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Coronavirus cases decline but rate of infection rises

Defense minister demands explanation over grilling

Kuwaiti mountaineer completes 7 volcanic summits challenge



Kuwaiti mountaineer Yousef Al-Refai unfurls the Kuwaiti flag atop Mount Sidley in Antarctica. Refai completed the seven volcanic summits challenge by summiting Sidley, making him the 24th individual in the world, the first Middle Eastern Arab, and the youngest person to achieve this accomplishment. — KUNA (See Page 2)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The number of new coronavirus cases dropped for the second day yesterday, but the infection rate continued to rise, according to figures released by the health ministry. The ministry reported 4,503 new cases yesterday, down from 4,417 cases reported on Saturday and 4,881 cases, the highest ever, reported on Friday. The ministry also reported one death yesterday.

The ministry said the infection rate remains high at 14.5 percent, adding the number of patients in intensive care units rose to 26, while those receiving treatment in hospitals increased to 277. The number of active coronavirus cases surged to 41,413 cases, it said. Kuwait has

imposed a series of restrictions to curb the new wave of the COVID pandemic, but has so far declined to impose total or partial closures.

Meanwhile, Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah yesterday demanded clarifications of some points of the grilling submitted against him by MP Hamdan Al-Azemi. Azemi filed the grilling on Jan 4 over allegations that the minister violated the country's traditions by allowing women to enlist in the military. He also charged the minister of ignoring recommendations made by the Audit Bureau on suspected violations in the multibillion-dollar deal to purchase Eurofighter warplanes.

The lawmaker also alleged that the minister did not protect state properties,

failed to cooperate with supervision agencies, and did not apply the policy of replacing expat employees by Kuwaitis. In a letter addressed to the National Assembly, the minister said the lawmaker did not explain what constitutional clauses were violated by enlisting women in the military.

The minister also demanded to know what recommendations were made by the Audit Bureau on the Eurofighter deal and how he failed to protect state land. The grilling is expected to be debated in tomorrow's regular session and could lead to opposition MPs filing a no-confidence motion. MP Saleh Al-Mutairi yesterday submitted a request calling for the Assembly to convene a special session on Jan 27 to discuss issues related to retired Kuwaitis.

Hostages freed in synagogue standoff in US

COLLEYVILLE, Texas: All four people taken hostage in a more than 10-hour standoff at a Texas synagogue have been freed unharmed, police said late Saturday, and their suspected captor is dead. The siege in the small Texas town of Colleyville - in which the suspect was apparently demanding the release of a convicted terrorist - had sparked an outpouring of concern from Jewish organizations in the United States and the government of the Zionist entity.

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COLLEYVILLE, Texas: SWAT team members deploy near the Congregation Beth Israel Synagogue on Saturday. — AFP

News in brief

Mali ex-president Keita dies

BAMAKO: Mali's former president Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, who led the West African country from 2013 until he was ousted in a coup in 2020, died at the age of 76 yesterday, his family said. "President IBK died this morning at 0900 GMT in his home" in Bamako, a family member told AFP using the ex-leader's initials, with several other family members confirming his passing. — AFP



Ibrahim Keita

Moon hails K-pop impact

DUBAI: South Korea's soft power matches its economic achievements, President Moon Jae-in said yesterday at the start of a Middle East tour expected to focus on business and trade opportunities. K-pop stars have "charmed the world", the president said at Dubai's Expo in the UAE, the first leg of a trip that will also take him to Saudi Arabia and Egypt. — AFP

Sudan revokes Al Jazeera license

KHARTOUM: Sudan has revoked the license of Al Jazeera Mubasher, part of the Qatar-based network, accusing it of "unprofessional" TV coverage of anti-coup protests, the channel said yesterday. Sudan has been gripped by political turmoil since top military leader General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan launched a coup on Oct 25. — AFP

'Disappointed' Djokovic deported from Australia

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic was deported from Australia yesterday having lost a high-stakes legal battle over his coronavirus vaccination status and with his dream of clinching a record 21st Grand Slam in tatters. Hours after a Federal Court unanimously upheld the cancellation of his visa on public order grounds, an "extremely disappointed" Djokovic complied with a direction to leave the country.

The humbled star boarded a flight from Melbourne's Tullamarine airport for Dubai late

yesterday, accompanied by a retinue of aides and officials. Emirates flight EK409 took off at 10:51 pm local time (1151 GMT), according to an AFP reporter on board. Twice in the last 11 days Australia's government had ripped up Djokovic's visa and placed him in immigration detention - saying the unvaccinated star's presence could fuel anti-vaccine sentiment amid a tidal wave of Omicron cases.

Twice the Serbian star fought the decision in court, winning one round but losing Sunday's decider. With a few dry words, the chief justice of Australia's Federal Court, James Allsop, ended a week of legal high drama that was followed around the world. "The orders of the court are that the amended application be dismissed with costs," Allsop said. With little chance for appeal, Djokovic acknowledged the game was up, and he would not be gracing Melbourne Park this year.

"I cannot stay in Australia and participate in the Australian Open," he said on the eve of a tournament that he has dominated for a decade. "I hope that we can all now focus on the game and tournament I love." But the controversy looks set to rumble, with Djokovic's image seriously tarnished and Australia feeding a growing reputation for being hostile to visitors.

"This cancellation decision was made on health, safety and good order grounds, on the basis that it was in the public interest to do so," conservative Prime Minister Scott Morrison said hailing the court verdict. "I welcome the decision to keep our borders strong and keep Australians safe."

Morrison, who faces a tough reelection battle this year, is unlikely to face a public backlash over the saga, even among those with misgivings about his hardline immigration policies.

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Trump rallies fans at 'MAGA Woodstock'

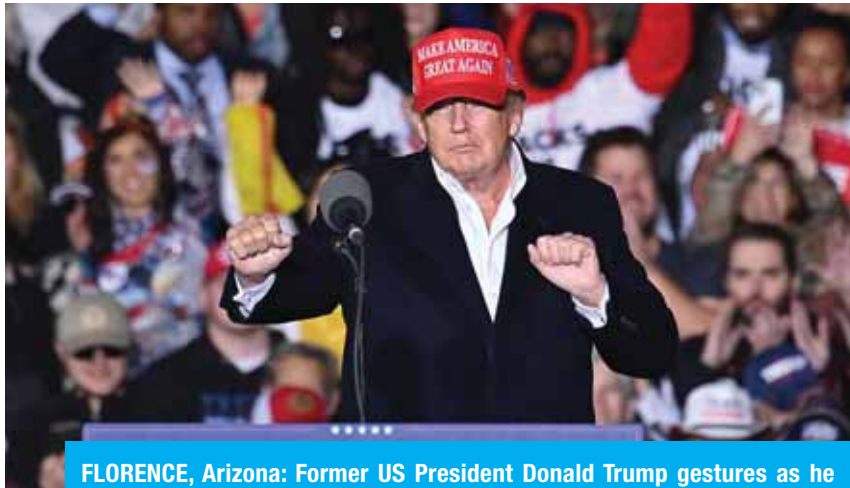
FLORENCE, Arizona: Donald Trump delivered a crowd-pleasing speech to thousands of adoring supporters in Arizona Saturday, insisting yet again that he won the 2020 US presidential election. Some of the faithful had arrived in the area days in advance from as far away as Florida or Texas, waiting to hear the former president trot out a familiar list of grievances.

Their patience was soon rewarded.

"We are done having our lives controlled by politicians in Washington. We are done with the mandates," he said, in reference to rules brought in to control the coronavirus pandemic. "The radical Democrats want to turn the United States into a communist country," he continued. "We won those elections. We won them big. We can't let them get away with it."

Earlier speakers had kept to similar themes, slamming 2020 election victor President Joe Biden as "weak" and "deranged", and taking aim at the "lamestream media", who were duly booed by the crowd. It was a greatest hits of Trumpism, playing all the expected notes: A stolen election, the unfairness of the media, open borders.

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FLORENCE, Arizona: Former US President Donald Trump gestures as he speaks during a rally at the Canyon Moon Ranch festival grounds on Saturday. — AFP

Local

Kuwaiti mountaineer completes seven volcanic summits challenge

World's youngest, first Middle Eastern to complete feat

KUWAIT: Mountaineer Yousef Al-Refa'i managed to complete the seven volcanic summits challenge when he climbed the summit of Mount Sidley in Antarctica, making him the 24th individual in the world, the first in the Middle East and Arab world, and the youngest person in the world to reach such an accomplishment. Speaking to the press, Refai said that he summited Sidley on December 22, 2021 after spending six days trying to arrive in Antarctica. Once in the South Pole, it took the team four hours and half to reach the Union Glacier Camp, spending a night before heading to Marie Byrd Land region on the base of the dormant volcanic summit of Sidley, indicated the Kuwaiti adventurer. He added that Sidley, which stood at 4,285 meters high, is not considered by any term as the highest volcanic summit in this challenge, but the main hardship was to withstand the merciless cold as well as carrying 15 kilograms of equipment plus using 25-kilogram skies.

Refai pointed out that the basecamp was at 2,225 meters above sea level, followed by a second camp at 3,000 meters and that was all prior to the summiting of the over 4,000 meters Sidley summit. The good part of summiting Sidley was that there

was no real sunset in this time of the year which meant that mountaineers could continue ascending longer; however, this made it had too hard to sleep, said Rafei. It took the team seven hours, starting at 8:00 am at minus 25 degrees Celsius temperature, to summit Sidley, he affirmed, noting that at the very top, the temperature dropped to a staggering -35 C degrees.

Refai felt proud to be part of the unique list of individuals that made to the summit of Sidley, indicating that he was especially enthusiastic about being the only Arab and even the youngest mountaineer in the world to ever achieve this dream. He thanked all those who supported him and praised the cooperation with the Kuwait Institute

for Scientific Research (KISR) who commissioned him to bring samples from the location of Sidley. Refai finished the seven summits challenge, which began with Tanzania's Kilimanjaro on December 30, 2015, Russia's Elbrus, and Papua New Guinea's Mount Giluwe on July 18 and 21, Mexico's Pico de Orizaba and Iran's Damavand on January 6 and 11 respectively, South America's Ojos del Salado on January 15, 2020, and finally Sidley in December 2021. — KUNA



Refai climbs Antarctica's Mount Sidley summit



Kuwaiti mountaineer Yousef Al-Refa'i and his team summit Mount Sidley in Antarctica. — KUNA

NBK Learning Hub, comprehensive revolution in staff digital training

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), through Group Human Resources Training and Development Department, has made remarkable achievements in upgrading the staff training system over the last period, whether through Blended Learning platforms represented in NBK Learning Hub or through its efforts to promote a training culture across all its branches spanning across four continents and 14 countries worldwide- starting from Beijing in the East and reaching to New York in the West, to align with its Digital Transformation Strategy.

NBK Learning Hub was entirely revamped in 2021, representing a comprehensive revolution in the concept of training, by utilizing technology to make E-Learning more appealing and effective for all employees. In addition, it contributes to implementing the strategic plans of NBK's training system for "Continuous Learning" with the aim of achieving personal growth as well as enabling investing in employees' talents and skills, thus driving sustainable growth for the bank.

NBK Learning Hub features a state-of-the-art design that is easy to access and user friendly when navigating relevant trainings when needed. It also boasts a rich digital library that includes multiple of different courses tailored to the needs of all

employees and managers from different career paths. Furthermore, it's up to date features permits employees to have their own personal page to track their past training activities, as well as their mandatory training courses, which contributes to the self-evaluation of the learning process and the extent of development achieved by the employee.

The revamping of NBK Learning Hub involves the incorporation of mandatory training courses, which are set by the regulators in all the international markets in which the bank operates. To this end, the Human Resources and Compliance teams collaborated together to promote and focus on prioritizing the mandatory training, which resulted in successfully achieving a 94 percent completion rate for the courses.



Ahmad Darweesh

The Hub also encompasses induction programs for new employees in different branches and departments, as well as training courses offered by NBK Academy which consist of providing training to newly hired employees, covering various areas of the banking business, such as banking principles, risk management, financial accounting, marketing, negotiation, consumer and commercial lending, as well as focusing on soft skills training related to creativity, innovation and design thinking.

On this occasion, Ahmad Darweesh, Head of Training and Development at National Bank of Kuwait quoted: "We have taken important steps to ensure that the bank's employees enjoy a more attractive learning experience. During 2021, we revamped NBK Learning Hub to make training easier and more effective, in line with the commitment of Group Human Resources to promote digital culture, and its comprehensive strategy to improve the learning experience of NBK employees."

NBK Learning Hub is accessible for all employees anytime, anywhere, providing learning across many topics, that include over 160 educational paths, designed according to the High Impact Learning that Lasts (HILL) Model, in cooperation with IQAD Learning, Darweesh added.

The Hub's digital library was enriched and implemented by collaborating with the international Cross Knowledge organization, specialized in creating training content, which is prepared by faculty staff of reputable universities such as

Stanford, Harvard, INSEAD, MIT and IE Business, he elaborated.

The Hub also includes 40 training themes available in both English and Arabic, directing employees to a variety of articles, podcasts, videos, book summaries and virtual training sessions. He emphasized that the Hub witnessed remarkable interaction with the virtual training offerings, which recorded a significant increase during the past months, with 3,000 trainees who received 9.2 thousand training hours from last September until December.

Darweesh noted that Group Human Resources and Training and Development Department are working on further developing the training approach and exploring how technology can support the development of the bank's human cadres, in addition to designing all learning opportunities to make these cadres well-positioned to embrace digital transformation in the future.

NBK Group Human Resources prides in the progress achieved in implementing a top-notch training program roadmap that aims to help promote a digital culture across NBK Group, in line with the bank's digital transformation strategy. NBK provides equal opportunities for all its employees, by giving them opportunities to attend training programs that are designed based on assessment of corporate and individual needs, as well as being committed to developing the academic and practical skills of its staff, with a view to prepare them as holistic future leaders.

Hostages freed in synagogue...

Continued from Page 1

Colleyville police chief Michael Miller told a news conference a "rescue team breached the synagogue" on Saturday evening and rescued three remaining hostages - all adults - being held inside. A first hostage had been released unharmed a few hours earlier. "The suspect is deceased," Miller told reporters. FBI Dallas Special Agent Matt DeSarno said the four hostages - who included a much-loved local rabbi, Charlie Cytron-Walker - did not need medical attention. "He did not harm them in any way," he said.

There were reports from journalists at the scene of a loud explosion and gunshots at the synagogue shortly before the press conference. That was more than 10 hours after police were alerted to the emergency at the Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, about 40 km west of Dallas. Officers evacuated the synagogue's surroundings and cordoned off the area, the police force said.

ABC News reported that the hostage-taker was armed and had claimed to have bombs in unknown locations. That was not confirmed by police although Miller said that "bomb techs are clearing the scene". At about 3 am local time (0800 GMT) the police force tweeted that it was "now safe for residents who were evacuated to return".

Quoting a US official briefed on the matter, ABC reported the man was demanding the release of Aafia Siddiqui - a Pakistani scientist who in 2010 was sentenced by a New York court to 86 years in prison for the attempted murder of US officers in Afghanistan. She is currently being held at a prison in Fort Worth, Texas. DeSarno told the news conference the suspect had been identified, but did not disclose his identity.

The FBI special agent did not confirm the suspect's demands, but said they were "focused on one issue that was not specifically threatening to the Jewish community" - and that he did not believe there was an ongoing threat. ABC initially said the man claimed to be Siddiqui's brother, but later clari-



A law enforcement vehicle is parked near the Congregation Beth Israel synagogue yesterday. — AFP

fied her brother is in Houston - while experts said the word the man used in Arabic was more figurative and meant "sister" in the Islamic faith.

Siddiqui's lawyer said she "has absolutely no involvement" in the hostage situation in a statement to CNN. The lawyer confirmed that the man was not Siddiqui's brother and said she condemned his actions. DeSarno said police negotiators "had a high frequency and duration of contact with" the hostage-taker. "There were times when it stopped for periods of time and like many hostage situations, the relationship between the negotiators and hostage-taker had been floating a little bit and sometimes got intense," he said.

A live stream of the congregation's Shabbat morning service, available on Facebook for around four hours during the standoff, appeared to capture audio of a man talking loudly - although it did not show the scene inside the building. He could be heard saying, "You get my sister on the phone," and "I am gonna die." He was also heard saying: "There's something wrong with America."

President Joe Biden pledged to "stand against anti-Semitism and against the rise of extremism in this country". "I am grateful to the tireless work of law enforcement at all levels who acted cooperatively and fearlessly to rescue the hostages," he said. — AFP

'Disappointed' Djokovic deported...

Continued from Page 1

Many Australians - who have suffered prolonged lockdowns and border restrictions - believe Djokovic gamed the system to dodge vaccine entry requirements.

It remains to be seen if the controversy, which the ATP Tour called "deeply regrettable", has a bearing on Australia's claim to host what was once known as "The Happy Slam". "Irrespective of how this point has been reached, Novak is one of our sport's greatest champions and his absence from the Australian Open is a loss for the game," it added.

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic was withering in his criticism of Australian authorities. "They think that they have by this, this mistreatment of 10 days, humiliated Djokovic, but they have humiliated themselves. Djokovic can return to his country with

his head held high," Vucic told a state media outlet. Vucic has remained steadfast in his support for his country's national hero throughout the drama, calling the earlier detention of the tennis star a "political witch hunt". "I spoke earlier to Novak Djokovic after the decision and I encouraged him. We look forward to seeing him return to his country, where he is always welcome," the president added.

Djokovic could now be banned from visiting Australia for three years, making it much more difficult for the veteran player to secure that elusive 21st Grand Slam. He is tied with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal with 20 Grand Slam titles each. More immediately he is likely to be trailed by questions about his conduct that the court hearings unearthed.

It emerged the tennis ace contracted COVID-19 in mid-December and, according to his own account, failed to isolate despite knowing he was positive. Public records show he attended a stamp unveiling and a youth tennis event, and granted a media interview around the time he got tested and his latest infection was confirmed. Djokovic declined to give evidence in the case to dispel the notion that he is opposed to vaccines. — AFP

Trump rallies fans at 'MAGA...

Continued from Page 1

and how the United States has become "a laughing stock all over the world".

There was a carnival feeling for much of the day. Flags proclaiming "Trump 2020" and "Trump 2024" fluttered in the desert wind, as chants of "Let's Go Brandon" erupted from the good-natured crowd. The slogan has become code in rightwing circles after a news reporter mistook coarse anti-Biden chants. "It's just a party atmosphere," said Jonathan Riches, who was attending his 40th Trump rally. "It's almost like a MAGA Woodstock. It's patriots from around the country getting together for the common good of this country. We love our president."

MAGA is an acronym for Trump's 2016 campaign call to "Make America great again". While some filtered

out as Trump was still speaking, perhaps to escape the parking crush, those who stayed until the end declared themselves happy with what they had heard. "He's encouraging, because he's not giving up and we're not giving up because we've lost our country," 58-year-old Tony Cunio said. "I'm supporting him because I want the country to get back to where it was before."

Trump abandoned a pledged press conference on Jan 6 - the anniversary of the invasion of the Capitol by his supporters - and the rally was his first major public outing since October. As is customary, he proclaimed it to be "the biggest" crowd, going "further than the eye can see", though accurate figures on attendance were not immediately available.

In the lead-up to his election win in 2016, and throughout his presidency, tens of thousands of supporters would throng venues to hear him speak. But crowds have since dwindled, and Saturday's turnout appeared to be far smaller than those of earlier rallies. The gathering, on farmland in Florence, 100 km from Phoenix, featured a raft of Republicans who have echoed Trump's unsubstantiated claims that the 2020 election was fixed. — AFP

Local

Climate change could make Kuwait 'unlivable' in the future: Bloomberg

Temperatures could become too hot for people and wildlife in decades



KUWAIT: Pigeons take cover under the shade of trees on the seafront of Kuwait City.

— Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Jassim Al-Awadi of the Kuwait Commute advocacy group is seen in a bus shelter.

By Fiona MacDonald

KUWAIT: Trying to catch a bus at the Maliya station in Kuwait City can be unbearable in the summer. About two-thirds of the city's buses pass through the hub, and schedules are unreliable. Fumes from bumper-to-bumper traffic fill the air. Small shelters offer refuge to a handful of people, if they squeeze. Dozens end up standing in the sun, sometimes using umbrellas to shield themselves.

Global warming is smashing temperature records all over the world, but Kuwait - one of the hottest countries on the planet - is fast becoming unlivable. In 2016, thermometers hit 54C, the highest reading on Earth in the last 76 years. Last year, for the first time, they breached 50 degrees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit) in June, weeks ahead of usual peak weather. Parts of Kuwait could get as much as 4.5C hotter from 2071 to 2100 compared with the historical average, according to the Environment Public Authority, making large areas of the country uninhabitable.

For wildlife, it almost is. Dead birds appear on rooftops in the brutal summer months, unable to find shade or water. Vets are inundated with stray cats, brought in by people who've found them near death from heat exhaustion and dehydration. Even wild foxes are abandoning a desert that no longer blooms after the rains for what small patches of green remain in the city, where they're treated as pests.

"This is why we are seeing less and less wildlife in Kuwait, it's because most of them aren't making it through the seasons," said Tamara Qabazard, a Kuwaiti zoo and wildlife veterinarian. "Last year, we had three to four days at the end of July that were incredibly humid and very hot, and it was hard to even walk outside your house, and there was no wind. A lot of the animals started having respiratory problems."

Political inaction

Unlike countries from Bangladesh to Brazil that are struggling to balance environmental challenges with teeming populations and widespread poverty, Kuwait is OPEC's number 4 oil-exporter. Home to the world's third-largest sovereign wealth fund and just over 4.5 million people, it's not a lack of resources that stands in the way of cutting greenhouse gases and adapting to a warmer planet, but rather political inaction.

Even Kuwait's neighbors, also dependent on crude exports, have pledged to take stronger climate action. Saudi Arabia last year said it would target net-zero emissions by 2060. The United

Arab Emirates has set a goal of 2050. Though they remain among the biggest producers of fossil fuels, both say they are working to diversify their economies and investing in renewables and cleaner energy. The next two United Nations climate conferences will take place in Egypt and the UAE, as Middle East governments acknowledge they also stand to lose from rising temperatures and sea levels.

Kuwait, by contrast, pledged at the COP26 summit in November to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 7.4 percent by 2035, a target that falls far short of the 45 percent reduction needed to meet the Paris Agreement's stretch goal of limiting global warming to 1.5C by 2030. The nation's \$700 billion sovereign wealth fund invests with the specific aim of hedging against oil, but has said that returns remain a priority as it shifts to more sustainable investing.

Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, head of



Young Kuwaiti leads efforts to encourage public transport

the EPA, told COP26 that his country was keen to support international initiatives to stabilize the climate. Kuwait also pledged to adopt a "national low carbon strategy" by mid-century, but it hasn't said what this will involve and there is little evidence of action on the ground.

Public transport

Jassim Al-Awadhi is part of a younger generation of Kuwaitis increasingly worried about their country's future. The 32-year-old former banker quit his job to push for a change that experts argue could be Kuwait's key to addressing global warming: revamping attitudes toward transportation. His goal is to get Kuwaitis to embrace public transport, which today consists only of the buses that are mostly used by migrant workers with low-paying jobs who have no choice but to put up with the heat.

It's an uphill struggle. Though Kuwait has among the world's highest carbon-dioxide emissions per capita, the idea of ditching their cars is completely foreign to most residents in a country where petrol

is cheaper than soda and cities are designed for automobiles.

The London School of Economics, which conducted the only comprehensive survey of climate opinions in Kuwait, found older residents remain skeptical of the urgency, with some speaking of a conspiracy to hobble Gulf economies. In a public consultation, everyone over 50-years-old opposed plans to build a metro network like those already operating in Riyadh and Dubai. And the private sector sees climate change as a problem that requires government leadership to solve. "When I tell companies let's do something, they say it's not their business," Al-Awadhi said. "They make me feel I'm the only one who has problems with transport."

That's partly because most Kuwaitis and wealthy residents are shielded from the effects of rising temperatures. Homes, shopping malls and cars are air-conditioned, and those who can afford it often spend summers in Europe. Yet, the heavy reliance on cooling systems also increases the use of fossil fuels, leading to ever hotter temperatures.

The situation is much worse for those who can't escape the heat, mainly laborers from developing countries. Though the government prohibits peak afternoon outdoor work during the hottest summer months, migrant workers are often seen toiling in the sun. A study published in Science Direct last year found that on extremely hot days, the overall number of deaths doubles, but it triples for non-Kuwaiti men, more likely to take on low-paid work.

It's a cycle that's all too clear to Saleh Khaled Al-Misbah. Born in 1959, he remembers growing up when homes rarely had air conditioners, yet felt cool and shaded, even in the hottest months. As a child, he played outside through months of cooler weather and slept on the roof in the summers; it's too hot for that now. Children spend most of the year indoors to protect them from either burning sun or hazardous pollution, something that's contributed to deficiencies in vitamin D - which humans generate when exposed to the sun - and respiratory ailments.

Temperature changes in the 2040s and 2050s will have an increasingly negative impact on Kuwait's creditworthiness, according to Fitch Ratings. Yet despite the growing risks, squabbling between the Gulf's only elected parliament and the appointed government has made it difficult to push through reforms, on climate or anything else.

"The political deadlock in Kuwait just sucks the oxygen out of the air," said Samia Alduaij, a Kuwaiti environmental consultant who works with the UK's Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science and UNDP. "This is a very

rich country, with a very small population, so it could be so much better."

So far, there's been little progress on plans to produce 15 percent of Kuwait's power from renewable sources by 2030, from a maximum of 1 percent now. Oil is so abundant that it's burned to generate electricity, as well as fuel the two million cars on the road, contributing to air pollution. Some power plants have switched to gas, another fossil fuel that's relatively cleaner but can leak methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. Consumption of electricity and water, heavily subsidized by the government, is among the world's highest per capita, and it's proven politically toxic to even hint at cutting those benefits.

"That obviously leads to a lot of waste," said Tarek Sultan, vice chairman of Agility Public Warehousing Co. When fossil-fuel powered electricity "is subsidized, solar technologies that can provide viable solutions get priced out of the competition," he said.

Not enough

Even if the world manages to cut emissions quickly enough to stave off catastrophic global warming, countries will have to adapt to more extreme weather. As it stands, experts say Kuwait's plan is nowhere near enough to keep the country livable.

If it starts now, said Nadim Farajalla, director of the climate change and environment program at University of Beirut, a lot can be done in the coming decades, but that would need to include protection against rising sea levels, making cities greener and buildings less energy intensive. It also needs to focus on transport, a leading cause of CO2 emissions.

Khaled Mahdi, secretary general of Kuwait's Supreme Council for Planning and Development, said the government's adaptation plan is aligned with international policies. "We clearly identify roles and responsibilities, and all the challenges in the country," he said, though he admitted that "implementation is the usual challenging issue."

If the government is dragging its feet, young Kuwaitis like Al-Awadhi aren't. His advocacy group Kuwait Commute is starting small by campaigning for bus stop shelters to protect passengers from the sun. Still, like much of the private sector, they remain outside the decision-making process. "I think I'm finally making progress," said Al-Awadhi, who hopes that getting more Kuwaitis to ride buses will fuel enough demand to improve the service. But "it has to be driven by the government. It's the chicken before the egg," — Bloomberg



KUWAIT: Pictures taken from the event and award ceremony. — KUNA photos



Six horses crowned at Kuwait Arabian Horse Beauty Championships

KUWAIT: The first version of Kuwait Arabian Horse Beauty Championships concluded on Saturday with honoring the breeders of the purebred horses. The six competitions of the four-day

event, hosted by Bait Al-Arab track of the Arabian Horse Center, gathered 450 horses from various domestic stud farms. BHN Ghanayem, bred by Bader Al-Mehlan, won the most beautiful female horse award for the category of less than one year of age. Qais Al-Motasawer, of Faleh Al-Qahtani, won the most beautiful male horse award for the same age category. In the 2-3 year age category, Layali Al-Aliyat, of Abdullah Al-Obaid won the female horse award, while Rafe' Al-Rayal, of Abdullah Al-Khaledi won the male horse award. In the four+ year age category, Manifa Al-Hamad, of Al-Hamad stud farm, won the female horse award, while D Ar'ad, of Asayel

farm, won the male horse award.

Speaking to the press after the award ceremony, Mishal Al-Mesbah, director of the championships, said the event showed a great deal of care by the Kuwaiti breeder for their purebred horses. "The championships gain additional significance from the fact that they raised the competitive edge of the participating horse and qualified them for future international events," Mesbah pointed out. The event was held under the patronage of the European Conference of Arab Horse Organizations (ECAHO), he added, expressing gratitude for the national sponsors of the event. — KUNA

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News in brief

60+ visas renewal given priority

KUWAIT: The renewal of permits of residents aged 60 and above without a degree will see deep-rooted solutions soon after being delayed for more than a year, Al-Jarida reported yesterday quoting high-ranking sources. They said Minister of Justice and State Minister for Integrity Affairs Jamal Al-Jalawi has this issue among his priorities and is keen on finding solutions as soon as possible. They said the minister is waiting for a Cabinet decree to transfer the jurisdiction of some government authorities to other entities, including the Public Authority for Manpower, which was under the commerce and industry minister and is now under the justice minister. The sources expected renewal fees to be KD 1,000 to KD 1,100 per year, including health insurance.

Live ammunition drill today

KUWAIT: Kuwait Coast Guard will carry out a shooting drill using live ammunition today at the marine shooting range (ALFA) near the islands of Boubyan and Failaka, said the Interior Ministry yesterday. In a statement, the ministry affirmed that the training would last until January 18 from 8 am to 3 pm. It also went on urging all sea-goers to keep away from the shooting range.

Temperatures to drop tomorrow

KUWAIT: Kuwait's weather today is expected to be rather cold with a chance of light rain, while a significant drop in temperature is expected starting from tomorrow, according to the Kuwait Meteorological Center.

Heads of Kuwait's top three authorities meet

KUWAIT: In line with an assignment by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, heads of the top three authorities held a meeting at Bayan Palace yesterday. The session grouped National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Head of the Supreme Judicial Council and Head of the Court of Cassation Justice Ahmad Musaed Al-Ajeel.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem. His Highness then received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince also received Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Heads of the top three authorities meet at Bayan Palace yesterday. — Amiri Diwan photo

Gulf Bank names new head of Compliance and Disclosure Unit

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank announced the appointment of Mohammad Jassim Al-Beloushi as Head of Compliance and Disclosure Unit. Beloushi started his new role on Wednesday, January 12, 2022, following the approval obtained from the Capital Markets Authority. This step was taken in keeping with Gulf Bank's policy to promote and appoint nationals to leadership positions, an essential part of the bank's 2025 strategy.

Beloushi is a seasoned regulatory compliance expert with over 12 years of experience in the field, having worked at both the Central Bank of Kuwait and Gulf Bank. He holds a bachelor's degree in Economics from Boston University and an MBA from Vanderbilt University, and has successfully completed an executive leadership development program with Harvard Business School in 2019. Mohammad also holds the ICA International Advanced Certificate in Regulatory Compliance in cooperation with the University of Manchester, as well as the CISI certificate in Capital Market Authority (CMA) Rules and Regulations.

Gulf Bank's Compliance and Disclosure Unit



Mohammad Al-Beloushi

works to ensure the Bank's compliance with supervisory laws and regulations during all stages of implementation of banking operations, services and transactions, and while working with business departments in reviewing and developing new products and services in accordance with local laws.

The unit also works in identifying and evaluating the non-compliance risks facing the Bank and preparing plans and reports to the Board of Directors on the efficiency of the Bank's management of these risks. In addition, the unit serves as a link between Gulf Bank, the Central Bank of Kuwait, the Capital Markets Authority, and the local stock exchange.

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

Spinsterhood rises among Arab women during pandemic

KUWAIT: The emerging and continuous COVID-19 pandemic and various social factors have increased rates of spinsterhood among women in the Arab world, said the Arabic Gulf Research Center. A report published on the center's official websites yesterday said Arab women have registered the highest rate of spinsterhood among women in different parts of the world, due to the unstable circumstances caused by the spread of the coronavirus and its impact on the social and economic levels. Education, self-affirmation and assisting families contribute to increasing the rate of women's reluctance to get married, the report added. Restrictions imposed on Arab societies because of the spread of the coronavirus since 2020, deterioration of living conditions of Arab individuals, unemployment, poverty and inflation are all factors that increased young people's rejection of marriage, the report pointed out. The study explained how the pandemic created a status of depression and isolation caused by fears of infection especially with the growing death toll, stressing that these factors affected the decisions and idea of marriage in the past two years. Addition to the internet and the social media had caused a negative impact on the young peoples' view about marriage, by increasing their fears of failure and divorce. The report concluded by explaining how other factors such as wars and conflicts had negatively affected economic and social conditions that led to an increase in the age of marriage in the Arab world in general. — KUNA

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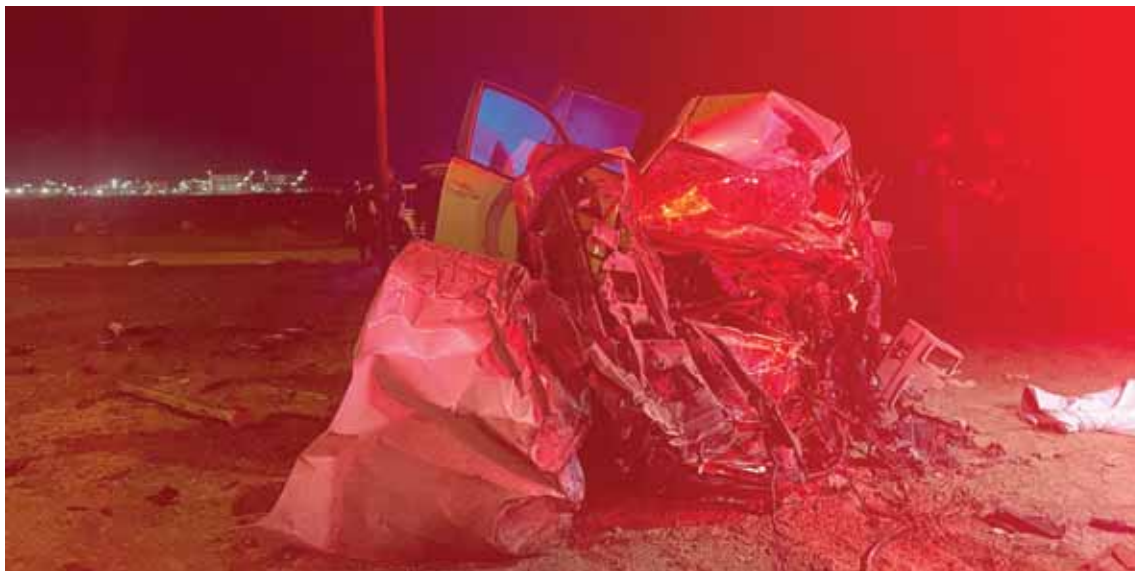
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Motorist dead in Abdaly Road crash



KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti died in a traffic accident between an SUV and a truck at dawn yesterday on Abdaly Road. Firemen extracted the body and handed it to concerned authorities. Separately, Kuwait Fire

Force said fire broke out in a Shuwaikh garage Saturday night. The fire was in a heated area where vehicles are painted. An employee was found suffering from burns and cuts and was handed to paramedics.



Taleban fighters pepper spray women protesters calling for rights

Huge Tonga volcanic eruption caused ‘significant damage’

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UK PM ‘broke the law’: Labour leader

Britain’s government points to lifting of COVID curbs

LONDON: Britain’s main opposition leader yesterday accused Prime Minister Boris Johnson of breaking the law, but the government vowed changes after a bruising series of revelations about lockdown-breaching parties. In the latest, Johnson’s wife Carrie was photographed on the front page of the Sunday Telegraph newspaper embracing a friend at a September 2020 party, in apparent violation of the then rules on social distancing.

At least six lawmakers in Johnson’s Conservative party have now called publicly for him to quit, while others say they are awaiting the findings of an internal inquiry by senior civil servant Sue Gray. Labour leader Keir Starmer, who is enjoying an opinion poll surge on the back of the Downing Street “partygate” allegations, said the facts were already clear.

“I think he broke the law. I think he’s as good as admitted that he broke the law,” Starmer told BBC television. Gray only has the remit to establish the facts, he added, calling for the police to look into a possible criminal inquiry once her report is out.

“The prime minister has degraded the office of prime minister and he has lost full authority not only in his own party, but in the country,” Starmer said. Government minister Oliver Dowden, the Conservatives’ co-chairman, conceded that the Downing Street parties were “completely unacceptable”.

But Dowden backed Johnson to stay in office, while stressing he would take “full responsibility” once Gray releases her findings. “I can tell you that when he responds to the House of Commons, as he has committed to do so, he will make sure that we address the kind of culture that has allowed that to happen in the first place,” he told Sky News.

Conservative MPs, many of whom were spending the weekend back in their home constituencies, say they are being deluged with messages from voters outraged at the accounts of rule-breaking in Downing Street. After weeks of denials and stonewalling, Johnson this week apologised in parliament for at least one boozy event organised by his staff which he attended in May 2020, when Britons were banned from socialising.

Two other parties were held in April 2021 as Queen Elizabeth II prepared to bury Prince Philip, her husband of 73 years. Downing Street sent apologies to Buckingham Palace, calling them “deeply regrettable”. But those were not isolated events, according to Saturday’s Daily Mirror, which published a photograph of a fridge being delivered to a Downing Street back door in December 2020 for “Wine time Fridays”.

Meanwhile, Britain’s government said yesterday it hopes to lift its latest COVID restrictions for England later this month with the Omicron surge of infections apparently fading. Last month, England switched to “Plan B” restrictions, re-imposing guidance to work from home and a requirement for attendees to show vaccination passports on entry to larger events.

The government will lift those on January 26, but a mandate to wear face masks may continue, according to reports. Government minister Oliver Dowden, co-

chairman of Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s Conservative party, said the “signs were encouraging”. “It has always been my hope that we would have the Plan B restrictions for the shortest period possible,” he said on Sky News.

“I’m under no doubt the kind of burdens this puts hospitality, wider business, schools and so on under, and I want us to get rid of those if we possibly can.” After the Omicron variant emerged, Britain’s daily caseload for COVID topped a record 200,000 infections in early January, but has now dropped to less than half that.

The upcoming relaxation will reportedly form part of plans by Johnson to relaunch his premiership as he battles a slew of allegations about “partygate” lockdown breaches in Downing Street. Opposition Labour leader Keir Starmer agreed with the need to lift the restrictions “as soon as possible” if government scientists agree, but noted the backdrop of political scandal.

“I want them to be lifted because the medical science says they should be lifted, not simply because the prime minister is in a real mess and he’s desperately trying to get out of it,” he told the BBC. Many Conservative MPs are up in arms about the reports of rule-breaking in Downing Street, and had already warned Johnson he cannot count on their support to extend COVID restrictions.



LONDON: A handout photograph released by the UK Parliament shows Britain’s Prime Minister Boris Johnson attending Prime Minister’s Questions (PMQs) in the House of Commons in London. —AFP

Facing restive Tory backbenchers, the prime minister rebuffed calls by some scientists to impose a full lockdown in December, and allowed sporting events to continue with capacity crowds in England. The devolved governments of Scotland and Wales did impose bans on large crowds at sports fixtures last month, but have now lifted that rule in time for the Six Nations rugby tournament starting next month. —AFP

Ukraine says has ‘evidence’ Russia behind cyberattack

KYIV: Ukraine said yesterday it had “evidence” Russia was behind a massive cyber-attack that knocked out key government websites this past week, while Microsoft warned the hack could be far worse than first thought. Tensions are at an all-time high between Ukraine and Russia, which Kyiv accuses of having massed troops on its border ahead of a possible invasion. Some analysts fear the cyberattack could be the prelude to a military attack.

On Friday, Washington also accused Russia of sending saboteurs trained in explosives to stage an incident that could be the pretext to invade its pro-Western neighbour. “All the evidence points to Russia being behind the cyberattack,” the Ukrainian digital transformation ministry said in a statement. “Moscow is continuing to wage a hybrid war.”

The ministry urged Ukrainians not to panic, saying their personal information was protected. The purpose of the attack, it added, “is not only to intimidate society. But to also destabilise the situation in Ukraine, halting the work of the public sector and crushing Ukrainians’ trust in the authorities”.

The Kremlin rejected the claims and said there was no evidence Russia was behind the attack. “We have nothing to do with it. Russia has nothing to do with these cyberattacks,” President Vladimir Putin’s spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, told CNN.

“Ukrainians are blaming everything on Russia, even their bad weather in their country,” he said in English. Kyiv said late Friday it had uncovered preliminary clues Russian security services could have been behind the cyberattack. The SBU security service said the attacks in the early hours of Friday had targeted a total of 70 government websites.

Microsoft warning

Microsoft warned yesterday that the cyberattack could prove destructive and

affect more organisations than initially feared. The US software giant said it continued to analyse the malware and warned it could render government digital infrastructure inoperable. “The malware, which is designed to look like ransomware but lacking a ransom recovery mechanism, is intended to be destructive and designed to render targeted devices inoperable rather than to obtain a ransom,” the US software giant said in a blog post.

Microsoft said it had not so far identified a culprit behind the attacks but warned that the number of affected organisations could prove larger than initially thought. “Our investigation teams have identified the malware on dozens of impacted systems and that number could grow as our investigation continues,” Microsoft said. “These systems span multiple government, non-profit, and information technology organisations, all based in Ukraine. We do not know the current stage of this attacker’s operational cycle or how many other victim organisations may exist in Ukraine or other geographic locations.” —AFP

Tony Blair defends knighthood after Iraq criticism

LONDON: British former prime minister Tony Blair said yesterday his leadership should be remembered for more than the Iraq war as he rejected fierce criticism over his receipt of a knighthood.

The Labour party’s most successful leader, who won three successive general elections, was made Sir Tony in Queen Elizabeth II’s New Year’s Honours list. The announcement was defended by the Conservative government, but several online petitions want it rescinded. One on change.org, accusing Blair of “war crimes”, has drawn more than one million signatories.

Blair said he had accepted not just for himself but for the “dedicated, committed people” who had worked with him in government and “provided a lot of change to the country”. “And of course there would be people who object to it strongly. That’s to be expected,” he told Times Radio.

“There are some people who want to say the only thing the government did was Iraq and ignore all the rest of the things we do,”

Blair added. But he stressed “you don’t occupy a position of leadership and take decisions without arousing a lot of opposition, and so it didn’t surprise me”.

The Queen personally appointed Blair as “Knight Companion of the Most Noble Order of the Garter”, the most senior order of knighthood. She previously knighted former Conservative prime minister John Major in this way in 2005. Blair, now 68, defeated Major with a landslide Labour victory in 1997 and spent a decade in office. His successes included securing peace in Northern Ireland, investments in health and education, and expanding gay rights. But he was widely reviled at home for his support for the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq.

Senior Conservative minister Michael Gove, while noting their political differences, said this week that Blair was an “outstanding statesman and performer”. Current Labour leader Keir Starmer said Blair had earned his knighthood, arguing he “made Britain a better country”. —AFP

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International

Aafia Siddiqui: Pakistani prisoner at centre of Texas hostage siege

First woman to be suspected of Al-Qaeda links by the US

ISLAMABAD: Aafia Siddiqui, a Pakistani prisoner in the United States whose release was reportedly demanded by a Texas hostage-taker this weekend, is serving an 86-year sentence for the attempted murder of American soldiers.

Four people were freed unharmed yesterday following a more than 10-hour standoff at a synagogue in the US state. Their suspected captor was killed. Media, quoting a US official briefed on the matter, reported that the man was calling for the release of 49-year-old Siddiqui. Her lawyer said in a statement to CNN that she had “absolutely no involvement” in the hostage situation, and condemned the man’s actions.

A US-educated Pakistani scientist, she was jailed in 2010 for attacking American soldiers in Afghanistan. She was the first woman to be suspected of Al-Qaeda links by the US, but never convicted of it.

At 18 years old Siddiqui travelled to the US, where her brother lived, to study at Boston’s prestigious MIT, later earning a PhD in neuroscience at Brandeis University. But after the 9/11 terror attacks of 2001, she came up on the FBI’s radar for donations to Islamic organisations and was linked to the purchase of \$10,000 worth of night-vision goggles and books on warfare.

The US suspected she joined Al-Qaeda from America, returning to Pakistan where she married into the family of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed —

an architect of the 9/11 attacks.

She disappeared in around 2003, along with her three children, in Karachi. Five years later she turned up in Pakistan’s war-torn neighbour Afghanistan, where she was arrested by local forces in the restive southeastern province of Ghazni.

‘Death to America’

During her interrogation by US forces, she grabbed a rifle and opened fire, while screaming “Death to America” and “I want to kill Americans”.

The soldiers escaped unhurt, but she was injured.

Her imprisonment sparked outrage in her home country and her supporters claim she was the victim of a secret Pakistan-US plot. After she was sentenced, Al-Qaeda’s then number two called on Muslims to “avenge” the decision.

Her release has previously been at the centre of militants’ demands, including during two hostage crises in Pakistan as well as the capture of James Foley, an American journalist who was beheaded by the Islamic State in 2014.

Michael Kugelman, a South Asia analyst, tweeted: “Siddiqui isn’t well known in the US, but in Pakistan she’s a big name — many view her as an innocent victim.”

In a previous article, he described her as a cause celebre among Islamist militants, and said

Her imprisonment sparked outrage in her home country



LAHORE: File photo shows, Pakistani protesters carry portraits of Aafia Siddiqui, a Pakistani scientist who is currently serving a prison term in the US, as they stage a demonstration for her release in Lahore. —AFP

she was viewed as a “powerful symbol of how poorly Americans treat innocent Muslims in the global campaign against terror”.

The issue has remained a matter of long-running tension between Pakistan and the US.

During his election campaign, Pakistan Prime

Minister Imran Khan, an open critic of US action linked to the war on terror, vowed to get her released. He offered to free Shakeel Afridi, who is languishing in Pakistani jail over his role in helping Americans trace Al-Qaeda founder Osama Bin Laden in Pakistan. —AFP

Kosovo restricts Serbia referendum on its territory

PRISTINA: Kosovo lawmakers on Saturday banned the holding on its territory of a referendum being organised in Serbia-but did allow Kosovo Serbians to vote by mail. Serbia is to hold a nationwide referendum yesterday on changes to the constitution that the government says would strengthen the independence of the country’s judiciary.

These reforms constitute one of the key conditions for the Balkan country’s bid to join the European Union. Western nations have welcomed the referendum, encouraging all Serbian nationals to take part in it. In a joint statement Friday, the United States, Britain, Germany, France, Italy and the EU urged the Kosovo government to “allow ethnic Serbs to exercise their right to vote in elections and electoral processes”.

But a resolution adopted by 76 MPs in the 120-seat Kosovo assembly said that holding a referendum of a foreign state “violates the constitution and sovereignty of Kosovo”. Kosovo is not allowing polling stations for the referendum on its territory, and on Friday, Kosovo police stopped two trucks with ballots from Serbia from entering Kosovo.

But Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti has said that ethnic Serbs can still vote, either by mail or at Serbia’s liaison office in Pristina. Ethnic-majority Albanian Kosovo proclaimed independence from Serbia in 2008, a move that Belgrade still refuses to recognise.

It maintains strong ties with some 120,000 Kosovo Serbs, most of whom refuse to accept the authority of Pristina. Tensions between Serbia and Kosovo have remained high since the 1998-1999 war between ethnic Albanian guerrilla and Serbian forces, in which about 13,000 people were killed, mostly ethnic Albanians.

But a key element of both Serbia’s and Kosovo’s EU membership aspirations is the requirement that they normalise their relations. Kosovo is already recognised by roughly 100 states, including the US and most EU countries. —AFP

Lebanon’s Hezbollah says ready to return to cabinet meetings

BEIRUT: Lebanese group Hezbollah and its ally the Amal movement said Saturday they were ready to return to government meetings after three months of political deadlock that has exacerbated the country’s economic crisis. “We announce our agreement to participate in cabinet meetings to approve the national budget and discuss the economic rescue plan and all that concerns improving the living conditions of the Lebanese,” the two Shiite movements said in a joint statement.

Lebanon’s government was formed in September after a 13-month political impasse. But it has not met since October 12 due to a boycott by Hezbollah and Amal amid tensions over an investigation into a catastrophic explosion at Beirut’s port in 2020.

Hezbollah and Amal said Saturday’s decision was a “response to the needs of the citizens”, citing “the collapse of the Lebanese pound’s exchange rate, the decline of the public sector” and crumbling incomes and purchasing power. The country is in the throes of an economic meltdown that the World Bank has said is likely among the world’s worst since the mid-19th century.

About 80 percent of the population now lives in poverty and the local currency has shed more than 90 percent of its value on the black market. Reacting to the parties’ announcement, Prime Minister Najib Mikati said he would convene a cabinet meeting as soon as the finance ministry had sent through a draft budget. —AFP

Huge Tonga volcanic eruption caused ‘significant damage’

WELLINGTON: A massive volcanic eruption in Tonga that triggered tsunami waves around the Pacific caused “significant damage” to the island nation’s capital and smothered it in dust, but the full extent was not apparent with communications still cut off yesterday.

The eruption on Saturday was so powerful it was recorded around the world, triggering a tsunami that flooded Pacific coastlines from Japan to the United States. The capital Nuku’alofa suffered “significant” damage, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said, adding there had been no reports of injury or death but a full assessment was not yet possible with communication lines down.

“The tsunami has had a significant impact on the foreshore on the northern side of Nuku’alofa with boats and large boulders washed ashore,” Ardern said after contact with the New Zealand embassy in Tonga. “Nuku’alofa is covered in a thick film of volcanic dust but otherwise conditions are calm and stable.”

Tonga was in need of water supplies, she said: “The ash cloud has caused contamination.” There has been no word on damage in the outer islands and New Zealand will send an air force reconnaissance aircraft “as soon as atmospheric conditions allow”, the country’s Defence Force tweeted.

“We’re working hard to see how we can assist our Pacific neighbours after the volcanic eruption near Tonga.” Tonga has also accepted Canberra’s offer to send a surveillance flight, Australia’s foreign office said, adding it is also immediately prepared to supply “critical humanitarian supplies”.

The United States was “deeply concerned for the people of Tonga”,

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said, pledging support for the island nation. A 1.2-metre wave swept ashore in the Tongan capital with residents reporting they had fled to higher ground, leaving behind flooded houses, some with structural damage, as small stones and ash fell from the sky. “It was massive, the ground shook, our house was shaking. It came in waves. My younger brother thought bombs were exploding nearby,” resident Mere Taufua told the Stuff news website Saturday. She said water filled their home minutes later and she watched the wall of a neighbouring house collapse.

‘People screaming’

“We just knew straight away it was a tsunami. Just water gushing into our home,” Taufua said. “You could just hear screams everywhere, people screaming for safety, for everyone to get to higher ground.”

Tonga’s King Tupou VI was reported to have been evacuated from the Royal Palace in Nuku’alofa and taken by police convoy to a villa well away from the coastline. Dramatic satellite images showed the long, rumbling eruption of the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha’apai volcano spew smoke and ash in the air, with a thunderous roar heard 10,000 kilometres (6,000 miles) away in Alaska.

The eruption triggered tsunamis across the Pacific with waves of 1.74 metres (five and a half feet) measured in Chanaral, Chile, more than 10,000 kilometres away, and smaller waves seen along the Pacific coast from Alaska to Mexico.

In California, the city of Santa Cruz was hit by flooding due to a tidal surge generated by the tsunami, videos retweeted by the US National Weather Service showed. Peru closed 22 ports as



EL SEGUNDO, California: People stretch next to a tsunami hazard zone sign in El Segundo, California. The US National Weather Service issued tsunami advisories for the entire west coast of the United States following a massive volcanic eruption across the Pacific Ocean in Tonga. —AFP

a precaution while waves of around 1.2 metres (four feet) hit along Japan’s Pacific coast. By 0300 GMT yesterday, the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Hawaii said the threat from the eruption had passed.

Heard in Alaska

The US Geological Survey recorded Saturday’s eruption as equivalent to a 5.8-magnitude earthquake at zero depth. The volcano’s eruption lasted at least eight minutes and sent plumes of gas, ash and smoke several kilometres into the air.

New Zealand scientist Marco Brenna, a senior lecturer at Otago University’s School of Geology, described the impact of the eruption as “relatively mild” but said another eruption with a much bigger impact could not be ruled out.

The eruption was so powerful it was even heard in Alaska, the UAF Geophysical Institute tweeted. “A part of the pressure signal in Alaska was in the audible range. The very large signal

is not that surprising considering the scale of the eruption, but the audible aspect is fairly unique,” it said, citing Alaska Volcano Observatory scientist David Fee.

“He recalls only a couple other volcanic eruptions doing something like this: Krakatau and Novarupta,” it tweeted. This referred to the 19th-century eruption of Indonesia’s Krakatau, and Alaska’s Novarupta, the most powerful volcanic eruption of the 20th century.

The Fife weather station in Scotland tweeted it was “just incredible to think of the power that can send a shockwave around the world” after the eruptions produced a jump in its air pressure graph. Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha’apai, which lies about 65 kilometres north of Nuku’alofa, has a history of volatility.

In recent years, it breached sea level during a 2009 eruption while in 2015 it spewed so many large rocks and ash into the air that when they settled a new island had formed two kilometres long by one kilometre wide and 100 metres high. —AFP

Prince Andrew, accuser name witnesses in sex assault lawsuit

NEW YORK: Prince Andrew will challenge his sexual assault accuser’s memory while her lawyers want to question a woman who purportedly saw him in a night-club with a “young girl,” US court documents show. Lawyers for Andrew and Virginia Giuffre, who has sued the British royal over alleged sexual abuse more than two decades ago, have named the first witnesses they hope to grill in the civil lawsuit.

Andrew’s attorneys said in a filing with a New York court late Friday that they were seeking testimony from Judith Lightfoot, Giuffre’s psychologist in her adopted home of Australia. Lawyer Melissa Lerner said that the prince’s legal team want to quiz Lightfoot about what was discussed during her counseling sessions with Giuffre, who says she was trafficked to Andrew for sex in 2001.

Andrew’s team are seeking Lightfoot’s notes from the sessions and medical records, Lerner wrote in a formal “letter of request” submitted to US judge Lewis Kaplan that would compel testimony in Australia.

The prince’s lawyers argue that Giuffre “may suffer from false memories” and want to ask Lightfoot about the “theory of false memories,” the letter said. They added

that they also wished to question Robert Giuffre, who married the then Virginia Roberts in and around 2002. The couple live in Australia with their three children.

Lerner wrote that Giuffre’s husband would likely have information about her “alleged emotional and psychological harm and damages.” She said they also intended to ask him about Giuffre’s finances. In a separate filing, Giuffre’s lawyers told judge Kaplan that they wanted to question two witnesses based in Britain, including Shukri Walker.

“(Walker) claims to have seen Prince Andrew at Tramp Nightclub in London with a young girl around the time that plaintiff contends Prince Andrew abused her in London after visiting Tramp Nightclub,” the wrote attorney Sigrid McCawley.

Ex-aide

“Because Prince Andrew has denied ever meeting plaintiff or being at Tramp Nightclub during the relevant time period, Ms Walker’s testimony is highly relevant,” she added. Giuffre alleges that Andrew sexually assaulted her at the London home of Ghislaine Maxwell in March 2001 when she was 17 and a minor under US law. She said the incident occurred after a night dancing at Tramp nightclub.

The prince has denied being at Tramp Nightclub with Giuffre, and has said he has no recollection of ever meeting her. Giuffre, now 38, sued Andrew last year for unspecified damages, alleging that she was trafficked to him by Maxwell—who was convicted of sex trafficking



Britain's Prince Andrew, Duke of York.

last month—and the late disgraced money manager, Jeffrey Epstein.

As well as the London allegations, Giuffre also says Andrew assaulted her at Epstein’s home in New York, and on Epstein’s private island in the US Virgin Islands. Andrew has repeatedly and strenuously denied the allegations and he has not been criminally charged.

Giuffre’s lawyers also want to interview Robert Olney, the prince’s former assistant, who they say “has relevant information” about Andrew’s relationship with Epstein. Andrew was on Thursday stripped of his honorary military titles and charitable roles after judge Kaplan earlier in the week denied his plea to dismiss Giuffre’s case. —AFP

International

Taleban fighters pepper spray women protesters calling for rights

Taleban dismiss 3,000 members for committing abuses: Official

KABUL: Taliban forces yesterday fired pepper spray at a group of women protesters in Afghanistan's capital demanding rights to work and education, three demonstrators told AFP. Since seizing control of the country by force in August, the Taliban authorities have imposed creeping restrictions on Afghans, especially on women.

Around 20 women gathered in front of Kabul University, chanting "equality and justice" and carried banners that read "Women's rights, human rights", an AFP correspondent reported. The protest however was later dispersed by the Taliban fighters who arrived at the scene in several vehicles, three women protesters told AFP.

"When we were near Kabul University three Taliban vehicles came, and fighters from one of the vehicles used pepper spray on us," said a protester, who asked not to be named for security reasons. "My right eye started to burn. I told one of them 'shame on you', and then he pointed his gun at me."

Two other protesters said that one of the women had to be taken to hospital after the spray caused an allergic reaction to her eyes and face. An AFP correspondent saw a fighter confiscate a mobile phone of a man who was filming the demonstration. The hard-line Islamist group have banned unsanctioned protests and frequently intervened to forcefully break up rallies demanding rights for women.

The Taliban authorities have blocked women public sector employees from returning to work, many secondary schools have still not reopened for girls, and public universities are shut. Long distance trips for women who are not accompanied by a close male relative have been banned.

The authorities have also issued guidelines that

prevent television channels from broadcasting serials featuring women actors. Meanwhile, many women are living in hiding, fearful of a regime notorious for human rights abuses during their first stint in power between 1996-2001, before being ousted by a US-led invasion.

Meanwhile, the Taliban have dismissed about 3,000 members accused of abusive practices from its hardline Islamist movement in a widespread "vetting process" launched since coming to power, an official said Saturday. The Taliban took back control of Afghanistan in August after a 20-year insurgency



Many women are living in hiding

against former US-backed governments and NATO foreign forces.

Promising a softer rule to their 1996-2001 regime, the Taliban government launched a commission to identify members who were flouting the movement's regulations. "They were giving a bad name to the Islamic Emirate. They were removed in this vetting process so that we can build a clean army and police force in the future," the head of the panel Latifullah Hakimi in the defence ministry told AFP.



KABUL: Afghan women march as they chant slogans and hold banners during a women's rights protest in Kabul yesterday. — AFP

So far about 2,840 members had been dismissed, he said. "They were involved in corruption, drugs and were intruding in people's private lives. Some also had links with Daesh," Hakimi said, using the Arabic acronym for the Islamic State group.

Taliban fighters have been accused by rights groups of extrajudicial killings of former security force members, despite an order from the movement's supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada of an amnesty.

The regional chapter of the jihadist group has emerged as a major security challenge to the hardline

Islamist administration, often targeting officials in gun and bomb attacks in Kabul and other cities. Hakimi said those suspended were from 14 provinces and the process to "filter out" such members will continue in other provinces.

Since seizing power the Taliban authorities have restricted the freedoms of Afghans, especially women. Women public sector workers have been largely blocked from returning to work, while many secondary schools have not reopened for girls. Long distance trips for women who are not accompanied by a close male relative have also been banned. — AFP

Bangladesh arrests brother of Rohingya insurgency leader

COX'S BAZAR: Bangladesh police said yesterday they had arrested the brother of a notorious insurgent leader whose organisation has been blamed for murders and drug trafficking in sprawling Rohingya refugee camps.

The country is home to around 850,000 members of the stateless Muslim minority, who live in patchwork and overcrowded settlements after fleeing systemic discrimination and violence in neighbouring Myanmar. The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army militant group has been accused of assassinating political opponents, running narcotics and instilling a climate of fear in the camps. Mohammad Shah Ali, arrested late Saturday by the elite Armed Police Battalion, is the half-brother of ARSA's infamous leader Ataullah Abu Ammar Jununi.

He was caught in a camp near the coastal city of Cox's Bazar with "arms and drugs," the battalion said

in a statement. Commanding officer Naimul Haque told AFP that Ali had admitted his links with ARSA and that "Ataullah was in regular contact with him".

He also said police had rescued one person kidnapped by Ali, without giving further details. A Rohingya refugee living in Nouakar Mat camp confirmed the arrest to AFP. "Everyone here is terrified by him," said Mohammad Salim. "(He) used to oppress us." Nearly all of the Rohingya refugees living in the border camp arrived in the wake of a brutal Myanmar military crackdown-now subject to a genocide investigation at The Hague-that began after ARSA attacks on Myanmar police posts in 2017.

Ali's capture was the most high-profile arrest of an ARSA member since the group was accused of murdering influential Rohingya community leader Mohib Ullah in September, and killing seven others at an Islamic seminary soon after.

Bangladesh authorities launched a dragnet in the camps after the murders, arresting hundreds of people. Tom Andrews, the UN special rapporteur for Myanmar, visited the camps last month and blamed ARSA for much of the crime committed there.

There was no immediate comment from ARSA on Saturday's arrest. But in a recent video message, Ataullah denied the group's involvement in the drug



COX'S BAZAR, Bangladesh: Undated handout picture released by the Bangladesh's Armed Police Battalion (APBN) yesterday shows Mohammad Shah Ali, the brother of Ataullah Abu Ammar Jununi, leader of Rohingya insurgency group Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) who was arrested from a refugee camp. — AFP

trade, instead accusing Bangladesh authorities of trafficking methamphetamine pills and blaming Rohingya refugees. — AFP

Monks flee temples in east Myanmar amid intense fighting

YANGON: Hundreds of Buddhist monks fled two major towns in Myanmar, a witness said yesterday, among thousands recently displaced by intense fighting between the military and rebel groups opposed to last year's coup.

A military power-grab 11 months ago expelled civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi's government with mass protests and subsequent crackdowns killing more than 1,400 — as dozens of rebel groups sprang up to oppose the regime.

Loikaw town-in eastern Myanmar's Kayah state-saw intense fighting last week and the United Nations estimates that almost 90,000 people have fled, with local NGO's placing that figure far higher at 170,000.

"More than half the population of Loikaw township has been internally displaced," the UN said, with even the holy men of the town scattering as the fighting raged. "It was impossible for us to stay there," said one Buddhist monk, adding around 30

monasteries were fleeing—an unusual sight in a nation where they are revered and temples are considered safe havens.

"It was hard to make the decision to leave, but we had to do it," the monk, who requested anonymity for his safety, told AFP. The monk, among the roughly 5,000 people who have fled to eastern Shan state, said that 12 monasteries in nearby Demoso town had also emptied.

In Loikaw rebel fighters have taken over churches and homes, a policeman-who asked for anonymity-said, adding they had also attacked a jail. "The town is deserted like a cemetery. The situation in town is very bad," he said, noting that roughly 600 vehicles left the settlement almost daily.

Both Demoso and Loikaw are rebel strongholds, with the UN noting that fighting has intensified in Kayah and Kayin states since December. Over Christmas the bodies of at least 35 people-including two Save the Children NGO workers-were found burnt in Kayah state, an atrocity blamed on junta troops.

Earlier this week UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar Tom Andrews called on junta leader Min Aung Hlaing to "halt the air and ground attacks" on Loikaw, lift the blockade of those seeking to escape, and allow aid to get through. — AFP



MAE SOT, Thailand: Photo shows Myanmar refugees, who fled a surge in violence as the military cracks down on rebel groups, rest after crossing a river on the border in Thailand's Mae Sot district. — AFP

News in brief

Somali govt spokesman wounded

MOGADISHU: A Somali government spokesman was wounded yesterday in an attack by the Al-Shabaab jihadist group, though his wounds are "not serious," the prime minister's office said. "The spokesman of the Somali Federal government was wounded in a terrorist attack, his injuries are not serious and we wish him quick recovery," the office said in a statement. Multiple sources said the attacker attempted to get onto the spokesman's car before detonating explosives, partially destroying the vehicle. "A suicide bomber jumped onto a vehicle transporting the spokesman of the government Mohamed Ibrahim, he was lucky to have survived with light injuries," said a policeman at the scene of the attack, Mohamed Farah. "Two other people got injured in the blast." Witnesses confirmed that the attacker had pressed himself against the car before a loud explosion was heard. Al-Shabaab claimed the attack in a statement. — AFP

Former Haiti senator arrested

MIAMI: A former Haitian lawmaker who is a suspect in the assassination of the country's president has been arrested in Jamaica, a police source said Saturday. Ex-senator John Joel Joseph, wanted in the July 7, 2021, killing of president Jovenel Moise, was arrested overnight Friday into Saturday, the source said, without specifying where in Jamaica. "He's being detained at the moment," the source in Jamaica told AFP. The source said Jamaican police acted in conjunction with "international law enforcement partners" and that "joint investigations" had been underway. Moise, who was unpopular in Haiti, was killed and his wife was seriously wounded when a commando of around 20 men burst into the presidential residence and shot them. Dozens of suspects had been arrested previously over Moise's murder, but much about the assassination remains murky, especially who ordered it. An arrest warrant was issued for Joseph right after the killing, with authorities describing him as "armed and dangerous." More than 40 people, including more than a dozen Colombians and some Americans of Haitian origin, have been arrested in connection with the assassination. — AFP

Questions persist over Kazakh version of unrest

ALMATY: As the dust settles on lethal clashes in Kazakhstan that prompted authorities to call in Russian-led troops, questions are mounting over the authoritarian government's handling of the unprecedented crisis.

While President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has pinned the blame on bandits and foreign militants, many ordinary people question the official storyline. Following days of internet shutdown, prosecutors announced late Saturday the unrest that began with peaceful protests over energy price hikes had left 225 people dead, including 19 law enforcement and military personnel.

But many stress that a number of issues remain unexplained. It is unclear why so many civilians died, and who the "foreign terrorists" the government blames for the violence are. And where is Tokayev's mentor and predecessor, 81-year-old Nursultan Nazarbayev, who has not been heard from since last year?

Dauren Bitkembayev, 30, who lost his elderly parents in the unrest, told AFP he needs answers. He and others want to know why gun attacks on civilian cars in the country's largest city occurred even after the military had appeared to restore order.

A video shared on social media shows a car engulfed in flames close to barriers put up by the military. Inside the vehicle were a retired postal service worker and a former teacher, Bitkembayev's late parents.

"It looks like military shot (the car) up... and we thought (violence) was over," the eyewitness, who filmed the burning car, can be heard saying. "Everyone is saying it was the army (who fired). I don't understand," said Bitkembayev, who works in a pawn shop ransacked by looters during the upheaval. "Were they blind? They could see it was a grandfather and a grandmother-what kind of looters or terrorists could they be?" Bitkembayev asked.

'Susceptible to propaganda'

Some doubt the authorities will ever tell the whole truth. Daniyar Moldabekov, a commentator and political reporter, said society was polarised. "With internet shut down, some turned out to be too susceptible to propaganda ready to believe that everyone who has been out on the streets is a terrorist and villain," he told AFP.

"Others understand that a lot of civilians died, there are a lot of innocent people in prisons, and instances of torture have been reported." The government has offered detailed accounts of how members of law enforcement died but provided little evidence proving the involvement of "foreign terrorists". Rights activists have been putting together a list of hundreds of people detained, killed or missing.

It has taken authorities days to release an official death toll. Kazakhstan had initially acknowledged fewer than 50 fatalities. A higher mortality count of 164 had been quickly retracted last week. On Saturday, officials said 225 had died. Over 12,000 people have been detained since the unrest erupted in early January, including journalists and rights activists.

Internet has been returned to the vast country after a blackout that lasted close to a week in Almaty, but establishing facts on the ground remains difficult. Outside morgues in Almaty, relatives of people suspected to have been killed stood on the street, waiting for information and a chance to bury their loved ones. — AFP

MONDAY, JANUARY 17, 2022

Business

Tunisia's crisis-hit economy needs 'deep reforms': IMF

Govt seeks new bailout amid ballooning public wage bill

TUNIS: Tunisia's crisis-stricken economy needs "deep reforms" such as slashing its vast public wage bill, the International Monetary Fund's outgoing country chief has said as the government seeks a new bailout.

Jerome Vacher, speaking in an interview at the end of his three-year term as the global lender's envoy to the North African country, said the coronavirus pandemic had helped create Tunisia's "worst recession since independence" in 1956. "The country had pre-existing problems, in particular budget deficits and public debt, which have worsened," he said.

Tunisia's debts have soared to nearly 100 percent of Gross Domestic Product. Its GDP plunged by almost nine percent in 2020, the worst rate in North Africa, only modestly offset by a three percent bounce-back last year. That is "quite weak and far from enough" to create jobs to counteract an unemployment rate of 18 percent, Vacher said.

He said young graduates face particular challenges in finding work, despite the country being able to offer "a qualified workforce and a favorable geographic location". Since dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was toppled by mass protests in 2011, Tunisia's troubled democratic transition has failed to revive the economy.

President Kais Saied sacked the government and suspended parliament on July 25 last year, and the government has since asked the IMF for a bailout package—the fourth since the revolution. Tunisian authorities say they are optimistic about reaching a deal by the end of this quarter.

Vacher said discussions are still at an early stage and that the IMF first wants "to understand what they're planning in terms of economic reforms". "It's an economy that needs very deep, structural reforms, especially to improve the business environment," the French economist said.



TUNIS: Jerome Vacher, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) envoy to Tunisia, is pictured during an interview with AFP in the capital Tunis, on Friday.

Hefty public wage bill

But Vacher added that the government "understands the main challenges and problems, which is already a good basis", urging Tunisia to come up with a "solid and credible" reform plan. To do that, it must tackle its huge spending on public sector salaries. "The public wage bill is one of the highest in the world," Vacher said. In a country of 12 million people, more than half of public spending goes to paying the salaries of around 650,000 public servants—a figure that does not include local authority wages.

Nor does the figure include Tunisia's hefty public companies, which often hold monopolistic positions across sectors from telecoms to air transport and employ at least 150,000 people at the public expense. All this drains resources that the state could be investing in education, health and infrastructure, Vacher said.

"There needs to be a big efficiency drive in the public sector (to meet) public expectations in terms of services," he said. The IMF has long



TUNIS: A Tunisian man waves his country's national flag during protests against President Kais Saied, on the 11th anniversary of the Tunisian revolution in the capital Tunis. —AFP photos

called for a restructuring of Tunisia's system of subsidies on basic goods such as petrol and staple foods, which essentially see more state funds doled out to the biggest consumers—a system Vacher said was unfair.

The lender recommends scrapping subsidies and instead creating a system of targeted cash payments to needy groups. The IMF's recommendations are important as not only could it lend billions more to Tunisia, but other bodies including the European Union have said they

will condition future aid on the global lender's green light.

For Vacher, the biggest responsibility lies in the hands of Tunisia's decision-makers. "It's up to them to act to find solutions, put forward reforms, a vision and an ambition," he said.

While many observers have predicted doom for Tunisia's public finances, Vacher said the situation is "not optimal, but manageable". But "there is an urgent need to make the public finances more sustainable." —AFP

World risks more years of high energy prices, emissions: IEA

PARIS: The world faces more years of high energy prices and emissions unless the electricity sector changes faster after demand hit a record last year, the International Energy Agency said Friday.

The economic recovery from the Covid pandemic, combined with unusual weather conditions, caused electricity demand to jump by more than six percent in 2021, the largest increase since 2010, the IEA said. In absolute terms, the increase of more than 1,500 terawatt-hours was the largest ever, the Paris-based agency said in its semi-annual Electricity Market Report.

This pushed prices to unprecedented levels while emissions from the electricity sector rose by seven percent in 2021 — an all-time high after having decreased the previous two years, the IEA said.

While renewable power experienced "impressive growth", electricity generation from coal and natural gas hit record levels, the report found. "In the absence of faster structural change in the sector, rising demand over the next three years could result in additional market volatility and continued high emissions," the IEA said. IEA executive director Fatih Birol said emissions from electricity must fall by 55 percent by 2030 if the world is to meet a target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

"But in the absence of major policy action from governments, those emissions are set to remain around the same level for the next three years," Birol said in a statement.

"Not only does this highlight how far off track we currently are from a pathway to net zero emissions by 2050, but it also underscores the massive changes needed for the electricity sector to fulfil its critical role in decarbonizing the broader energy system." Birol also warned that high electricity prices "have been causing hardship for many households and businesses around the world and risk becoming a driver of social and political tensions." China accounted for around half of the global growth in electricity demand last year. The country experienced power cuts due to coal shortages—a problem also encountered by India. —AFP

Libya oil, gas exports hit 5-year high of \$21.5bn

TRIPOLI: Libya's lifeline oil and gas exports raised revenues of more than \$21.5 billion in 2021, the highest level in five years, the National Oil Corporation announced Saturday. Total net revenues for oil and gas exports last year amounted to \$21.5 billion as well as 30 million euros in non-dollar sales, the state-run NOC said in a statement.

It said record levels were achieved in November and December, raising a combined \$4.3 billion in the two last months of 2021. "The end of the year 2021 recorded a recovery, and oil prices achieved their largest annual gains since 2016, driven by the recovery of the global economy from the state of stagnation" due to the coronavirus epidemic, NOC chief Mustafa Sanalla said.

Since the 1970s, Libya which sits on the largest known oil reserves in Africa has been heavily dependent on revenues from its hydrocarbon exports. But in a decade of violence since the 2011 revolt that overthrew and killed dictator Muammar Gaddafi, armed groups have frequently blockaded or damaged oil installations.

The shutdowns have forced the NOC to declare force majeure, a legal move allowing it to free itself from contractual obligations in light of factors beyond



The Brega oil port in Marsa Brega, 270 km west of Libya's eastern city of Benghazi. —AFP

its control. Oil production has recovered to 1.2 million barrels per day, as opposed to between 1.5 million and 1.6 million bpd before the NATO-backed uprising of 2011. But Sanalla warned "the ability of the oil sector in Libya to invest and advance the process of infrastruc-

ture modernization will remain weak in the foreseeable future, especially in light of the scarcity of budgets".

"What we need more than ever is to think outside the box and create initiatives to save the infrastructure," he stressed. —AFP

UN warns global economic recovery is losing steam

WASHINGTON: The global economic recovery is facing significant headwinds amid new waves of COVID-19 infections, persistent labor market challenges, lingering supply-chain challenges and rising inflationary pressures. After expanding by 5.5 percent in 2021, the global output is projected to grow by only 4.0 percent in 2022 and 3.5 percent in 2023, according to the United Nations World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2022, which was launched Friday.

The robust recovery in 2021 — driven by strong consumer spending and some uptake in investment, with trade in goods surpassing pre-pandemic levels — marked the highest growth rate in more than four decades, the report highlighted. Yet the momentum for growth — especially in China, the United States and the European Union — slowed considerably by the end of 2021, as the effects of monetary and fiscal stimuli began to recede and major supply-chain disruptions emerged. Rising inflationary pressures in many economies are posing additional risks to recovery.

"In this fragile and uneven period of global recovery, the World Economic Situation and Prospects 2022 calls for better targeted and coordinated policy and financial measures at the national and international levels. The time is now to close the inequality gaps within and among countries. If we work in solidarity — as one human family — we can make 2022 a true year of recovery for people and economies alike," said António Guterres.

Secretary-General of the United Nations. With the highly transmissible Omicron variant of COVID-19 unleashing new waves of infections, the human and economic toll of the pandemic are projected to increase again. "Without a coordinated and sustained global approach to contain COVID-19 that includes universal access to vaccines, the pandemic will continue to pose the greatest risk to an inclusive and sustainable recovery of the world economy," noted Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

The global economy was projected to grow 6.0 percent in 2021 and 4.9



percent in 2022 by the International Monetary Fund. The 2021 global forecast was unchanged from the April 2021 WEO, but with offsetting revisions.

Prospects for emerging market and developing economies have been marked down for 2021, especially for Emerging Asia. By contrast, the forecast for advanced economies is revised up. These revisions reflect

pandemic developments and changes in policy support. The 0.5 percentage-point upgrade for 2022 derives largely from the forecast upgrade for advanced economies, particularly the United States, reflecting the anticipated legislation of additional fiscal support in the second half of 2021 and improved health metrics more broadly across the group.

Business



VIV Terminal opens at Terminal 5, Kuwait International Airport

VIV offers a luxury and private travel experience

KUWAIT: The VIV Terminal commenced its operations at Kuwait International Airport yesterday. VIV is the first private terminal experience to be launched in Kuwait and to offer privacy and exclusivity in a luxury setting when departing and arriving.

Available for departing and arriving passengers traveling on airlines operating from Terminals 1 and 5 and for general aviation and private jets. The VIV Terminal enables passengers to benefit from a private check-in reception and handling services, gourmet la carte meals, private customs and immigration area, luxury amenities, and chauffeured transportation to and from the aircraft in a BMW 7 series limousine. The VIV facility comprises two private suites and a large lounge.


Speaking of the inauguration of services, VIV Terminal General Manager, Laila Al-Mukhtar, said: "The VIV Terminal is the perfect start and end to a business trip or holiday getaway. We make the travel journey easier and faster by ensuring that all airport procedures are taken care of without having to go to any public terminal. Our guests will appreciate the pri-

vacy and safety this service provides.

"The VIV Terminal staff take care of checking in guests, collecting their baggage and catering to their needs while they wait to depart. As well as food and beverages we offer exclusive products from duty free brought to the lounge. When arriving in Kuwait, guests are greeted at the aircraft and chauffeured to the Terminal where they can relax while waiting for their baggage to be collected. Our guests bypass all waiting lines while enjoying the luxury design and amenities of the VIV Terminal."

The VIV Terminal services require reservation 24 hours before the time of departure or arrival of passengers' flights and can be made through the website at www.viv.com.kw. Al-Mukhtar added: "We look forward to welcoming guests traveling on airlines departing and arriving at Terminals 1 and 5 starting today." The VIV Terminal is operated by Kuwait national carrier, Jazeera Airways. Services are presently available for passengers traveling from Terminals 1 and 5 and will be made available to passengers traveling from other terminals at a later stage.





AL SAFAT

شركة الصفاة للاستثمار

AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 13 JANUARY 2022

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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	32,831	8,058.12	4.6%	5.5%	5.5%	633,078,234	234,190,430	27,271	30.3	2.4	75.6%
Main Market	10,593	6,074.49	2.6%	3.2%	3.2%	1,270,257,152	166,879,690	39,540	16.9	1.8	24.4%
All Share	43,425	7,389.50	4.1%	4.9%	4.9%	1,903,335,386	401,070,120	66,811	27.7	2.2	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
BANKS	25,494	1,719.82	4.8%	6.0%	6.0%	369,787,388	155,265,459	14,660	31.9	2.4	58.19%
BASIC MATERIALS	960	1,076.89	4.9%	5.1%	5.1%	10,379,993	5,058,281	1,091	26.2	1.5	2.19%
CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY	766	1,497.73	8.0%	12.1%	12.1%	26,115,384	11,323,184	3,077	15.6	7.6	1.75%
CONSUMER STAPLES	222	730.70	0.7%	-0.1%	-0.1%	2,367,751	1,369,711	243	14.8	1.5	0.51%
ENERGY	299	1,438.42	2.7%	0.7%	0.7%	34,228,017	2,102,907	1,446	12.5	1.5	0.68%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	4,285	1,500.01	4.6%	5.4%	5.4%	945,202,997	131,206,735	23,169	9.3	1.8	9.78%
HEALTH CARE	395	797.27	-0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	16,511	8,450	16	29.1	5.2	0.90%
INDUSTRIALS	4,178	1,180.04	3.9%	3.4%	3.4%	82,837,362	31,081,109	7,814	38.1	1.3	9.54%
INSURANCE	626	1,495.82	-2.5%	-2.5%	-2.5%	6,373,541	1,728,613	408	7.4	1.1	1.43%
REAL ESTATE	2,936	1,367.06	2.5%	3.1%	3.1%	390,071,466	50,148,698	12,697	19.4	1.3	6.70%
TECHNOLOGY	10	719.50	4.0%	5.2%	5.2%	77,059	7,691	18	-	0.9	0.02%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	3,389	1,106.78	1.4%	1.6%	1.6%	28,052,743	10,004,235	1,640	20.7	1.4	7.74%
UTILITIES	250	600.00	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	7,825,174	1,765,046	532	19.4	4.0	0.57%

Top Gainers

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
AGHC	404	44.80	13,830,737	5,187,124	1,259
MARAKEZ	80.8	17.10	28,875,199	2,519,205	1,611
JAZEERA	1,575	14.13	5,819,829	8,980,059	1,633
PAPCO	64.1	13.85	28,995	1,823	18
FTI	61.9	12.96	8,000	455	5

Top Losers

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
ALAQARIA	48.9	-7.39	209,501	10,142	11
MUNSHAAT	67.9	-6.86	1,129,021	78,605	67
SANAM	73.5	-6.01	806,356	60,446	89
EDU	3,400	-5.82	37,754	129,857	151
PAPER	218	-5.63	40,101	8,766	8

Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GFH	107	2.89	269,621,501	28,931,042	3,291
AAYAN	175	8.70	138,673,002	24,013,270	2,362
AUB	285	4.40	134,282,483	37,695,064	1,490
INJAZZAT	102	-1.92	110,719,519	11,926,314	1,978
KPROJ	155	8.39	72,768,486	10,828,293	1,088

Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	899	7.54	57,015,513	49,295,645	4,231
AUB	285	4.40	134,282,483	37,695,064	1,490
GFH	107	2.89	269,621,501	28,931,042	3,291
AAYAN	175	8.70	138,673,002	24,013,270	2,362
NBK	1,052	3.75	21,039,654	21,716,697	1,973

REAL ESTATE 13%

INDUSTRIALS 8%

FINANCIAL SERVICES 33%

CONSUMER STAPLES 0%

ENERGY 1%

CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY 3%


BASIC MATERIALS 1%

BANKS 39%

TELECOM 2%

VALUE TRADED

All Share Price Index YTD



Market Summary:

- The Premier Market Volume and value increased 51% and 63%, respectively. Main market volume and value increased 69% and 87%, respectively.
- Premier and Main indices managed to recover from Omicron and regained their position back. When both indices reached and overcome a very critical resistance level the volume and value increased massively showing great purchasing power which means reaching new high levels.
- Technically, the All-Share index registered a new all-time high-level closing at 7389, support levels at 7318, 7286, and 7249. Premier index registered a new all-time high-level closing at 8058, support levels at 7979, 7938, and 7868. The Main Index closed at 6074, support levels at 6058, 6023, and 5970, while resistance at 6083, 6112, and 6153.

Business

Venezuela: The decline of an oil giant in crisis

Once-flourishing petroleum industry is now on its knees

PUERTO LA CRUZ: Leaks, rusted pipes, pieces of broken equipment scattered about and staircases leading nowhere: Lake Maracaibo's oil field is a metaphor for Venezuela's once-flourishing petroleum industry that is now on its knees.

More than a century ago, the Maracaibo basin in northwestern Zulia state was the birthplace of a business that transformed the country into one of the world's 10 largest oil producers and a Latin American economic heavyweight. By 2008, the country was producing 3.2 million barrels of oil a day.

Just 13 years later, it can only muster 500,000 to one million barrels per day amid a grinding economic crisis marked by years of recession and hyperinflation. Venezuela's gross domestic product per capita is now similar to that of Haiti.

Despite sitting on the world's largest proven oil reserves, the country battles fuel shortages and frequent blackouts, and at one point even had to import fuel from Iran.

The Maracaibo basin was once a flurry of oil activity, with a halo of light over the complex visible at night from a fair distance. Today, it is a humid swamp that stinks of oil from leaking pipes floating on the water. Hardly anyone risks going to that area "for fear of an explosion due to the gases," one fisherman who asked not to be named told AFP.

The oil platforms have long been pillaged of any valuables, including taps and valves that control the flow of oil and gas.

'Families broke up'

It is a sea change from the prosperous 1970s when Venezuela's oil industry was nationalized, giving state-run PDVSA a monopoly. That lasted until the 1990s when the industry was opened to private capital. But after Hugo Chavez came to power in 1999, he ordered all private oil companies to merge with PDVSA and made the state institution the majority shareholder. From then on, the industry was hit by corruption, poor decision-making, problems with maintenance and aging equipment, and later financial sanctions. PDVSA did not immediately respond to requests from AFP for comment for this story.

Many analysts believe the key moment in the industry's decline came in the early 2000s when Chavez, who died in 2013 while still president, became embroiled in an protracted battle with PDVSA executives.

The clash resulted in a crippling strike from December 2002 to March 2003, during which production dropped to a historic low of just 25,000 barrels a day. Blasting the "sabotage" of Venezuela's oil production, Chavez sacked most of PDVSA's management and thousands of employees, replacing them with people "loyal to the revolution" who often lacked the necessary expertise.

Production rebounded after the strike, but by 2009, 70 businesses involved in the supply chain were also nationalized. This resulted in "a lack of maintenance, and a lack of motivation among employees," whose salaries plummeted, said one former employee identified here as Carlos (his name has been changed to protect his anonymity).

He had started working at PDVSA in the early 2000s, when he was just 18. But when the onetime "cash cow" for Venezuela's government encountered hard times, so did its employees. "Many women left their husbands because they no longer worked for PDVSA. Families broke up. I didn't earn enough anymore," said Carlos, who blamed his own divorce on a loss of income. By that time, half of the country's oil wells were paralyzed.

Corruption 'breeding ground'

In 2013, the crisis deepened when subcontractors stopped working due to unpaid bills. Idle employees began spending their days "fishing to feed themselves" as provisions never reached workers on the platforms, recounted Maria, who worked for the company at the time and still does (her name has been changed for this story). The politicization at PDVSA had reached a high point: even computer screensavers at the company used pictures of Chavez, and later, his successor Nicolas Maduro.

"Hiring people based on their politics badly affected production... we got rid of experienced people, and any semblance of meritocracy disappeared,"



PUERTO LA CRUZ, Venezuela: View of an oil refining plant of state-owned Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) in Puerto La Cruz, Anzoategui state, Venezuela. —AFP

said Maria, who asked that AFP not explain the job she performs for PDVSA.

It also created a "breeding ground for corruption," with embezzlement at the highest level, she added. In 2017, authorities launched a vast operation targeting corruption within PDVSA, investigating former managers including the company's ex-president Rafael Ramirez.

"They seize public resources and illegally seek to legalize the capital," Attorney General Tarek William Saab said at the time. Ramirez, now in self-exile in Italy, said the accusations against him are politically driven. Several witnesses with direct knowledge of the situation, including Maria, said PDVSA vehicles were put to private use, company funds were used for personal purchases and even televisions and computers were stolen. But that was nothing new.

'In God's hands now'

"There's old corruption and new corruption," said Carlos Mendoza Pottella, a professor of oil economics at the Central University of Venezuela in Caracas, adding that irregular purchases and illicit practices were already happening in the 1980s. With PDVSA in solid decline, some employees jumped ship and found jobs as taxi drivers or in supermarkets, while engineers and geologists fled abroad in search of opportunities. Maria stayed, however, and works twice a week for a meager 60 bolivars (less than \$15) per month and no benefits. Before, she had a good salary and medical coverage.

"We are in God's hands now," she said. "No oil employee can live off their PDVSA wage," said Maria, except for those employed by "mixed companies"—joint ventures with Chinese or Russian firms. —AFP

Burgan Bank reveals winners of Yawmi account draw

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

The lucky winners are:

- Hamad Abdullah Alateeqi
- Nader Sultan Mahmoud
- Msairah Rahi Alfadhli
- Hamad Mohammed Al-Saad
- Mansour Abbas Almutawaa

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

KPMG records solid growth in FY21 in MESA region

KUWAIT: KPMG International announced annual aggregated revenues for KPMG firms globally of \$32.13 billion for the fiscal year ending 30 September 2021 (FY21). Reporting a 10 percent increase in US dollar revenues from FY20, this follows an extensive period of investment and focus on priority services and solutions addressing the challenges faced by businesses across the globe. Strong growth was achieved across functions: Advisory growing at 17 percent, Audit at 4 percent and Tax & Legal Services at 8 percent.

The aggregate revenue of KPMG member firms in the Middle East & South Asia (MESAi) region grew by 7.8 percent in US dollar terms for FY21, more than doubling the growth rate achieved in the previous year. The positive results demonstrate the deep and impactful investments that KPMG firms in the MESA region have been making

in people, technology, solutions and alliances.

Commenting on the region's performance, Nader Haffar, Chairman of KPMG MESA said "Throughout the unpredictability of recent months, our priorities have remained steadfast: we are working closely with our global network and strategic alliances, particularly in the technology space, to deliver more composite value-led propositions to our clients and meet their business needs amidst increasing digital disruption. Opportunities lie at the crux of every challenge and we remain laser-focused on leveraging them for our clients."

He added, "With environmental, social and governance (ESG) moving upwards on the business agenda, we are making a positive impact on the communities where we operate. The foundation for our future growth is built on our commitment to diversity and inclusion across our firms. As the MESA region enters a new era of growth and progress, we continue to drive transformation across industries, and to deliver quality across all core functions, be it audit, tax or advisory."

Dr Rasheed Al-Qenae, Managing Partner of KPMG in Kuwait said: "KPMG in Kuwait, along with the other member firms in the Middle East and South Asia

(MESA) region, played a key role in driving the financial success of the KPMG MESA region in FY21, doubling its growth rate compared with the previous financial year. While there is no denying that the teams worked tirelessly to help KPMG in Kuwait meet its goals, it is also important to recognize the crucial investments that were made with regard to people, technology and environmental, social and governance (ESG) to help keep the firm growing amid the uncertainty in the business scenario brought upon by the pandemic. It is important to identify that the markets are changing dynamically and so are clients' requirements - and, as disruption-led changes look to shape the new reality, the firm remains driven by its values and focused on its commitments to continue making a difference and stay on the growth trajectory."

"The year 2021 changed how business was done. Organizations were increasingly shifting their focus toward environmental, social and governance (ESG) matters while the people's expectations from larger corporations to address global as well as societal challenges skyrocketed. It was imperative that businesses reconsidered their approach and incorporated ESG-related matters into their corporate strategies.

US bill aims to end China's 'chokehold' on rare earth supplies

WASHINGTON: Two US senators have proposed a law aiming to end China's alleged "chokehold" on rare-earth metal supplies, a statement by the lawmakers said Friday.

The law-proposed by Democrat Mark Kelly and Republican Tom Cotton-would aim to ensure the United States can guarantee its supplies of rare-earth minerals. "The Chinese Communist Party has a chokehold on global rare-earth element supplies, which are used in everything from batteries to fighter jets," Cotton said in the statement.

"Ending America's dependence on the CCP for extraction and processing of these elements is critical to winning the strategic competition against China and protecting our national security," he said.

Eighty percent of the United States' rare-earth imports in 2019 were from China, according to the United States Geological Survey (USGS). The bill aims to "protect America from the threat of rare-earth element supply disruptions, encourage domestic production of those elements, and reduce our reliance on China", the statement said.

The law would require the departments of the Interior and Defense to create a "strategic reserve" of rare earth minerals by 2025. That reserve would be tasked with responding to the needs of the army, the tech sector and other essential infrastructure "for one year in the event of a supply disruption".

It also aims to ensure greater transparency on the use of rare-earth minerals from China in "sophisticated" defense equipment, and urges the Commerce Department to investigate Beijing's "unfair trade practices" and impose higher customs duties accordingly. —AFP

US industrial output slows in December

WASHINGTON: A downturn in the US manufacturing sector in the final month of 2021, notably the hard-hit auto sector, caused overall industrial output to dip in December, the Federal Reserve said Friday. Industrial production slipped 0.1 percent, surprising economists expecting a modest increase, as manufacturing fell 0.3 percent in the month, according to the data.

Amid the ongoing shortage of key computer chips that has hampered auto manufacturing, motor vehicles and parts fell 1.3 percent in December and was about six percent lower than a year earlier, the Fed said.

That decline ended a two-month streak of gains and offered "a sign that the sector's travails are far from over," said Kathy Bostjancic of Oxford Economics. Despite the downbeat end to the year, industrial output is 3.7 higher than in December 2020, the report said.

Bostjancic said that "solid demand will keep industrial production growing strongly in 2022."

However, she cautioned that "industrial supply chains will continue to face a difficult operating environment this year; the latest surge in (COVID-19) cases already looks to be exacerbating labor problems."

Rising oil prices helped push the mining sector up two percent compared to November, and output was 11 percent higher than the final month of 2020.

However, the Fed noted, "the index for mining in December was about 6 percent below its pre-pandemic level." Utilities dropped 1.5 percent in December, which "primarily resulted from a drop in the output of gas utilities, as warmer-than-normal temperatures reduced demand for heating."

Output in the sector is 3.4 percent below the year-ago level, the report said.

Retail sales

As the Omicron variant began spreading, American consumers dialed back spending at a range of retail outlets during the December holiday shopping season, according to government data released Friday.

Retail sales fell 1.9 percent in the final month of the year, the Commerce Department said, against analysts' expectations for them to be flat for the month. And November's slight sales growth was revised even lower. The sales slump came as the US economy was grappling with high inflation that has pushed up prices for a range of goods, and as infections caused by the Omicron variant of COVID-19 began rising, creating a new challenge for businesses.

"Omicron is doing meaningful economic damage," Mark Zandi of Moody's Analytics said on Twitter. "Based on credit card data, holiday sales were gangbusters through the



MIAMI, US: In this file photo, people walk by the Louis Vuitton store in Miami, Florida. As the Omicron variant began spreading, US consumers dialed back spending at a range of retail outlets during the December holiday shopping season. —AFP

first week of the month. Then Omicron infections came on, and sales promptly slumped." A wide range of retail outlets saw sales decline last month, including furniture and home furnishings stores, where they fell 5.5 percent, and nonstore retailers such as e-commerce businesses, where sales fell 8.7 percent.

With their inventories reduced by the shortage of semiconductors, motor vehicles and parts dealers reported a 0.4 percent dip, while sporting goods and hobby stores saw

a 4.3 percent drop. Despite the downbeat end to the year, sales were 19.3 percent higher in 2021 than the year before, when the US economy was still battling COVID-19 without the aid of vaccines.

Companies that saw growth last month include building materials and garden equipment dealers, where sales rose 0.9 percent, health and personal care stores, where they grew 0.5 percent, and miscellaneous store retailers, where they increased 1.8 percent. — AFP

Business

AL-SHALL WEEKLY ECONOMIC REPORT

Kuwait's real estate liquidity grew to KD3.9 billion in 2021

Banking sector off to a buoyant start in 2022

KUWAIT: According to the data available at the ministry of Justice —Real Estate Registration and Authentication Department — after excluding both the craft activity and the coastal strip system — real estate market liquidity for 2021 reached KD 3.936 billion, 63.8 percent higher than 2020 liquidity recorded at KD 2.403 billion.

The liquidity of the second half of 2021 was KD 1.998 billion and slightly higher than first half liquidity at KD 1.938 billion, indicating the stability of liquidity movement throughout the year (2021). Liquidity movement between November and December 2021 was stable and amounted to KD 315.1 million for the former and KD 294.3 million for the latter, down by -6.6 percent.

The real estate market began to rise in 2007, reaching KD 4.447 billion liquidity which quickly declined in 2008 -the global financial crisis year- and the decline continued in 2009 and reached the lowest level in the last 15 years when it reached KD 1.878 billion. It recovered again in 2010 and continued to 2014 and registered its highest level for the period (2007-2021) at KD 4.992 billion. The decline in liquidity level began in 2015 when oil prices dropped sharply and scored KD 3.318 billion. This decline continued in 2016 and reached KD 2.493 billion when oil prices reached a very low level. That decline continued in 2017 despite the improvement in oil prices, when real estate liquidity reached KD 2.382 billion. Liquidity rose again to KD 3.631 billion in 2018 but declined again in 2019 and witnessed a greater decline in 2020 at KD 2.403 billion as a result of the pandemic repercussions. The real estate market liquidity rebounded in 2021 recovering from the pandemic and reached KD 3.936 billion as mentioned previously. This represents an absolute rise of KD 1.533 billion versus 2020 liquidity.

Liquidity of the private residential activity increased by 104.2 percent in 2021 compared to 2020, as its volume in contracts and agencies reached KD 2.956 billion; contributing to 75.1 percent of the market liquidity (60.2 percent for 2020). The residential investment activity liquidity also increased to KD 779.1 million, a 60 percent growth rate compared to 2020, with a slight decrease to 19.8 percent in its contribution to market liquidity (20.3 percent of market liquidity in 2020). Private and investment residential accounted for 94.9 percent of real estate market liquidity in 2021, leaving 5.1 percent of liquidity for commercial and warehousing activity. Trading of the commercial activity decreased to KD 181.6 million, a -59.5 percent decrease, and its contribution to total market liquidity declined to 4.6 percent in 2021 (18.7 percent for 2020).

The average value per deal for the private

residential activity increased in 2021 to KD 326.8 thousand versus KD 306.2 thousand in 2020. Likewise, the average per transaction of investment residential activity slightly increased to KD 703.2 thousand versus KD 700.7 thousand. While the average value of a single deal for commercial activity decreased to KD 2.1 million down from KD 3.3 million in 2020, the overall average per deal in the real estate sector trading decreased by -11 percent in 2021.

Banking sector

The Kuwaiti banking sector started 2021 with a market value of 50.3 percent of total market value of all listed companies on Boursa Kuwait. As a result of the rise in the banking sector index during 2021 by 28.6 percent, in addition to the rise in the Premier Market index by 26.2 percent and the All-Share Market index by 27 percent, Kuwaiti banks contribution in Boursa Kuwait market value slightly increased in total market value to 50.8 percent as on December 31st 2021. While the Kuwaiti banking sector contributed 51.9 percent to Boursa Kuwait's liquidity in 2020, its liquidity contribution reached 28.7 percent in 2021 due to the directed liquidity to other sectors, most notably the financial services, industrial and real estate, as these sectors acquired a total of 53.7 percent of Boursa Kuwait's liquidity, compared to 25.6 percent for 2020. This means that Boursa's liquidity tends to balance or spread fairly on its listed companies. Its direction to low priced companies may gradually bridge the gap between their low market prices and high book values, and this is a positive trend.

Part of the banking sector's popularity and its superior performance is due to the stability of foreign ownership in it, foreigners' ownership rose slightly in 2021 to 11.80 percent versus 11.47 percent in 2020, despite the repercussions of the pandemic in 2021. About 97.5 percent of the foreigners' ownerships in the sector were concentrated in four banks. Their ownership value in the "National Bank of Kuwait" at the end of last December was KD 1.490 billion (20.76 percent ownership), outperforming both in absolute and relative ownership. While the value of their absolute ownership in "Kuwait Finance House" exceeded KD 728 million, becoming the second in ownership value; their relative ownership in it reached 10.34 percent or in the third- place. Boubyan Bank came third in terms of the absolute ownership value with KD 132.2 million and their relative ownership in it amounted to 5.23 percent, coming in the fourth - place. The "Gulf Bank" comes fourth in terms of absolute ownership by KD 105.6 million, and relative ownership by foreigners at 12.46 percent, i.e. in the second-place.

Foreign indirect investment is supported by two factors: the first is the stable currency exchange rate of the Kuwaiti dinar moving against the US dollar within narrow limits, which essentially limits the risks of exchange rate movement; the second is the soundness of the banking sector. The preferences come within the sector's units according to their diligence in analyzing the conditions of each unit. While the local investor was more apprehensive and perhaps higher in subordination to the foreign investor in 2020, the local investor became more confident in his/her local Boursa and less subordinated to the foreign investor in 2021. As a result, local investors' contribution to Boursa Kuwait's liquidity increased from 73.5 percent in 2020 to 85.8 percent in 2021. The return of some balance to the liquidity of Boursa Kuwait is attributed to the activity of the local investor. This was reflected in the increase in his contribution to liquidity as mentioned above, and this new liquidity was directed to the rest of

American market and its impact on the rest of the global markets are very heavy, and the comprehensive index of North & South Americas rose by 11.8 percent. The "MSCI" comprehensive index for Europe rose by 1.8 percent, and the same index -excluding the UK- rose by 2.1 percent. The performance of Asia was negative and completely opposite to the performance of 2020, as the "MSCI" index for Asia/Pacific decreased by -7.6 percent compared to an increase in 2020 by 17.1 percent, also the Japanese index decreased by -0.8 percent. The world market index rose by 0.4 percent when excluding the USA, this reflects the weight of the American market in the composition of the index as mentioned above. The performance of the Boursa Kuwait, according to the Al-Shall index, came fourth with a 27.8 percent increase compared to a -11.9 percent decrease and in the thirteenth place among these markets in 2020. It should be noted that the average rise of the markets included in the graph amounted to

cent decrease at the end of 2020. The Jordanian market came next with an increase of 27.8 percent, after a - 8.7 percent decrease at the end of 2020.

GCC stock exchange liquidity 2021

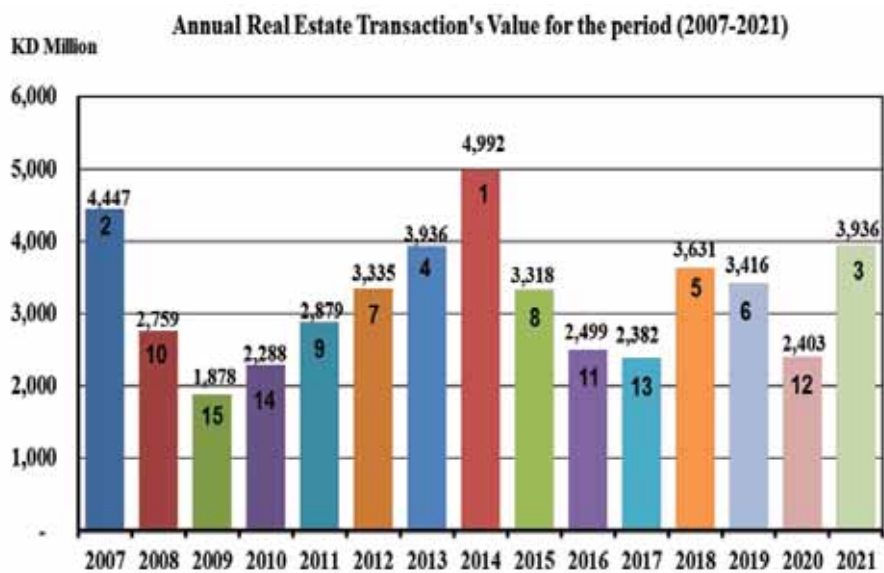
Total liquidity of the seven GCC stock exchanges increased from \$657.5 billion for 2020 to \$792.2 billion for 2021, ie a 20.5 percent growth. The majority of the increase in liquidity came from the increase in absolute liquidity of the Abu Dhabi market. The increase in liquidity was comprehensive for most of the seven stock exchanges as six markets achieved increases, some of which are substantial, and one market achieved a drop in its liquidity. All Gulf stock exchanges achieved gains compared with their indices at the end of 2020.

The highest relative increase in liquidity was for the Abu Dhabi market, increasing by 407.8 percent compared to 2020 liquidity, and its index achieved the highest gains in the region at 68.2 percent. The second highest relative increase was achieved by the Muscat Stock Exchange, by 85.5 percent. This rise in liquidity resulted in the second-lowest gains in the region by 12.9 percent. The Boursa Kuwait achieved the third-highest relative increase by 28.1 percent, and its All-Share Market index rose by 27 percent, ie the fourth highest rise in indices growth. The Dubai market was the fourth market that increased its liquidity by 10.4 percent with its index gaining 28.2 percent, which is the third-highest gainer. The liquidity of the Saudi market (the region's largest market) increased by 7.1 percent, and its index achieved the second-highest rise by 29.8 percent. The last market to increase in liquidity was the Qatar stock market by 6.6 percent, and its index achieved the least gains by 11.4 percent.

The only decrease in liquidity was for Bourse Bahrain, whose liquidity lost -8 percent during 2021 and its index contradicted the path of its liquidity and rose by 20.6 percent. This means that six markets in the region were in agreement between high liquidity and high indices, while in one market the liquidity path differed from the index path.

The weekly performance of Boursa Kuwait

The performance of Boursa Kuwait for last week was more active, where the traded value, traded volume, number of transactions and the general index (AlShall Index) increased. AlShall Index (value weighted) closed at 658.5 points as of last Thursday, showing an increase by 28.3 points or by 4.5 percent compared with its level last week. It remained higher by 35.7 points or by 5.7 percent compared with the end of 2021.



the sectors, which reduced the relative liquidity of the banking sector. If this feature continues in 2022 trading, the conditions of the stock exchange may become healthier, especially if liquidity is directed to 50 percent of listed companies that only contributed to 4.4 percent of Boursa Kuwait's liquidity in 2021.

Boursa Kuwait performance vs global markets 2021

The positive performance of the majority of the world's market indices continued during 2021 as in 2020, as the "MSCI" index for the world gained 8.6 percent by the end of 2021, compared to a greater increase for the same index in 2020 by 10.6 percent, the rise included the "MSCI" index of the USA that rose by 12.7 percent. The weight of the

17.2 percent at the end of 2021, compared to a decline of -1.8 percent at the end of 2020.

Regarding the performance of 12 Middle-Eastern selected financial markets, all markets achieving positive growth. Boursa Kuwait ranked fourth among 12 financial markets in the Middle East in the gains of its index according to the Al- Shall index, without adjusting for the impact of the currencies exchange rate against the US dollar. The unweighted growth/loss rate for the indices of those markets reached 18.1 percent after a -3.2 percent decline in 2020.

The Saudi market achieved the first position during 2021, with an increase of 29.8 percent after an increase of 3.6 percent at the end of 2020. The UAE market came second with a 28.2 percent increase after a -9.9 per-

Huawei teaches you how to train like an Olympic champion

Huawei's health and fitness plan

Since 2015, the concept of health management has become increasingly popular. As people pay more and more attention to their health, the demand for health monitoring of smart devices is becoming stronger. Huawei put forward the concept of active health management in 2018, using its leading technology capabilities to provide users with top notch active health detection management services. This is also in line with Huawei's vision: "Committed to bringing the digital world to everyone, every family, and every organization, and build a smart world with all things connected."



As one of the important means of daily health management for people, running training also has a lower entry requirement and can be benefit to most users. Therefore, Huawei focused on investing in running projects. Huawei's strategy for health and fitness does not stop here.

In scientific running training, Huawei has established its position with Huawei TruSport. Technology can play a much greater role in health and fitness management. Many seemingly irregular and unpredictable motion states can become very clear and predictable under the analysis of big data and other technologies. With the capabilities of Huawei TruSport, Huawei will likely further develop new technologies in health and fitness. As what Huawei Consumer Business Group CEO, Richard Yu, said "Technology should serve people, and we will continue to use the power of technology to protect everyone's health."

NBK Money Markets report

US inflation hits 39-year high

KUWAIT: US consumer prices saw the largest 12-month gain since 1982, weakening Americans purchasing power and setting the stage for the US Federal Reserve to begin hiking interest rates in March. The consumer price index climbed 7 percent in 2021, marking the largest yearly gain in 39 years. On a monthly basis, the gauge rose 0.5 percent from November, exceeding forecasts. The core figure, which excludes volatile food and energy components, also saw a larger than forecasted figure of 0.6 percent monthly and 5.5 percent yearly. The yearly core figure marked the biggest advance since 1991. The increase in CPI was largely attributed to higher prices for shelter, food and used vehicles. Energy prices fell last month after proving to be the main driver of inflation through most of 2021.

Looking at the US Federal Reserve, the inflation data reinforces expectations that the central bank will begin raising interest rates in March. The move would demonstrate a sharp policy adjustment from the Fed's timeline just a few months ago, proving the stubbornness of high inflation amid record demand for goods alongside constraints in both labor and material. On the other hand, the unemployment rate now sits below 4 percent, leaving some policy members voicing the opinion to begin shrinking the Fed's balance sheet soon after raising rates. In terms of the Fed's dual mandate - inflation & employment - the central bank appears on path to hike in March. Markets were last seen pricing in an 84 percent chance for a 0.25bps hike in March - largely unchanged following the CPI report.

The greenback recovered some of its losses on Friday though still ended the week 0.60 percent lower. Meanwhile the euro and sterling gained 0.56 percent and 0.65 percent, respectively.

PPI rise less than expected

Meanwhile, data on producer prices

provided hints of steadying inflation with data released lower than expectations. The producer price index increased 0.2 percent on a monthly basis following a 1 percent jump in November, and 9.7 percent yearly. Meanwhile, the core figure that excludes volatile food and energy components climbed 0.5 percent m/m and 8.3 percent y/y. The mixed report reveals overall elevated inflation, however underlying price pressures are moderating. Nevertheless, producers are continuing to face materials shortages, limited labor, and transportation bottlenecks.

Omicron sends jobless claims higher

The number of Americans filing claims for unemployment benefits increased to an eight-week high amid a surge in Omicron cases that has disrupted activity from airlines to schools. Initial claims jumped to total 230,000 last week, above expectations however still remaining low compared to pandemic averages. Although the figure rose unexpectedly for the second straight week, the underlying trend is still falling. When looking at continuing claims tracking the total number of Americans claiming benefits on regular state programs, the figure fell to its lowest since 1973 at 1.559 million.

Lagarde maintains stance

In Europe, ECB President Christine Lagarde reiterated on Friday the central bank's commitment to price stability. Lagarde noted the drivers of inflation are expected to ease over the course of 2022, adding that the ECB will take any measures necessary to ensure delivery on the inflation target of 2.0 percent over the medium-term, and that monetary accommodation is still needed to reach that goal. While the bank remains confident that inflation will fall this year, price growth hit 5 percent last month - more than twice the bank's 2 percent target. Lagarde on Friday said "We understand that rising prices are a concern for many people, and we take that concern very seriously."

Kuwaiti dinar

USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30205.

KUWAIT: For the human body, running is actually a complicated activity. From swinging limbs externally to internal organ circulation, every breath and every step involves the coordinated work of hundreds of muscles and dozens of circulatory systems. This process can be described as a battle, with the precise coordination of all parts of the body, our feet can be temporarily off the ground and our arms can embrace the wind.

The body will develop certain type of habits after training for a long period of time, which will make you more comfortable when running. But when you want to further improve your running ability, it is necessary to break the habits of the current body and form new habits to improve performance. However, sudden changes in training may disrupt the rhythm of our body systems and make it difficult to adapt and injuries may follow one after another. Just like a mechanical watch, even if only one cog is



damaged, the watch may become inaccurate or even stop functioning.

To overcome the difficulties, there are two requirements. The first is to collect the body data generated by different people in different motion states and in different environments. The second is to collect these data for scientific analysis and present accurate and easy-to-understand interpretations.

The first requirement is to invite enough people to participate in the test, simulate the environments, and collect accurate data. The second requirement requires a team of professionals who understand the health and fitness



Italian fashion designer Kean Etro (Front right) acknowledges applause with his models at the end of the presentation of Etro's Men's Fall/Winter 2022/2023 fashion collection yesterday.

Men's fashion week in Milan eyes dressing for post-COVID excursions

Fitted frock coats, bow ties and exuberant colors graced the runway as Dolce & Gabbana and Fendi both imagined more glamorous, post-pandemic wardrobes for their fall/winter collections at the Milan men's fashion week. Designer Silvia Venturini Fendi took inspiration from the 1920s dandy at her fashion house's show on Saturday, punctuating refinement with touches of eccentricity. Blazers were transformed into capes, knitwear featured sizeable chest cutouts and the accessories veered towards the flashy.

The collection also aimed for a more fluid interpretation of typically gendered clothes, with wide-leg pants ballooning

into half-skirts. "We women wear men's jackets, I do not see why they could not take inspiration from our wardrobe," said the designer, the granddaughter of the Italian fashion house's founders. At Sicilian duo Dolce & Gabbana's show, casual and sartorial styles mixed in a celebration of returning to the great outdoors.

Tailored to appeal to a younger generation, the show featured rap and punk music orchestrated by Machine Gun Kelly. Models wore loose-fitting coats with leopard or zebra prints, white suits embroidered with pearls or tight-fitting pants and tuxedos with wide shoulders and a cinched waist. Others were

wrapped up in thick, oversized down jackets in bold colors or eco-friendly furs, ready to face the winter cold during post-COVID excursions.

And like at Fendi, the skirt featured as part of the male wardrobe, with the designer duo citing young people's ability to choose their clothes freely, without worrying about gender. Both shows carried on despite the disruption sown across Europe by the surging Omicron variant, which has curtailed the fashion week calendar. After Giorgio Armani announced its withdrawal, the number of physical shows was reduced from 23 to 16. Eighteen brands opted for a purely virtual presence, while others presented their collec-

tions by appointment.

Still, those that went ahead, like Dsquared2 on Friday, embraced the return to the catwalk. In their first live show in two years - attended by football star Zlatan Ibrahimovic - the Canadian twins behind the label displayed a festival of bright yellows, pinks, reds and blues alongside floral patterns, sequins and crystal embroidery. With a glimmer of hope and much enthusiasm, Dsquared2's globe-trotting styles were a nod to getting out of the cocoon and going on a long-awaited trip. — AFP



A guest poses as he arrives to attend the presentation of Etro's Men's Fall/Winter 2022/2023 fashion collection yesterday in Milan.



A guest arrives to attend the presentation of Etro's Men's Fall/Winter 2022/2023 fashion collection in Milan.



Models present creations for Etro's Men's Fall/Winter 2022/2023 fashion collection in Milan. —AFP photos

Roman villa housing Caravaggio up for auction amid legal dispute

A Roman villa housing the only mural by Caravaggio and at the centre of a legal battle between a former Playboy model and the sons of her late husband, an Italian prince, will go up for auction tomorrow. The sprawling property, valued at 471 million euros (almost \$540



A general view of the Casino dell'Aurora di Villa Ludovisi Boncompagni, in Rome.

million), is a Baroque jewel with gorgeous gardens and a valuable art collection that also includes frescoes by Guercino.

Art lovers are demanding the Italian state step in to buy the spectacular property, arguing that artistic treasures should be protected and available for public viewing.

But the government might not have enough to cough up for it - the auction is only open to those who can put up 10 percent of the starting price of 353 million euros - and rumoured buyers include Bill Gates and the Sultan of Brunei.

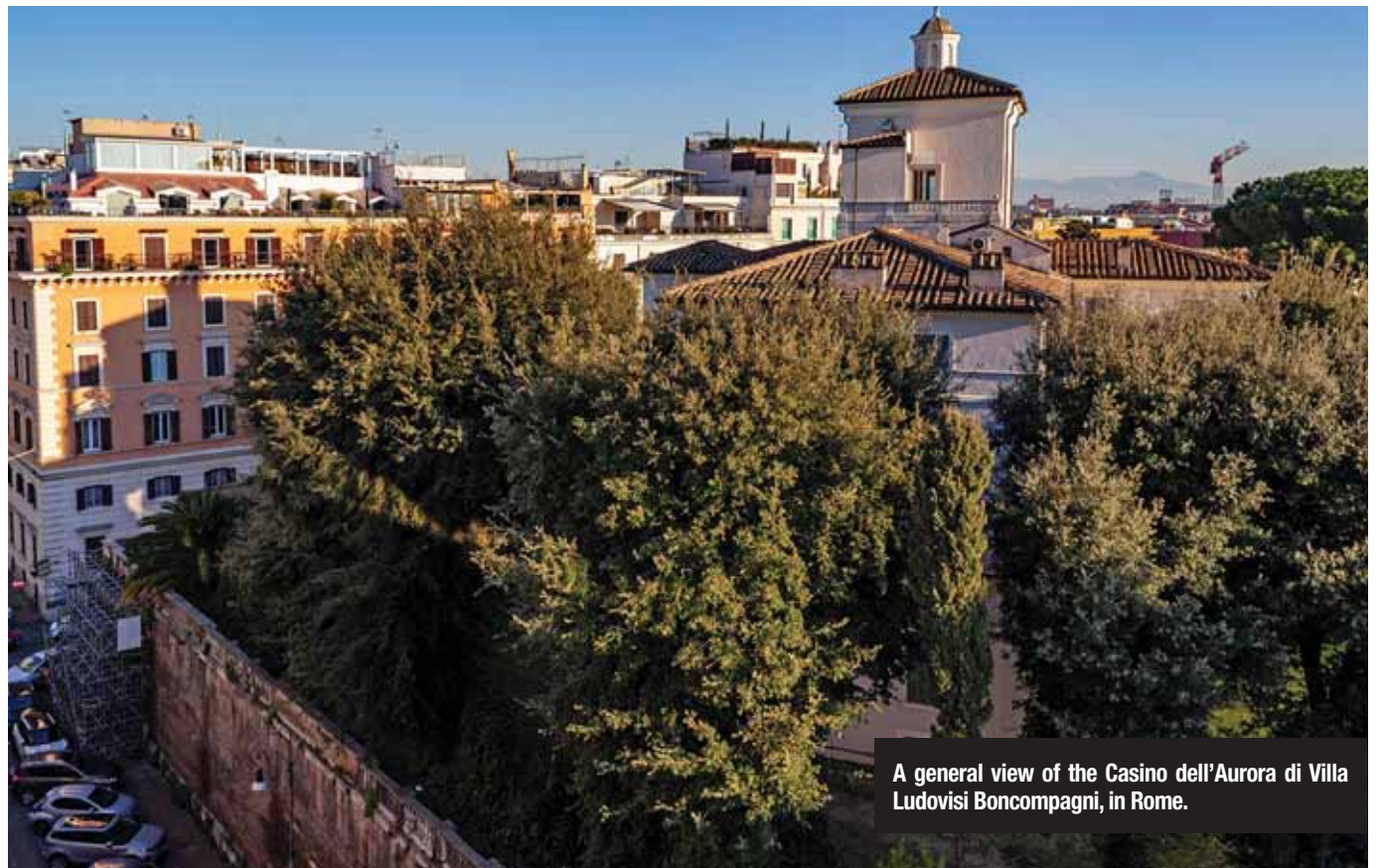
The auction was ordered by a Rome court following a dispute among the heirs of Prince Nicolo Ludovisi Boncompagni, the head of the family who died in 2018. The dispute is between the prince's third and final wife, Rita Jenrette Boncompagni Ludovisi, a 72-year-old American former real estate broker and actor who once posed for Playboy, and the children from his first marriage.

Auction of the century

The residence of the noble Ludovisi Boncompagni family for hundreds of years, the 2,800-square-metre (30,000 square feet) Casino dell'Aurora is located in central Rome between the Via Veneto and the Spanish Steps. Its sale is being held behind closed doors, and has been dubbed by Italian media as the "auction of the century" in its breathless reporting on the legal wrangling around it and who could buy it.

There are those who believe the cultural gem should be preserved for the nation. Almost 35,000 people have called on the Italian government to exercise "its pre-emptive right" to buy the building and the Caravaggio, which alone is valued at 350 million euros, according to a petition on change.org. "Sign this petition to prevent another piece of Italy, such a beautiful one, from being sold off," it said.

However, the estimated price of the villa represents a quarter of the annual budget of the culture ministry. Culture Minister Dario Franceschini wrote this month to Prime Minister Mario Draghi and the



A general view of the Casino dell'Aurora di Villa Ludovisi Boncompagni, in Rome.

finance minister to raise the issue of the sale, according to reports. Under Italian law, the government can only exercise its pre-emptive rights after the sale to a private individual, and then within 60 days of the sale's competition - and for the same price.

'Beautiful, important building'

The oil mural by Caravaggio - real name Michelangelo Merisi - dates to 1597 and is located on the ceiling in a corridor

on the first floor of the palace. It depicts Jupiter, Pluto and Neptune with the world at the centre, marked by signs of the zodiac. "It's certainly one of his earliest (works) and is very interesting because the subject is a mythological subject, and Caravaggio painted almost only sacred works," art historian Claudio Strinati told AFP.

The palace was originally an outbuilding in the grounds of the Villa Ludovisi, of which nothing remains today. Its name comes from a Guercino fresco depicting

the goddess Aurora, or Dawn, on her chariot. "It is a very beautiful, very important building, with some very beautiful paintings," said Strinati, a former museum curator in Rome. "It would certainly be a positive thing if it became public property, it could become the home of a museum or particularly important cultural activities." The auction is due to start tomorrow at 3:00 pm (1400 GMT) and will last 24 hours. — AFP

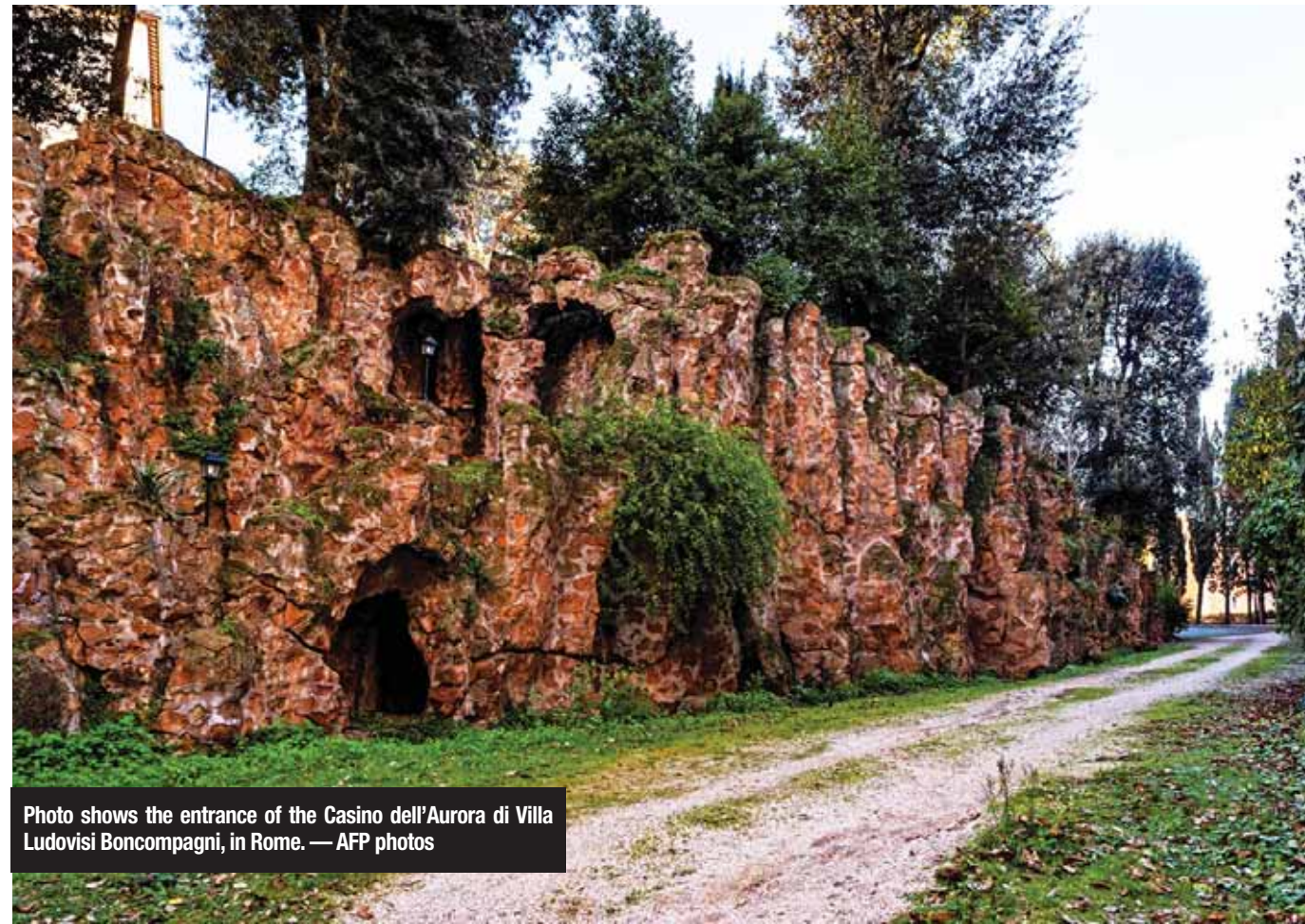


Photo shows the entrance of the Casino dell'Aurora di Villa Ludovisi Boncompagni, in Rome. — AFP photos



Photo shows the Casino dell'Aurora di Villa Ludovisi Boncompagni, in Rome. A Roman palace housing the only mural by Caravaggio and at the centre of a messy legal battle between a former Playboy model and the sons of her late husband, an Italian prince, will go up for auction tomorrow.

Italian fashion pioneer Nino Cerruti dies at 91

Pioneering Italian fashion designer Nino Cerruti, who introduced "casual chic" into men's fashion and in his heyday dressed Hollywood stars, has died at the age of 91. He died at the Vercelli hospital in the northwest region of Piedmont, where he had been admitted for a hip operation, the Italian daily Corriere della Sera reported on its website. "A giant



Italian fashion designer Nino Cerruti

among Italian entrepreneurs has left us," said Gilberto Pichetto, deputy minister for economic development.

Cerruti, who created the first deconstructed jacket in the 1970s, was one of the leading figures in men's ready-to-wear fashion in the 20th century, with a look that was at once stylish and relaxed. "I want men more free in their elegance, more elegant in their freedom," he once said. Tall and slim, Cerruti always insisted on being the first to try on his creations, many of which he kept stored away at the woollen mill his grandfather founded in the northern town of Biella in 1881. "I have always dressed the same person-myself," he once said.

'Italy's chicest man'

Born in 1930 in Biella, Cerruti dreamt of becoming a journalist. But after his father died when he was 20, he was forced to give up his philosophy studies to take over the family textile factory. In the 1960s, he met Giorgio Armani and hired him as a creator of men's fashion. The duo made a profound mark on the world of fashion, before Armani branched out with his own fashion house in 1975. On Saturday, Carlo Capasa, head of the National Chamber of Italian Fashion, mourned the passing of "Italy's chicest man". He called the designer, often seen at his fashion shows in his

signature yellow jumper, "a great innovator, a visionary creative and a forerunner of many realities today" in fashion.

"He leaves behind a great legacy: the courage to invest and believe in youth. He



In this file photo, Italian fashion designer Nino Cerruti rides his bike on the Promenade des Anglais in Nice on March 09, 1985.

— AFP photos

was the one who believed in a very young Giorgio Armani." Armani himself told Corriere della Sera of his great sadness at the news. "Nino had a piercing gaze, a true curiosity, a capacity to dare," he said. Cerruti opened his first shop in Paris in 1967, launching his luxury brand on the path to global fame. "Clothes only exist from the moment someone puts them on. I would like these clothes to continue to live, to soak up life," he said.

'Philosopher of clothing'

As French students rose up in revolt in May 1968, he revolutionized fashion by asking male and female models to walk down the catwalk in the same clothes. "Trousers have given women freedom," he said. He created his first line of women's clothing in the 1970s, a branch of the business that two decades later would account for a fifth of its revenue. He then moved into perfumes, watches, shoes and jewelry. The man nicknamed the "philosopher of clothing" dressed American actors Richard Gere and Robert Redford as well as French star Jean-Paul Belmondo.

He also made cameo appearances in Hollywood films "Cannes Man" (1996) and "Holy Man" (1998). In the 1990s, his fashion house was asked to be the official designer of the Ferrari Formula 1 team. Struggling to keep up with the highly competitive world of luxury fashion as an independent business, he sold his label "Cerruti 1881" to Italian investors in 2001. It was then taken over by a US investment fund, and then by the Chinese group Trinity. After the sale, he returned to the family home in Biella. — AFP

Celine Dion cancels N America tour due to health troubles

Quebec superstar Celine Dion announced on Saturday she would not be able to perform the North America leg of her "Courage world tour," citing persistent health problems. "I was really hoping that I'd be good to go by now, but I suppose I just have to be more patient," the singer wrote on Twitter. After a pause due to the pandemic, Dion had been scheduled to resume her world tour in November 2021 with a slate of performances in Las Vegas.

Those dates were canceled in October after she began "experiencing severe and persistent muscle spasms," she said at the time on Twitter. The singer had hoped to continue the tour in March, starting in Denver and traveling over two months to 15 other cities across the United States and Canada. Those dates are now also canceled, due to "her recovery taking longer than she hoped," explained Dion's management in a press release accompanying her tweet.

According to the statement, Dion had performed 52 shows as part of her Courage World Tour before the beginning of the pandemic, and she still plans to perform the European leg beginning May 25 in Birmingham, England. "I'll be so glad to get back to full health, as well as all of us getting past this pandemic," said the star, thanking her fans for their support. "I feel your love and support and it means the world to me." — AFP

Australian bowlers destroy England again to win Ashes

Rampant Australia seal a one-sided series 4-0

News in brief

PSG extend Ligue 1 lead

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe scored the opening goal as Paris Saint-Germain saw off Brest 2-0 at the Parc des Princes on Saturday to stretch their lead at the top of Ligue 1 to 11 points. Mauricio Pochettino's men, who missed out on the title last season to Lille, had drawn four of their five previous league games before second-placed Nice closed to within eight points by beating Nantes 2-1 on Friday. PSG also remain without Lionel Messi, who is still recovering after testing positive for Covid-19, while the injured Neymar watched on from the stands. But the capital giants had little trouble in swatting aside Brest as Mbappe made it 10 goals in his last six appearances. "The most important thing is to have had chances, and good situations," said PSG coach Pochettino. "We might have liked to win by a bigger margin. Players will be able to score next time." — AFP

Betis v Sevilla abandoned

MADRID: A Copa del Rey match between rivals Sevilla and Real Betis was abandoned on Saturday after Sevilla's Joan Jordan was struck on the head by an object thrown from the crowd. After a stoppage of around 45 minutes at the Benito Villamarin, the Spanish federation (RFEF) confirmed the last-16 game had been abandoned, with the score at 1-1. Jordan did not appear seriously hurt. "The Copa del Rey knock-out match between Real Betis and Sevilla is suspended. The RFEF condemns all acts of violence on the pitch," the federation said in a statement. It will now be up to the federation to decide whether the game gets replayed or restarted, and how many Betis fans are allowed to attend. One option is for the match to be played behind closed doors. Nabil Fekir had just equalized for Betis in the 39th minute, scoring straight from a corner, when a long object thrown from the stand at the Benito Villamarin hit Jordan. — AFP

Ghana's Tetteh banned

YAOUNDE: Ghana striker Benjamin Tetteh will serve a three-match suspension after punching an opponent during a mass brawl following Friday's 1-1 draw with Gabon at the Africa Cup of Nations. Tensions boiled over as Ghana were enraged by a late equaliser that Gabon scored after opting not to return the ball when the Black Stars put it out of play after their midfielder Daniel-Kofi Kyereh went down injured. After a shoving match broke out on the pitch at full-time, Tetteh took a swing at Gabon's Aaron Boupendza and was later shown a red card by the referee. CAF on Saturday said it had decided to suspend Tetteh for one additional match on top of his automatic two-game ban. He will miss Ghana's must-win clash against Comoros tomorrow. Ghana are third in Group C with just one point from two games. — AFP

Katethong downs Sindhu

NEW DELHI: Thailand's Supanida Katethong stunned top seed PV Sindhu to reach the final of the India Open women's singles badminton in New Delhi on Saturday, as more players withdrew due to positive COVID-19 tests. Russia's mixed doubles player Rodion Alimov on Saturday became the latest to contract the virus, according to organizers, taking the count to eight in the Super 500 tournament. Alimov and his partner Alina Davletova bowed out with Indonesian pair of Yong Kai Terry Hee and Wei Han Tan getting a walkover into the final. In the women's semi-finals, sixth seed Katethong beat home favourite Sindhu 21-14, 13-21, 21-10 to book her title clash with second seed and countrywoman Busanan Ongbamrunphan who beat another home player Aakarshi Kashyap 26-24, 21-9. — AFP

Fulham demolish Bristol City

LONDON: Aleksandar Mitrovic hit a hat-trick as Fulham powered to the top of the Championship with a 6-2 demolition of Bristol City on Saturday. Marco Silva's side trailed to Antoine Semenyo's early goal at Craven Cottage. Serbia striker Mitrovic headed Fulham level after 21 minutes before Semenyo restored the Robins' lead. That was the spark for Fulham to score four more before half-time, just days after they won 7-0 at Reading. Neeskens Kebano equalized and Fulham took the lead for the first time after 36 minutes thanks to Fabio Carvalho. Mitrovic bagged his 26th and 27th league goals this season with a header and a clinical finish. Kebano struck after 57 minutes as Fulham leapfrogged Bournemouth, who surrendered first place after a last-gasp 3-2 defeat at Luton. — AFP

HOBART: Australia's fast bowlers ran through the English batting line-up to claim a comprehensive 146-run win in the fifth and final Ashes Test at Hobart yesterday, sealing a one-sided series 4-0. After a bright 68-run opening stand chasing 271 for victory, England collapsed once again to hand the Test to the rampant Australian outfit, losing 10 wickets for 56 runs in 137 balls.

The hosts could easily have won the series 5-0, but for some bad weather and heroics from England's lower order in Sydney, when the outclassed visitors held on for a tense draw. "To be at the end of a five-Test series with so many positives - winning 4-0 - it's huge so I'm really pumped," Australian captain Pat Cummins said. "It really feels like we are building to something big. "I can't wait to show our wares overseas so we can really judge ourselves in all conditions."

England had no answers once more in Hobart to the pace barrage of Cummins, Cameron Green, Scott Boland and Mitchell Starc, who shared the wickets between them and

took nine English wickets in the night session. So dominant were the fast bowlers, off-spinner Nathan Lyon did not bowl a ball in the entire match. England captain Joe Root admitted his side were simply not good enough throughout the series. "It's been a really tough tour," he said. "We've played good cricket in parts, we've just not been able to structure a whole game together."

"It's something we have to learn from and not go away and keep making the same mistakes. "We've been outplayed in all areas and credit to Australia." The tourists had bowled Australia out for 155 during the middle session, leaving themselves an improbable target of 271 for victory. Rory Burns and fellow opener Zak Crawley got the tourists off to a rousing start but in the last over before tea, Burns tried to leave a ball from Green, only to chop it on, falling for 26 with the score on 68.

David Malan, whose wife gave birth to their first child overnight, started well with a couple of slashing boundaries, but he fell the same way,

“We’ve been outplayed in all areas”



HOBART: Australia's Pat Cummins takes the final England wicket of Ollie Robinson as Australia defeats England on the third day of the fifth Ashes cricket Test match in Hobart yesterday. — AFP

chopping on to Green for 10 to end a disappointing Test. Green struck again when Crawley edged the ball through to wicketkeeper Alex Carey, before Ben Stokes on five threw his wicket away when he pulled a Starc short ball to Lyon at deep square leg.

Root has endured a difficult series after some bright starts, but there was nothing he could do when a Boland delivery barely bounced, shooting through and crashing into the bottom

of off-stump. All Root could do was stand there and shake his head with a wry smile before trudging off, bringing debutant Sam Billings to the crease. But he didn't last long before he meekly chipped Boland to mid-off where Cummins took a simple catch. The wickets continued to tumble after that with no-one offering any resistance and it was no surprise when Australia wrapped up the win 40 minutes before stumps. — AFP

Bengals end decades of playoff futility, Bills throttle Patriots

LOS ANGELES: A solid outing from quarterback Joe Burrow and a late defensive stand saw the Cincinnati Bengals beat the Las Vegas Raiders 26-19 on Saturday to earn their first NFL playoff victory in 31 years. Burrow threw for two touchdowns as he piloted an efficient Bengals offense that scored on their first four drives.

Rookie kicker Evan McPherson made all four of his field goal attempts as the Bengals ended an eight-game playoff losing streak that stretched back to their victory over the now-defunct Houston Oilers in January of 1991. "It feels great winning for us, for the city, for the organization. But, you know, we expected this. So it's not going to be a big celebration like it was when we won the division," Burrow told broadcaster NBC. "We took care of business, on to the next round." Cincinnati will face either the Kansas City Chiefs or Buffalo Bills in the divisional round next weekend.

Josh Allen passed for five touchdowns as Buffalo thrashed the New England Patriots 47-17 in another AFC wild-card matchup. Allen led the Bills to touchdown drives on their first seven possessions, a first for any team in an NFL playoff game in the Super Bowl era. In Cincinnati, Burrow completed 24 of 34 passes for 244 yards and two touchdowns as the Bengals held on for the win in front of a crowd of 66,200 at Paul Brown Stadium. That included a controversial 10-yard TD strike to Tyler Boyd that Burrow unleashed just before going out of bounds.

A line judge erroneously blew his whistle to indicate Burrow was out of bounds, which should have immediately made the play dead. The touchdown counted, however, whether or not the sound of the whistle caused Raiders defenders to pull up on the play. Raiders interim head coach Rich Bisaccia declined to criticize the offi-



CINCINNATI: Germaine Pratt #57 of the Cincinnati Bengals tackles Darren Waller #83 of the Las Vegas Raiders in the first half of the AFC Wild Card playoff game at Paul Brown Stadium on January 15, 2022. —AFP

ciating crew. "I think there's a lot of things that went on in the game both ways," he said. "I've got enough problems with my job, I can't do the officiating, too."

Another questionable call-roughing the passer against the Bengals-helped the Raiders keep a potential game-tying drive alive in the final minutes.

Down 26-19 and needing a touchdown to force overtime, Raiders quarterback Derek Carr converted a third and 17-yard play and a third and 10 before the Bengals defense came up with three huge stops from within 10 yards of the goalline. Bengals linebacker Germaine Pratt intercepted Carr on fourth down to seal the victory. —AFP

Super-sub Coutinho caps Villa revival to frustrate Man Utd

BIRMINGHAM: Steven Gerrard hailed Philippe Coutinho's dream debut for Aston Villa as the Brazil star's late equalizer capped a thrilling fightback from two goals down against Manchester United in Saturday's 2-2 draw. Four years after he last played in the Premier League with Liverpool, Coutinho made an instant impact on his return to England following his loan move from Barcelona this week. Coutinho came off the bench midway through the second half with Villa trailing 2-0 after Bruno Fernandes's double for United.

The 29-year-old provided the assist for Jacob Ramsey to give Villa hope with 13 minutes left. Coutinho then converted Ramsey's cross five minutes later to ensure Gerrard's side made amends for their FA Cup third round exit at United today. Coutinho

suffered a disappointing time at Barcelona, but Gerrard is confident he can bring the forward back to his best after playing with him at Liverpool. "It was a good start. We've brought a quality footballer to the club. We need to get him up to speed in terms of his match sharpness," Gerrard said.

"We certainly deserved to be trailing at the break. I had to tell a few home truths and the reaction was fantastic. "We conceded against the run of play but didn't feel sorry for ourselves, we continued to show character and believe. "The substitutions really brought something to the game. The two goals we scored were fantastic." United have now gone two league matches without victory after losing to Wolves in their previous top-flight game.

With United languishing in seventh



BIRMINGHAM: Aston Villa's Brazilian midfielder Philippe Coutinho (left) scores their second goal past Manchester United's Spanish goalkeeper David de Gea during the English Premier League football match between Aston Villa and Manchester Utd on January 15, 2022. — AFP

place, there will be fresh questions about interim boss Ralf Rangnick. Rangnick had already endured reports that United's players were unimpressed with his coaching methods and his backroom staff. Fernandes owed his first goal to a howler from

Villa goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez, who let his free-kick spill into the net. The Portugal playmaker's second goal was the kind of eye-catching finish that made his name when he arrived at United from Sporting Lisbon in January 2020. —AFP

Defaults, drama, science: Djokovic controversies

MELBOURNE: Hailed as one of the greatest tennis players of all time, Novak Djokovic was aiming to defend his title at this year's Australian Open and win a record 21st Grand Slam. But his refusal to get vaccinated against COVID-19 pitted him against the Australian government, who cancelled his visa and left the tennis ace facing deportation on the eve of the tournament. AFP Sport looks at other controversial incidents that have dogged the career of the world number one and 20-time Grand Slam title winner:

US Open default

Djokovic saw his 2020 US Open title hopes dashed

when he was sensationally disqualified from his last-16 match against Pablo Carreno Busta after accidentally hitting a female line judge in the throat with a ball. The Serbian had lashed out in frustration after dropping serve in a match played on an empty Arthur Ashe Court where fans were banned due to the pandemic. "This whole situation has left me really sad and empty," Djokovic said in a statement. "I checked on the linesperson and the tournament told me that thank God she is feeling OK. I'm extremely sorry to have caused her such stress. So unintended. So wrong."

COVID tour

In the midst of the pandemic in 2020, and with professional tennis shut down, Djokovic organised the Adria Tour, a series of exhibition events in the Balkans. However, the tournament was abandoned in Zadar in Croatia after Bulgarian player Grigor Dimitrov tested positive for coronavirus. Djokovic and his wife Jelena as well as fellow players Viktor Troicki and Borna Coric also went on to reveal pos-

itive tests. The players were also heavily criticized for dancing and embracing at a nightclub.

Tone deaf?

When Djokovic arrived in Melbourne for the 2021 Australian Open, he whipped up another storm for issuing a list of requests that reportedly included players being given private homes with tennis courts. "Djokovic is a tool," firebrand Aussie player Nick Kyrgios tweeted in response. Ironically, Kyrgios has leapt to Djokovic's defence during his current Australian controversy. "I just think it's crazy. I feel so sorry for him," he said Saturday. Djokovic has long faced accusations that he exaggerates injuries in matches. At the 2008 US Open, he took two medical timeouts in a gruelling five-set win over Tommy Robredo. Quarter-final opponent Andy Roddick then mockingly listed Djokovic's injuries to include "two hurt ankles, bird flu and SARS!" Djokovic defeated the American and hit back in his post-match, on-court interview. — AFP

Sports

Salah's strike gives Egypt victory over Guinea-Bissau

Nigeria cruise to Cup of Nations last 16

DOUALA: Mohamed Salah got back among the goals for Egypt on Saturday as the record seven-time champions beat Guinea-Bissau after Nigeria secured their place in the last 16 of the Africa Cup of Nations. Salah's first-time finish at the back post in the 69th minute in Garoua got his and Egypt's campaign in Cameroon up and running after they had lost 1-0 to Nigeria in their opening Group D game.

However, Guinea-Bissau were left fuming after a stunning 82nd-minute strike by Mama Balde was ruled out following a VAR review. Carlos Queiroz's Egypt, who also hit the woodwork three times, now need only draw their last group game against neighbors Sudan in Yaounde on Wednesday to guarantee safe passage to the last 16. "It was a really tough game and we were a little bit lucky with the foul," Salah admitted to broadcasters.

"We have to win our next game now to make sure we qualify and we will do our best to go as far as we can in the tournament," Salah, who had not scored in any of his previous six appearances for Egypt this season, struck the post with just 84 seconds played and Mostafa Mohamed hit the same upright later in the first half. The Liverpool star finally broke the deadlock midway through the second half when he met Amr El Solia's floated ball to the back post with a first-time cushioned volley that beat Guinea-Bissau goalkeeper Jonas Mendes.

Substitute Zizo also hit the woodwork for Egypt before Balde's superb strike into the far corner was ruled out by the referee on review for grappling defender Omar Kamal to the ground.

The small west African nation of Guinea-Bissau are appearing at their third straight AFCON having never qualified before 2017, but they are left still searching for their first win at the tournament after eight attempts.

Super Eagles cruise

In contrast, continental powerhouse Nigeria secured qualification for the knockout phase thanks to a 3-1 win over Sudan earlier at the same venue in northern Cameroon. With former Super Eagles star Augustine Eguavoen in temporary charge after last month's sacking of German coach Gernot Rohr, Nigeria stuck with the same line-up that defeated Egypt. Villarreal's Samuel Chukwueze struck in the third minute and the three-time winners scored a second goal in slightly fortunate circumstances on the stroke of half-time.

Captain William Troost-Ekong's header ricocheted off a Sudan defender and then the head of Taiwo Awoniyi and squirmed in under the goal-keeper. Moses Simon added a third right at the start of the second half, with Waliedin Khidir converting a consolation spot-kick for Sudan. The Super Eagles are now certain to top Group D meaning they will stay in Garoua-close to the border with the Nigerian state of Adamawa-for a last-16 tie against a third-placed side on January 23.

"To be a champion you should be ready to play against any team, so any team that comes our way, we'll be prepared," said Eguavoen. The matches in Garoua, home of leading Cameroonian club CotonSport, attracted larger crowds than



GAROUA: Egypt's forward Mohamed Salah (right) is fouled by Guinea-Bissau's defender Fali Cande during the Group D Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) 2021 football match between Guinea-Bissau and Egypt on January 15, 2022. —AFP

have been seen at most Cup of Nations matches, with the requirement to be fully vaccinated against Covid-19 and provide a negative test appearing to put many fans off attending in the football-mad country.

On Sunday reigning champions Algeria look for their first win when they play Equatorial Guinea in Douala after the Ivory Coast face Sierra Leone in the same Group E. A Tunisia side missing a raft of players due to positive coron-

avirus tests take on Mauritania in the coastal town of Limbe after Gambia face Mali at the same venue. Ghana striker Benjamin Tetteh has been handed a three-game ban after punching an opponent during a mass brawl at the end of Friday's 1-1 draw with Gabon. Tetteh took a swing at Gabon's Aaron Boupendza and was later shown a red card by the referee. The ban means he will not be able to play again at the tournament unless Ghana reach the semi-finals. —AFP

'Machine' Lewandowski scores 300th Bundesliga goal in Bayern romp

BERLIN: Bayern Munich captain Manuel Neuer hailed Robert Lewandowski as a scoring "machine" after the Poland striker claimed his 300th Bundesliga goal with a hat-trick as the German league leaders thrashed Cologne 4-0 on Saturday. The champions restored their six-point advantage after Borussia Dortmund had cut the gap with a 5-1 thumping of Freiburg on Friday.

Visitors Bayern, almost back to full strength after nine players missed last weekend's home loss to Borussia Moenchengladbach following positive COVID tests, raced into a 2-0 lead with goals by Lewandowski and Corentin Tolisso. "After the defeat against Moenchengladbach, it was important for us to get our first points this year," Neuer told Sky Sport. Lewandowski reached the 300 mark by netting twice in the second half, with both assists provided by substitute Leroy Sane.

Only Bayern and West Germany legend Gerd Mueller, who died last year, scored more Bundesliga goals with 365. "We are happy and grateful to have Robert - he is a machine up front," added Neuer. Lewandowski opened the scoring with some

slick finishing before Tolisso doubled Bayern's lead by thumping his shot into the top corner from 16 meters out. Cologne looked to have clawed a goal back through Mark Uth, but the VAR spotted he was offside.

The scored stayed 2-0 until Leroy Sane, one of the players who missed the Gladbach loss, came on and carved holes in Cologne's defense for Lewandowski's next two goals. Sane's pass put Lewandowski in behind the defense for his second goal. Eight minutes later, Sane again danced through Cologne's midfield before putting Lewandowski into position to tuck away his 23rd league effort this season. Lewandowski has scored in 15 of Bayern's 19 league games and is on course to break his own record of 41 Bundesliga goals in a single season, which he set last May.

Leverkusen win at Gladbach

Later, Bayer Leverkusen regained third spot behind Dortmund with a 2-1 victory at Moenchengladbach despite Patrick Schick and Kerem Demirbay both having second-half penalty attempts saved by Gladbach keeper Yann Sommer. Schick was first denied



COLOGNE: Bayern Munich's Polish forward Robert Lewandowski (left) shoots the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match FC Cologne vs Bayern Munich on January 15, 2022. —AFP

by Sommer's superb diving save only for Leverkusen midfielder Robert Andrich to score from the resulting corner. Schick then made amends for his penalty miss by heading in a free-kick. Gladbach clawed a late goal back when Nico Elvedi tapped in after a goal-mouth scramble just before another great Sommer save denied Demirbay's spot kick.

Sommer took no consolation from his

double penalty saves. "The result is disappointing," he said glumly with Gladbach four points above the bottom three after their third straight home defeat. "We are where we are - and rightly so." Union Berlin fought back for a 2-1 home win over Hoffenheim as Andreas Voglsammer and Grisca Proemel scored for the hosts after an own goal by team-mate Timo Baumgartl. —AFP

to a 3-0 win at rock-bottom Salernitana. Argentina forward Dybala swept home a classy finish from Moise Kean's lay-off to put Juve ahead in the 19th minute of a largely drab contest at the Allianz Stadium in Turin, but it was his reaction to the strike which raised eyebrows.

He did not celebrate his seventh Serie A goal of the season and shot a stern look to the stand where the Juve hierarchy was sitting, with observers suggesting he was making clear his unhappiness about

the delay to the renewal of his contract. Dybala explained the glare by saying he was looking "for a friend who I'd invited to the game". When asked by Sky Sport Italia whether fans should believe him, Dybala said: "I don't know, that's up to you." The 28-year-old's current deal expires at the end of the season and he is waiting to sign an extension which Italian media report should take his annual salary up to eight million euros a season (\$9.1 million), plus a further two million euros of bonuses. —AFP

Premier League faces fan fury for flurry of postponements

MANCHESTER: The Premier League stands accused of oversteering a farce after agreeing to Arsenal's request to postpone their trip to Tottenham with the Gunners reportedly missing just one player due to coronavirus. Yesterday's north London derby, which was due to be screened live in Sky Sports' marquee slot of 16.30 GMT, became the 21st match called off over the past two months. Rules initially brought in to cope with record numbers of COVID-19 cases caused by the Omicron variant of the virus have quickly been abused by clubs seeking to take advantage when depleted by injuries and the ongoing Africa Cup of Nations.

Arsenal have four players away on international duty in Cameroon on top of injuries to Emile Smith Rowe and Takehiro Tomiyasu. Bukayo Saka, Kieran Tierney and Cedric Soares all picked up knocks in Thursday's League Cup semi-final, first leg at Liverpool and Granit Xhaka would have been suspended after being sent off in that game, but Martin Odegaard is the only player currently ruled out due to testing positive for COVID. Mikel Arteta's squad had been further depleted this week by loan moves for Ainsley Maitland Niles to Roma and Polarin Balogun to Middlesbrough.

Had both players remained at the Emirates, they may have been able to meet the Premier League's criteria of having 13 available outfield players plus a goalkeeper. "What started out as postponements due to a pandemic has now become about clubs not having their best team," tweeted former Manchester United captain and Sky pundit Gary Neville. "The Premier League must stop this now, draw a line in the sand and say all games go ahead unless you have an exceptional amount of CV (coronavirus) cases. It's wrong." —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Kaizen center	25716707
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Rawda	22517733
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Adaliya	22517144
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Khalidiya	24848075
Chest Hospital	24849400	Kaifan	24849807
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Shamiya	24848913
Adan Hospital	23940620	Shuwaikh	24814507
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Nuzha	22526804
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
		Qadsiya	22515088
		Dasmah	22532265
		Bneid Al-Gar	22531908

Clinics

CHANGE OF NAME

I Jafar Ali Syeed S/o Syeed Abdulla holder of Indian passport No.U0197067 issued at Kuwait on 06/10/2020 & civil ID No. 278091202586 has changed my name from Jafar Ali Syeed to Shaik Mohammed Rafi in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of Mohammed Rafi (given name) and Shaik (surname) (C 1404) 16-1-2022

I Shaik Shahida Banu W/o

Shaik Reddy Gafoor (old name), R/o D No. 4-10, Rayavaram (V & Post), T.Sundupal (Mdl), Y.S.R. District, A.P, have changed my name as Shaik Shahidun W/o Shaik Reddy Gafoor.

I Shaik Abdul Gaffaar S/o Shaik Dastageer (old name), R/o D.No. 4-10, Rayavaram (V&Post), T.Sundupal (Mdl), Y.S.R. District, A.P, have changed my name as Shaik Reddy Gafoor S/o Shaik Dastageer (new name) (C 1404) 12-1-2022

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Liverpool move up to second

Benitez sacked as Everton manager; Harrison hat-trick fires Leeds



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's English midfielder Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain (2nd left) heads the ball to scores his team's second goal during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Brentford yesterday. — AFP

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool kept their slim hopes of reeling in Manchester City at the top of the Premier League alive by seeing off Brentford 3-0 at Anfield to move up to second in the table yesterday. Fabinho, Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain and Takumi Minamino scored the goals as the Reds coped without the absence of Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane at the Africa Cup of Nations. Victory lifts Jurgen Klopp's men to within 11 points of the runaway leaders, but they also have a game in hand on City.

Liverpool failed to take advantage of an extra man for over an hour as Thursday's League semi-final, first leg against Arsenal ended 0-0, sparking fears of how they will cope for the rest of the month without two of their main sources of goals. But a Brentford side that have not won a league game away from home since early October never threatened to cause an upset. Klopp made just two changes from the Arsenal stalemate as Curtis Jones and Oxlade-Chamberlain were recalled to add extra creativity and dynamism to the midfield.

He was rewarded with a bright start as Diogo Jota headed over, Trent Alexander-Arnold flashed a shot just off target and Alvaro Fernandez made a brilliant save to deny Virgil van Dijk. However, the crowd were growing restless until Brentford allowed Alexander-Arnold's corner to bounce inside the area and Fabinho headed in at the back post. The Bees went toe-to-toe

with Liverpool in a pulsating 3-3 draw when the sides last met in September.

But the visitors only created one big chance to get back in the game when Bryan Mbuemo turned Joel Matip and shot inches wide. Jota hit the post and then should have scored when firing too close to Fernandez in a one-on-one. There was no doubt over the outcome, though, once Oxlade-Chamberlain's diving header turned Andy Robertson's perfect cross into the bottom corner. Brentford were architects of their own downfall for the third goal as Fernandez's pass out from the back was seized upon by Roberto Firmino and he teed up Minamino to slot home from close range.

The home fans could relax for the final 15 minutes and pointedly took the chance to chant the name of former manager Rafael Benitez, who was sacked by rivals Everton yesterday. The Toffees are in danger of falling into a relegation battle after one win in 13 league games. Brentford, by contrast, still enjoy a 10-point cushion over the bottom three in their first season in the top-flight for 74 years but remain in 14th.

Leeds beat West Ham

Meanwhile, Jack Harrison hit a hat-trick as Leeds boosted their bid for Premier League survival with a 3-2 win against West Ham yesterday. Harrison put Leeds ahead at the London Stadium and netted again after Jarrod Bowen's equalizer. When Pablo Fornals

hauled West Ham level in the second half, Harrison had an instant response as the midfielder completed his treble. Marcelo Bielsa's side made it two successive league victories to climb nine points clear of the relegation zone.

It was sweet revenge for Leeds, who were knocked out of the FA Cup in the third round at West Ham just a week ago. West Ham had won three consecutive league games and four in all competitions, but their bid to finish in the top four suffered a major setback thanks to Harrison. David Moyes' team remain fourth, however they are now just two points ahead of Arsenal, who have two games in hand, while Tottenham are four points back with four games extra to play.

Leeds had scored just eight goals in nine away league fixtures this season, but Bielsa's men made a flying start and took the lead in the 10th minute. Adam Forshaw found Harrison in the West Ham area and he drilled a fine finish that gave Lukasz Fabianski no chance. Daniel James fired just over from 25 yards as Leeds looked to build on Harrison's second league goal this term.

Leeds' ongoing injury crisis was underscored by the presence of 15-year-old Archie Gray on the bench. They suffered yet more fitness misery when Forshaw and Junior Firpo were both forced off with what looked like hamstring problems midway through the half. Craig Dawson should have taken advantage of Leeds' latest

enforced reshuffle, but the West Ham defender squandered a golden opportunity, heading a corner wide from close-range.

Leeds' weakness at set-pieces was exposed in the 34th minute as Bowen headed West Ham's equaliser from another corner. But Harrison had the perfect response three minutes later. Luke Ayling headed the ball into Harrison's path and he bundled home from close-range. West Ham equalized in the 52nd minute as Michail Antonio found Fornals, who got behind Ayling and guided a clinical finish past Illan Meslier.

Benitez sacked

In another development, Rafael Benitez was sacked as Everton manager yesterday after just 200 days in charge of the struggling Premier League club. Benitez was an unpopular appointment in June last year after his long spell with Everton's Merseyside rivals Liverpool. The Spaniard paid the price for a dismal run of nine defeats in Everton's last 13 league matches, culminating in a 2-1 loss at lowly Norwich on Saturday.

"Everton Football Club can confirm the departure of Rafael Benitez as first-team manager," a club statement said. "Benitez, who joined Everton in June 2021, has left the club with immediate effect. "An update on a permanent replacement will be made in due course." Former Everton forward Wayne Rooney, currently impressing as manager of second tier Derby, is the bookmakers' favorite to replace Benitez. — AFP

Gambia snatch 1-1 draw against Mali

LIMBE: Musa Barrow converted a 90th-minute penalty for Gambia to snatch a 1-1 draw against Mali with the matchday 2 result set to take both teams through to the second round of the Africa Cup of Nations. Mali went ahead after 79 minutes in Limbe when Ibrahima Kone scored from another penalty, both of which were awarded after the Moroccan referee watched replays on a VAR monitor. The draw keeps Gambia and Mali level at the top of Group F with four points each. Pointless sides Tunisia and Mauritania meet later and a win for either country will bring them into contention.

Group winners and runners-up after three matchdays qualify for the round of 16 along with the best four third-placed sides. Brighton midfielder Yves Bissouma, who came off the bench in a matchday 1 win over Tunisia, was promoted to the

starting line-up by Mali coach Mohamed Magassouba. The other Premier League player in the Mali team, Southampton winger Moussa Djenepo, retained his place as the west African nation sought a ninth win in 19 matches in all competitions against Gambia.

In 32 degrees Celsius early afternoon heat and 75 percent humidity at the 20,000-seat Stade Omnisport it was no surprise that the match began at a slow pace. Mali were more impressive in the early exchanges with Bissouma firing a free-kick wide and Djenepo having a header saved by Modou Jobe, who plays in the South African second division. After being on the back foot for 20 minutes, Gambia were awarded a 35-metre free-kick and Musa Barrow unleashed a thunderbolt that rattled the crossbar. — AFP



LIMBE: Gambia's midfielder Musa Barrow (center) fights for the ball with Mali's defender Boubakar Kiki Kouyate (right) during the Group F Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) 2021 football match between Gambia and Mali yesterday. — AFP

Harden powers Nets past Pelicans, Raptors rally to beat Bucks

LOS ANGELES: James Harden flirted with a triple-double, scoring 27 points with 15 assists and eight rebounds as the Brooklyn Nets rolled over the New Orleans Pelicans 120-105 despite an injury to NBA leading scorer Kevin Durant. "The guys got to step up. It's simple," Harden said. "Obviously you know how great of a player KD is and what he brings to the table each and every night consistently. So, guys got to step up and fill that role and just continue to compete."

Durant was hurt with 5:44 left in the second quarter of Saturday's contest when he collided with teammate Bruce Brown. Durant grimaced from the contact but stayed in the game for the next possession before calling a timeout and heading to the dressing room. Durant, the MVP of the NBA finals, is expected to have an MRI on Sunday to determine the extent of the damage.

Before exiting, Durant — who entered Saturday averaging 29.7 points per game - scored 12 points in the first quarter to help the Nets compile a 32-22 lead. Coach Steve Nash said they are hoping that Durant won't be forced to miss significant time. "Yeah, of course it will be tough to lose him," Nash said. "You know no one wants to see that. We obviously hope for the best outcome. Regardless of the outcome, we have to continue to work, build and grow, and get better and compete."

Patty Mills added 21 points and Kessler Edwards chipped in 16 for the Nets, who never trailed in front of a crowd of 17,000 at Barclays Center. Brandon Ingram scored 22 points and Josh Hart had 14 points and 11 rebounds for the Pelicans, who had won two straight. In Milwaukee, Pascal Siakam posted his second career triple-double with 30 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists as the Toronto Raptors rallied from 15 points down to beat the league champi-



NEW YORK: James Harden #13 of the Brooklyn Nets shoots against Brandon Ingram #14 of the New Orleans Pelicans during their game at Barclays Center on January 15, 2022. — AFP

on Milwaukee Bucks 103-96.

"I just try to come out every night with just the same intensity and same energy," Siakam said. "Tonight I think we all played well. We were flowing and moving the ball and just playing our brand of basketball." The Raptors continued their move up the Eastern Conference standings by winning their seventh game in the last 10 and their third straight against the Bucks this season.

OG Anunoby scored 30 points, Fred VanVleet added 17 points, Chris Boucher had 15 for Toronto, who held the Bucks to a season low 33.8 percent shooting at Fiserv Forum. "We're one of those teams I feel like can compete with anybody when we're at our best," said VanVleet. — AFP