Champions League in early December.

They won 4-1 at Valencia in La Liga at the weekend with Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scoring a hat-trick, while Napoli are third in Serie A after drawing 1-1 with Cagliari on Monday. Scottish champions Rangers are hoping to secure a spot in the last 16 as they welcome Dortmund to Ibrox following their stunning 4-2 win in Germany.

It would go down as one of the best results in their history in Europe if they could see off the Bundesliga giants, but the outcome of the tie could hinge on whether Erling Haaland plays any part. The Norwegian,

scorer of 23 goals in 20 appearances for his club this season, missed the first leg and his team's last three domestic outings due to injury but has now returned to training and could feature in Govan. However, USA starlet Gio Reyna, whose father Claudio played for Rangers and is a close friend of the Ibrox side's manager Giovanni van Bronckhorst, is sidelined.

Barcelona are one of four Spanish teams aiming to advance to the last 16, with Real Sociedad hosting RB Leipzig and Real Betis leading 3-2 against Zenit Saint Petersburg after the first leg in Russia. Sevilla, the record six-time winners of the second-tier European competition and who will host this season's final, lead 3-1 as they go to Dinamo Zagreb. In the Europa

Conference League, Marseille, PSV Eindhoven and Leicester City are among the teams primed to advance to the last 16 but Celtic must overturn a 3-1 first-leg deficit as they travel to Norway to play Bodo/Glimt.

The Norwegian champions shocked the Scottish Premiership leaders at Parkhead but Celtic captain Callum McGregor believes they can turn the tie around in the Arctic Circle. "We are that type of team that still want to be aggressive even if we are going away from home, we still want to play the same way, and that way will get us chances," he said. "It's then just being ruthless and clinical when the chances come." —AFP

After AFCON glory, Senegal ushers in world-class stadium

DIAMNIADIO: Thousands of Senegalese gathered on Tuesday for the inauguration of a 50,000-seater stadium aimed at making the country Africa's go-to venue for international events. The stadium is in Diamniadio, a town being built about 30 kilometers from the capital Dakar, for which an express train link opened in December. The venue, to be named in honor of former president Abdoulaye Wade, will be the only one in Senegal certified for international football. Current President Macky Sall said during an inauguration ceremony that the naming of the stadium was a "tribute to the multidimensional, intellectual, pan-Africanist politician".

"This beautiful infrastructure-dedicated to young people—is an invitation to continue our path towards excellence," Sall said. The country's last major stadium, Lat Dior, in the region of Thies 70 kilometers from Dakar, lost its certification from the Confederation of African Football (CAF) in May last year. Jubilant crowds came by bus and train for the inauguration, which follows Senegal's dramatic victory at the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) on February 6.

The new stadium was built in just 18 months by Turkey's Summa construction company, at a cost of 156 billion CFA francs (\$270 million, 238 million euros). Sall, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and FIFA boss Gianni Infantino were among the VIPs scheduled to attend Tuesday's inauguration. An exhibition match will be part of the show, with Senegalese legends such as Aliou Cisse—the current coach of the national side—opposing a team of African all-stars, including Cameroon's Samuel Eto'o and Didier Drogba of Ivory Coast

"It's a source of pride to have a stadium as beautiful as this Senegal. The country needed it to restore its footballing image," said one fan, Bamba Dieng, 24. "I've never seen such a great stadium. I hope it will be properly maintained so that it lasts for a very long time," said Ibou Ngom, 29. Mbaye Jacques Diop, a communications advisory at the ministry of sports, said the project was part of a programme to make Dakar a "sporting hub" for Africa.

It would mean an end to matches transferred to Asia because the continent lacked infrastructure, he said. The first big competitive match will be on March 29. Senegal, who beat Egypt for to take the African title, meet the Pharaohs again in a World Cup qualifier. Senegal has launched a program to refurbish its stadiums before Dakar hosts of the Summer Youth Olympics in 2026. The country's biggest sporting venue is the 60,000-capacity Leopold Sedar Senghor Stadium built in Dakar in 1985. —AFP

MLS boss warns stars: No retirement plans

NEW YORK: While he appreciates interest from Neymar or Lionel Messi, Major League Soccer commissioner Don Garber warned football's global stars on Tuesday that US clubs aren't their retirement homes. Speaking ahead of Saturday's MLS season kick off, Garber addressed 30-year-old Brazilian striker Neymar's podcast comments that he "would love to play in the US" for at least a season after his deal with Paris Saint-Germain expires in 2025. The former Barcelona star noted: "Their season is shorter so I would get three months vacation. I would play many more years."

Garber said MLS had outgrown the days of needing to bolster its image with big-name players in their later years. "We don't need to bring in a big name player at the end of their career because they decided they want to retire in MLS," Garber said in a conference call with reporters. "We want our story to be about young players coming here at the earliest stages or in the prime of their career and making our league their league of choice."

Colombian James Rodriguez, 30, and Argentine standout Messi, 34, have also been linked to MLS interest. Garber pointed to 30-year-old Swiss star Xherdan Shaqiri joining the Chicago Fire this season, saying, "You have players coming at 30. I don't think 30 is old when you are an MLS player." Garber also noted that when Swedish 40-year-old striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic left the Los Angeles Galaxy for AC Milan in December 2019, "nobody said he went to retire in Italy."

MLS will grow to 28 sides when an expansion team in Charlotte takes the field this year and to 29 when St Louis joins in 2023. Garber noted that MLS was among the top five leagues worldwide in transfer fees received and spent. "Like all the top leagues around the world, it's about buying and selling players," Garber said. "It's very clear there's a global demand around the world for our young talented players."

Garber said one of the league aimed to keep a healthy balance in spending for players and selling young talent from a growing academy network. Garber, a member of the US Soccer Federation board of directors, congratulated USSF president Cindy Parlow Cone on Tuesday's announcement of a settlement of a discrimination lawsuit against USSF by the US women's national team, the reigning Women's World Cup champions, that will ensure equal pay moving forward.

"If it wasn't for her focus and her courage and her steadfastness, I don't think she would have been able to lead us to the settlement that was announced today," Garber said of Cone. "I think it's time for the organization to move forward with the women's program and repair some of the challenges they've had in the relationship." Team owners, who Garber said have together invested \$12 billion in MLS, will meet Cone and rival candidate for president Carlos Cordeiro, who resigned in 2020 to allow Cone to take over, before next month's USSF election. —AFP

Dubai Expo 2020



By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Tumouh Disabled Sports Club delegation left for Dubai to participate in Dubai Expo 2020. The delegation includes 34 athletes, coaches and officials headed by Chairwoman of Tumouh Club and National Director of Kuwait Special Olympics Rihab Buresli. Buresli said the Club is keen on participating in this event with participants from 190 countries as it coincides with Kuwait celebration of its national days.

She said the club prepared well to have a distinguished participation and this reflect the bright side of the disabled sports activities and theater with a patriotic nature inspired by the theme of Expo 2020 "Connecting Minds, creating the Future". Buresli thanked the Public Authority for Sport for its support. She also thanked the Ministry of information and parents for making this event possible.



Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics			
Sabah Hospital	24812000	Rawda	22517733
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
		Dasmah	22532265
		Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
		Shaab	22518752
		Qibla	22459381
Clinics			
Kaizen center	25716707		

CHANGE OF NAME

I, hereby declare to change my name from Veena Velerina Gubbala (in Passport no. Z2708206) to Veena Valerina D'souza. (C 0860) 24-2-2022

I, Jijumon M, Indian National residing in Riggae, Kuwait (Passport number L1 388559 issued in Cochin - Kerala) Ettiyappanvila

Kizhakkethil, Mavelikara P O, Alappuzha (Dist), Kerala. Hereby declare that my daughter name shown as JAANAKI JUJUMON in passport number S3691407 issued in Kuwait on 21/02/2018 and also in birth certificate. I further declare that I have to change my daughter name as JAANAKI (Given Name) JUJU (Surname). In future her name will be known as JAANAKI JUJU. (C 1424) 23-2-2022

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

EMERGENCY 112



CHITTAGONG: Afghanistan's wicketkeeper Rahmanullah Gurbaz (left) and teammate Fazalhaq Farooqi celebrate after the dismissal of Bangladesh's Yasir Ali (center) during the first one-day international (ODI) cricket match between Afghanistan and Bangladesh yesterday. — AFP

Bangladesh beat Afghanistan

Afif, Mehidy share record 174-run 7th-wicket stand

CHITTAGONG: Afif Hossain and Mehidy Hasan shared a record 174-run seventh-wicket stand as Bangladesh recovered from a top-order collapse to beat Afghanistan by four wickets in the first one-day international of a three-match series in Chittagong yesterday. Afif hit an unbeaten 93 off 115 balls while Mehidy added 81 not out, helping Bangladesh reach 219-6 in 48.5 overs, after Afghanistan left-arm pace bowler Fazalhaq Farooqi's opening-spell burst reduced the hosts to 18-4 inside five overs.

Spinners Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Rashid Khan took one wicket apiece to leave Bangladesh struggling at 45-6 before Afif and Mehidy turned the tide. Earlier Mustafizur Rahman took 3-35 with Shoriful Islam (2-38), Shakib Al

Hasan (2-50) and Taskin Ahmed (2-55) all making an impact as Bangladesh bowled out Afghanistan for 215 runs.

Despite the modest target, Bangladesh were in all sorts of trouble when Farooqi dismissed openers Tamim Iqbal (eight) and Liton Das (one) in the third over before nabbing Mushfiqur Rahim (three) and debutant Yasir Ali (zero) in the next. Things turned worse for Bangladesh after Shakib Al Hasan dragged onto his stumps off Mujeeb Ur Rahman to depart for 10 and Rashid dismissed Mahmudullah for eight to leave Bangladesh in a precarious situation. But Afif, who hit 11 fours and a six in his career-best knock, and Mehidy ensured there was no further damage.

Mehidy struck nine fours in his third ODI fifty, also his personal best innings, which came off 120 balls. Their partnership surpassed Imrul Kayes and Mohammad Saifuddin's 127 seventh-wicket record for Bangladesh, set against Zimbabwe in 2018. "The way the youngsters played, unbelievable, (I am) very happy and proud," said Bangladesh skipper Tamim. "Afghanistan have a great spin attack and the way these two handled (them) was amazing."

Farooqi, the most successful Afghanistan bowler, finished with 4-54 playing only his second ODI. "Farooqi bowled well at the top. But I will give credit to their batsmen," said Afghanistan captain Hashmatullah Shahidi.

Afghanistan earlier lost regular wickets after they elected to bat first before Najibullah Zadran hit 67 runs to give their innings some respectability. Rahmat Shah (34), skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi (28) and Mohammad Nabi (20) got starts but could not convert them into a big score.

Zadran put on 63 runs with Nabi for the fifth wicket to help Afghanistan recover from 102-4. Shoriful ended Zadran's patient 84-ball knock in the penultimate over as Mahmudullah Riyad took the catch at long-on. Mustafizur wrapped up Afghanistan's innings three balls later - in 49.1 overs - with the wicket of Yamin Ahmadzai. The second match of the series was due to be held at the same ground on Friday. — AFP

Chelsea sink Lille

LONDON: Chelsea showed they can thrive without Romelu Lukaku as Kai Havertz scored after replacing the axed Belgium striker for the 2-0 Champions League last-16, first-leg win against Lille on Tuesday. Thomas Tuchel's side took control of the tie thanks to Havertz's first-half header and Christian Pulisic's clinical finish after the break at Stamford Bridge. The holders will expect to complete their progress to the quarter-finals when they travel to France for the second leg on March 16.

But Chelsea's sixth successive win in all competitions was more a referendum on their Lukaku conundrum than an indication of their chances of retaining the trophy. Lukaku has scored just 10 goals since a club record £97 million (\$131 million) move from Inter Milan last year that was expected to launch a period of sustained dominance for Chelsea.

He touched the ball only seven times in Saturday's 1-0 win at Crystal Palace, the lowest total by a Premier League player since 2003-04. Despite being infuriated in December by Lukaku's public questioning of the way he was being used, Tuchel had appeared to back him on Monday, insisting his problems were no laughing matter. But, tellingly, Chelsea were more potent in Lukaku's absence and it remains to be seen if Tuchel will trust his beleaguered star in the League Cup final against Liverpool on Sunday.

At least Tuchel knows Chelsea have the ammunition to damage opponents while their supposed leading man labours. "For Kai, I'm very pleased. He's been very strong for several weeks now. He really stepped up. The work rate is immense. The areas of the pitch he covers for us is very good. He is never shy of defending," Tuchel said. "Romelu struggled in the last game to deliver. Not only mentally tired, but physically, which I can understand. It was the moment to take a step back."

"Today we went with other players. For Sunday we have four days to recover and decide who plays." Chelsea's Ben Chilwell, Reece James and Callum Hudson-Odoi paraded the Club World Cup around the pitch just before kick-off. However, that victory in Abu Dhabi will be only a footnote in the story of Chelsea's season if they don't mount a strong finish to an inconsistent campaign. This was a step in the right direction and Havertz didn't take long to get involved.

Cesar Azpilicueta's low cross was begging to be finished off, but the German forward poked his effort over the bar from six yards. If that was a concern for Tuchel, he would have been relieved that Havertz looked more threatening as he cut inside for a fierce strike which Leo Jardim pushed away at full stretch. From the resulting corner, Havertz gave Chelsea an eighth-minute lead. Taking advantage of Lille's woeful marking, Havertz met Hakim Ziyech's corner with a downward header that bounced in for his seventh goal this season. — AFP



VILLARREAL: Villarreal's Nigerian midfielder Samuel Chukwueze (center) falls as he fights for the ball with Juventus' French midfielder Adrien Rabiot (left) during the UEFA Champions League football match between Villarreal and Juventus on February 22, 2022. — AFP

Villarreal hold Juve to 1-1 draw

VILLARREAL: Dusan Vlahovic lived up to the hype by scoring 32 seconds into his Champions League debut on Tuesday but Juventus have work to do to make the last 16 after being held to a 1-1 draw by Villarreal in the first leg. Vlahovic found the corner with just his second touch of the game at La Ceramica but a sensational start for Juve and the Serb's Champions League career was not enough for victory. Instead, Villarreal's Dani Parejo steered in a deserved equaliser midway through the second half to leave a compelling contest in the balance ahead of the return leg in Turin. At 22 years and 25 days old, Vlahovic is the second youngest player to score on their Champions League debut for Juventus after Alessandro Del Piero made his mark aged 20. "He's young, this is his first Champions League match," said Juve's Alvaro Morata. "Imagine the career he has ahead of him."

Vlahovic was signed for an initial 70 million euros from Fiorentina in January and to huge excitement, with Juve toasting the arrival of one of the world's most coveted young talents. Juventus coach Max Allegri had tried to reduce expectations on Monday by insisting the striker

would have to adapt psychologically and technically to the intensity of the Champions League - but Vlahovic needed less than a minute to find his feet.

It was his second goal in five appearances for Juve after he scored 12 minutes into his debut against Verona earlier this month, following a blistering 25 goals in 31 games for Fiorentina. "When you play against this type of team, with top players, you can't give them even half an inch. It was a great goal," said Parejo. Juventus will be favorites to finish the job at home next month but a well-organized and disciplined Villarreal, who won the Europa League last season, showed enough to suggest an upset is far from impossible. "We feel a bit of frustration. You need to win at home," said Villarreal's Etienne Capoue. "But I think this team has the strength and mentality to win there. It's difficult but we can do it." Nine Juventus players had not yet touched the ball when it hit the back of the Villarreal net. Villarreal had stroked the ball back and across the pitch from kick-off but it was their ninth pass that went astray, Alberto Moreno choosing to dummy when he thought Arnaut Danjuma was behind him, only to find Danjuma had sprinted away. Danilo intercepted and instantly drove a ball over the top, where Vlahovic had sped between Raul Albiol and Pau Torres. Vlahovic chested down and looked well-marshalled, with Torres tracking him across, but the striker fired early on the turn and the ball slid crisply into the far corner. — AFP



LONDON: Lille's Portuguese midfielder Renato Sanchez (left) attempts to score past Chelsea's Spanish defender Marcos Alonso (right) during the UEFA Champions League round of 16 first leg football match between Chelsea and Lille (LOSC) on February 22, 2022. — AFP