

2

Crown Prince receives Foreign Minister and new diplomats



4

Art show sheds light on the importance of birds



7

Japan's baby hatch hospital offers mothers 'last resort'



16

England thrash Sweden to reach women's Euro final



Lawmakers urge premier to embrace reforms package

New Cabinet to call for fresh elections

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: A group of MPs yesterday called on the new Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah to embrace a package of reforms that includes a list of legislation proposed by experts and youth activists. Sheikh Ahmad was on Sunday named by the Amir to form the new Cabinet following the resignation of the outgoing prime minister

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah over lingering disputes with opposition MPs.

The new Cabinet will supervise a plan to dissolve the National Assembly and call for fresh polls as promised by the Amir a few weeks ago. In a joint statement, MPs also called on all sections of the society to cooperate and coordinate to create a common platform to jointly build the future Kuwait.

The lawmakers also stressed their commitment to

a package of reforms proposed by a parliamentary bloc several months ago which calls for extensive legal, legislative, economic, election and political reforms and urged the new premier to adopt it. A large number of MPs have welcomed the appointment of Sheikh Ahmad, the son of HH the Amir, as the new prime minister and urged him to fight corruption and adopt reforms.

Meanwhile, lawmakers expressed optimism that

the new PM will be able to take Kuwait out of ongoing political disputes that stalled reforms and development and vowed to lend him all cooperation needed. Opposition lawmakers, who were at loggerheads with the outgoing prime minister, were overjoyed by the appointment of Sheikh Ahmad. MP Saud Al-Mutairi expressed the hope that the new head of government will succeed to “build a new Kuwait”.

Iran, GCC states discuss boosting relations

DUBAI: The Emirati and Iranian foreign ministers have held a telephone conversation and discussed boosting ties, UAE state media reported Wednesday, as the Gulf Arab country considers sending an ambassador back to Tehran. Emirati Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan and his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian discussed ways of “boosting bilateral relations and areas of cooperation for the benefit of both countries”, the UAE’s state news agency WAM reported.

Sheikh Abdullah “highlighted the UAE’s keenness... to enhance the security and stability of the region”, WAM added. Iran’s foreign ministry said Amir-Abdollahian “welcomed the enhancement of the level of ties between the two countries” as “an important step in the process of developing bilateral relations”, in a statement late Tuesday.

It said the Iranian minister also spoke separately with his Omani and Kuwaiti counterparts on Tuesday night. The United Arab Emirates scaled back its ties with the Islamic republic in 2016 after Iranian protesters attacked Saudi diplomatic missions in Iran following Riyadh’s execution of Shiite Muslim cleric Nimr Al-Nimr.

Earlier this month, UAE presidential adviser Anwar Gargash said his country was considering sending an ambassador back to Iran and called for regional economic cooperation to help ease political tensions. “The next decade cannot be like the last decade. It’s a decade where ‘de-escalation’ should be the key word,” he had said. His comments came after Zionist entity and the United States signed a new security pact reinforcing their common front against Iran, during a visit to the Jewish state by US President Joe Biden.

The UAE’s talk of strengthening Iran ties comes alongside Iraqi efforts to mediate between Emirati ally Riyadh, and Tehran. Saudi Arabia and Iran have had no diplomatic ties since the 2016 attacks on the kingdom’s diplomatic missions in the Islamic republic, while Kuwait also downgraded relations with Tehran. An Iranian diplomat told a Kuwaiti newspaper earlier this week that a Kuwaiti ambassador would arrive in Tehran “in the next few days”, but authorities in the Gulf emirate have yet to announce such a move.

The oil-rich UAE has previously said that Arab Gulf states should take part in “collective diplomacy” to reach an agreement with Iran, whose talks with Western powers over a faltering 2015 nuclear agreement have been stalled since March. In 2020, the UAE established diplomatic relations with Zionist entity, a move which Tehran condemned. Amir-Abdollahian on Tuesday described Zionist entity’s presence in the region as a cause of “instability and insecurity”, Iran’s foreign ministry said.— AFP

Kuwait among top exporters of oil byproducts

KUWAIT: The Clean Fuels Project (CFP) is one of the most significant and largest projects in the history of the Kuwait oil sector since it is widely expected to change Kuwait’s status and future, and place it among major exporters of high-quality and eco-friendly products. The mega and strategic project comes within the framework of Kuwait’s endeavor to become a regional economic attraction hub.

Kuwait’s great significance to the project was manifested by the presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah during the inaugural ceremony of the

Saudi mirrored skyscraper city unveils

JEDDAH: A futuristic Saudi megacity is to feature two skyscrapers extending across a swathe of desert and mountain terrain, according to the latest disclosures on the project by the kingdom’s de facto ruler. The parallel structures of mirror-encased skyscrapers extending over 170 kilometers, known collectively as The Line, form the heart of the Red Sea megacity NEOM, a plank of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s bid to diversify the Gulf state’s oil-dependent economy.

First announced in 2017, NEOM

Powerful quake hits northern Philippines

MANILA: A 7.0-magnitude earthquake killed at least five people in the northern Philippines Wednesday, toppling buildings and shaking high-rise towers more than 300 kilometers away in the capital Manila. The shallow and powerful quake struck the mountainous and lightly populated province of Abra on the main island of Luzon at 8:43 am, the US Geological Survey said.

Shallow earthquakes tend to cause more damage than deeper ones. This one left more than a hundred people injured across the hilly region, triggered

state-owned Kuwait National Petroleum Company’s (KNPC) biofuel project at Mina Abdullah Refinery on March 22.

The project is a historic milestone that would unquestionably shore up Kuwait’s presence as an influential and competitive state able to fulfill strict requirements and conditions in various world markets. This strategic project expands and upgrades Mina Abdullah and Mina Al-Ahmadi Refineries and boosts Kuwait’s global position in the oil refining industry.

In addition to advanced conversion capabilities, the two refineries’ operational excellence, reliability and safety performance are greatly upgraded. Energy efficiency and environment protection are also greatly enhanced. Their clean products conform to US, European and Asian specifications, including Euro-4 and Euro-5.

Some 199 companies from 23 countries participated in the manufacturing of equipment and technology used in the implementation of this mega project. In this context, KNPC’s Deputy CEO for

has consistently raised eyebrows for proposed flourishes like flying taxis and robot maids, even as architects and economists have questioned its feasibility. In a presentation Monday night, Prince Mohammed sketched out an even more ambitious vision, describing a car-free utopia that would become the planet’s most liveable city “by far”.

Analysts noted, though, that plans for NEOM have changed course over the years, fuelling doubts about whether The Line will ever become reality. NEOM was once touted as a regional “Silicon Valley”, a biotech and digital hub spread over 26,500 square kilometers. Now it’s a vehicle for reimagining urban life on a footprint of just 34 square kilometers, and addressing what Prince Mohammed describes as “liveability and environmental crises”. — AFP (See page 13)



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is pictured during the celebration of the (KNPC) biofuel project at Mina Abdullah Refinery. — AFP

Administrative and Commercial Affairs and Official Spokesman Ahed Al-Khuryayif said due to global oil industry advancement and variables in different environment requirements locally and internationally, the company has carried out its Clean Fuel Project that has helped revamp product specifications in line with the required global standards. — KUNA (See page 3)

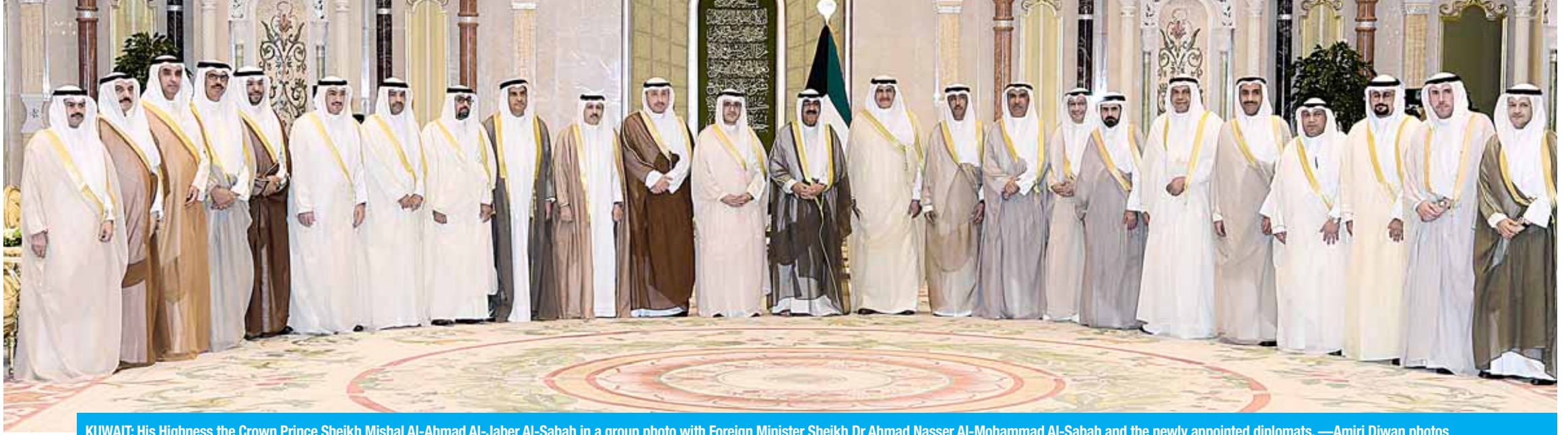


NEOM: A handout picture provided by Saudi’s NEOM shows the design plan for the 500-metre tall parallel structures, known collectively as The Line, in the heart of the Red Sea megacity NEOM. — AFP



LA TRINIDAD, Philippines: Photo shows a rescue team at the site of a collapsed building in La Trinidad, in the province of Benguet on July 27, 2022, after a 7.0-magnitude earthquake hit the northern Philippines. — AFP

Local



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in a group photo with Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and the newly appointed diplomats. —Amiri Diwan photos

Kuwait's Crown Prince receives Foreign Minister, newly appointed diplomats

Sheikh Mishal urges diplomats to represent Kuwait to the best of their abilities

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on Wednesday Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and a group of newly appointed heads of Kuwaiti missions abroad. Those received included:

- Permanent Representative of Kuwait at the UN Office in Geneva and General Consul at the Swiss Federation Nasser Abdullah Al-Hain.
- Ambassador to Azerbaijan Abdullah Mohammad Al-Maw'ad.
- General Consul in Ibril, Iraq, Othman Dawoud Al-Dawoud.
- Ambassador to Tunisia Mansour Khaled A-Omar.
- Ambassador to Iran Bader Abdullah Al-Munaikh.
- General Consul in Dubai, and northern Emirates in the UAE Ali Salem Al-Thaithi.
- Ambassador to Bulgaria Ghazi Hamed Al-Fadhli.
- General Consul in Hong Kong, China, Nasser Saqer Al-Ghanim.
- Ambassador to Benin Mishal Ahmad Al-Mansour.
- Ambassador to the Swiss Federation Talal Suleiman Al-Fassam.
- General Consul in the Iraqi city of Basra Mohsen Obaid Al-Ajmi.
- Ambassador to Cambodia Mohammad Saeed Al-Hajri.
- Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the UN headquarters in New York, US, Tareq Mohammad Al-Bannai.
- Ambassador to Italy Nasser Sanhat Al-Qahtani.



High expectations for new diplomats

The diplomats took oath in front of His Highness the Crown Prince. In a speech, His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He called on them to represent their country to the best of their abilities in their respective posts. His Highness indicated that he had instructed the Foreign Minister to embark on the biggest shuffling within the domain diplomatic missions to reinvigorate the diplomatic corps in Kuwait. His Highness the Crown Prince said that the regional and international challenges required vigilance on part of Kuwaiti diplomats who should address such challenges with wisdom and clarity. Not only do Ambassadors and diplomats represent the leadership of Kuwait, but they also



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah speaks at the reception.

serve the Kuwaiti people abroad and this was their main mission, His Highness the Crown Prince affirmed. He concluded his speech with wishes of success and welfare for all those embarking on their mission to represent the Kuwaiti leadership and people in regional and international arenas.

Meanwhile, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad delivered a speech congratulating the diplomats on assuming their posts, saying that His Highness the Amir



Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah delivers his speech.



Permanent Representative of Kuwait at the UN Office in Geneva and General Consul at the Swiss Federation Nasser Abdullah Al-Hain takes the oath.

Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah had put their trust in the appointed diplomats. The leadership's expectations were high of the newly appointed officials and hopefully they would live up to those expectations, he reiterated. Senior officials of the state had attended the ceremony. —KUNA

French embassy responds to visa-related rumors

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: The French Embassy to Kuwait held a press conference on Wednesday to respond to several rumors related to some aspects of the delivery of French visas in Kuwait. Ambassador of France to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher said that the rumors may conflate several separate though connected elements, part of which are factual information, while others are unchecked and malevolent suppositions.

The ambassador mentioned that the rumors include fraudulent backdoor channels that issue faster visa appointments, despite there being existing indeed limited channels for specific categories of people who have justifications for getting a visa according to a faster procedure. But these channels are absolutely transparent and devoid of any element of hidden price. "Their existence might create some confusion between legitimate fast-track procedures and illegal ones," she said.

She added, "Illegal practices or excessive invoicing of visa-linked services do exist. They can only be attributed to private intermediaries (travel agencies) hired by travelers without any intervention from the embassy, which does not exercise control over their activity. In addition to that, the electronic system of booking appointment is reliable and rigorously designed to prevent fraud. Notably, visa appointments are to be made mentioning a passport number, which cannot be modified afterwards."

The ambassador mentioned, "One factual element we have been fully aware of is the unusually high levels of visa applications, which have exceeded the capacities and entailed longer than usual delay of appointments in the visa center." She added, "We took all available measures to limit the impact of these delays. However, because of capacity limits, we were not in a position to eliminate them altogether and it might be so until the end of the summer period." Clarifying, "The travelers were reminded that visa applications can be applied several months ahead of the time of travel. However, many applications have still been applied quite lately, within less than a month before the travelling date."

The ambassador mentioned that in order to confront delays in visa issues, "the consular section at the embassy has mobilized its capacities to the full, so as



KUWAIT: Ambassador of France to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher speaks during the press conference. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

to increase the number of applications handled by authorized agents of the embassy, while the daily rate of applications has gone up from 200 to 300 a day, and from April to June the number of handled applications has increased from 3,000 to 6,000 a month. As a whole in three months from April to June, 13,000 applications were processed as compared with 2,400 in the corresponding period of 2021."

The ambassador reminded that there are some categories of visa applicants who are fully exempted of booking an appointment and can go directly to the visa center, like holders of diplomatic passports; military personnel in official mission; people travelling for medical reasons with a certificate; students; as well as spouses and children of French citizens. They should therefore especially not pay any fee-based private services to get an appointment.

Regarding the visa appointments issue, the ambassador said, "The embassy has decided to take measures in order to prevent fake appointments made by unauthorized agencies. Henceforth, prepayment of a visa appointment will have to be made at the time of booking it electronically, in order to validate it. A delay of 48 hours was until now available to make the prepayment, while cancelled appointments will, as from now, not result in immediate and automatic opening of new appointment slots using the freed capacity."

"It seems conceivable that intermediaries have abused this by creating some time in advance fictitious appointments, and then cancelling them so as to reuse them right away for a traveler with a late visa application. Freed slots will be reopened only later, at a not predictable time so as to thwart this abusive practice," she explained.

"New slots will henceforth be opened over a period of six months, so as to incentivize a maximum number of travelers to introduce their visa applications as early as possible. As of now, appointment taking has been opened until the end of 2022," she pointed out.

Kuwaiti aid convoy for tribal violence victims arrives in Sudan

KHARTOUM: Rahma International Society, a Kuwaiti charity, delivered famine relief and other aid items to the people affected by the recent tribal strife in the Blue Nile State, southeast Sudan, on Wednesday. Charge d'Affaires of Kuwait Embassy in Khartoum Mohammad Ghazi said, while attending the delivery ceremony, the aid convoy is a token of solidarity and fraternity between the peo-

ple of Kuwait and those of Sudan. In statements to the press, he expressed the benevolent Kuwaitis who donated to the aid campaign and the efforts of the Kuwaiti aid agency. Ambassador Ghazi affirmed firm support from the Kuwaiti government and people to sisterly Sudan in all conditions. Meanwhile, Abdul-Salam Younis, director of the care and reform society - the local partner of Rahma, thanked the Kuwaiti donors who contributed to the aid convoy. He said the assistances include nearly eight tons of foodstuffs and household items for the persons displaced by violence. According to UN estimates, more than 31,000 were displaced by the tribal violence, in addition to 105 deaths and 300 injuries. —KUNA



Local

Clean Fuels Project places Kuwait among top exporters of oil byproducts

Part of Kuwait's efforts to become regional economic hub



KUWAIT: These pictures provided by Kuwait National Petroleum Company show the Clean Fuels Project's facilities.

KUWAIT: The Clean Fuels Project (CFP) is one of the most significant and largest projects in the history of the Kuwaiti oil sector since it is widely expected to change Kuwait's status and future, and place it among major exporters of high-quality and eco-friendly products. The mega and strategic project comes within the framework of Kuwait's endeavor to become a regional economic attraction hub. Kuwait's great significance to the project was manifested by the presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in the inaugural ceremony of the state-owned Kuwait National Petroleum Company's (KNPC) clean fuel project at Mina Abdullah Refinery on March 22.

The project is a historic milestone that would unquestionably shore up Kuwait's presence as an influential and competitive state able to fulfill strict requirements and conditions in various world markets. This strategic project expands and upgrades Mina Abdullah and Mina Al-Ahmadi Refineries and boosts Kuwait's global position in the oil refining industry. In addition to advanced conversion capabilities, the two refineries' operational excellence, reliability and safety performance are greatly upgraded. Energy efficiency and environment protection are also greatly enhanced. Their clean products conform to US, European and Asian specifications, including Euro-4 and Euro-5. Some 199 companies from 23 countries participated in the manufacturing of equipment and technology used in the implementation of this mega project.

Global advancement

In this context, KNPC's Deputy CEO for Administrative and Commercial Affairs and Official

Spokesman Ahed Al-Khurayif said due to global oil industry advancement and variables in different environment requirements locally and internationally, the company has carried out its Clean Fuel Project that has helped revamp product specifications in line with the required global standards. Speaking to the press, he said the project reflects the company's general strategic vision to become one of the most competitive and advanced refining companies around the world, and manifests the optimal usage of the country's oil resources as one of the top strategic goals of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC).

The project is globally unique since the company managed to carry out its huge works at the existing refineries while, at the same time, carrying on production and fulfilling relevant obligations towards its customers both at home and abroad, he said. He estimated that the capex of the Clean Fuels Project hit KD 4.68 billion (around \$15.2 billion), considering the financing process as the largest in the history of

Kuwait's oil industry. The company's official elaborated that the KPC funded 30 percent of the project's capex, while the remaining 70 percent was bankrolled out of foreign financing sources. Owing to the mammoth size of this project, it was divided into three main parts, with each part having been executed by a consortium of international companies, Khurayif pointed out. The number of new manufacturing units carried out as part of the project at the two refineries hit 76; divided into 39 production units, 37 service units, in addition to the revamping of 30 units involving seven production units and 23 service units, he said.

Following the successful completion of the project, the refining capacity of Mina Abdullah and Mina Al-



Ahmadi refineries has surged to 454,000 and 346,000 barrels per day (bpd) respectively, the official remarked. Thus, this 800,000-bpd quantity, together with the expected 600,000-bpd production capacity of Al-Zour oil refinery, will take the refined oil total up to 1.4 million bpd, thus achieving the best value added and highest possible revenue of hydrocarbon resources, he boasted. One of the main aims of the project is to boost the conversion capacity of the company's refineries by means of converting heavy low-quality products into high-quality ones. The products meet Euro-4/Euro-5 specifications. Therefore, the environmental impact is greatly reduced with much less content of SOx, NOx and other pollutants. For example, sulfur content in gasoline will be cut down from 500 ppm into 10 ppm, and in gasoil from 5,000 ppm into 10 ppm, he added.

Ship fuel oil

Furthermore, the KNPC is now prepared to produce ship fuel oil (Bunker fuel), which contains 0.5 percent of sulfur, in line with the requirements of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) put in place in 2020, he elaborated. On job opportunities created by the project, Khurayif said the Clean Fuels Project is one of the strategic projects that serve Kuwait's 2035 vision by

providing Kuwaiti nationals with job opportunities. Since it was launched, the project has now created around 800 jobs for Kuwaiti nationals, and developed their capabilities and skills, he added. The project is also expected to create more jobs and promote local economic development, based on relevant mechanisms for maintenance and service contracts, he said, noting that nationals must make up at least 30 percent of workforce per contract.

Internal and external training courses were held for some 650 newly recruited employees, added the KNPC's Deputy CEO for Administrative and Commercial Affairs and Official Spokesman. On the importance of the project to the national economy, he expounded that local spending was one of the key aspects of the project, with its contractors having spent a total KD 1.1 billion (around \$3.57 billion) at the local market during all execution phases. As for environmental significance, he said the company's products meet the strictest global environment specifications, and the project meets the local power plants' needs of clean low-sulfur fuel, thus reducing environmental hazards. On major difficulties and challenges the project faced, he said the COVID-19 pandemic was a key challenge, given that it had hit the entire world at a time when the project was almost done. —KUNA



Crackdown targets labor law breakers in Salmiya

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The joint tripartite commission, led by the General Administration of Residence Affairs' Investigations, organized a sudden inspection security campaign in several Salmiya malls on Tuesday. The inspection resulted in the arrest of 19 violators of labor law, who were referred to the proper authorities to take necessary measures against them.

The campaign was launched with the aim of inspecting workers in Salmiya and detect those who violate the labor law, Dr Fahd Al-Murad, Director of the Labor Inspection Department at Public Authority for Manpower (PAM), said on the sidelines of the campaign. "Today's campaign aimed at regulating the labor market, where we spotted several violations in several malls in Salmiya," he said. "Several booth salesmen were working illegally, and there were many unlicensed booths."

Murad revealed that most of the workers that



KUWAIT: Inspectors are seen during the crackdown. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

were arrested have family visas (article 22) and there were children aged under 18 among the workers. He stressed that PAM does not issue work permits for juveniles, unless under certain conditions. "A special work permit must be issued for juveniles, most of whom are employed in the summer for a short period," he explained. "Article 19 of the labor law prohibits the employment of children under the age of 15, and Article 20 regulates the work of those who are 15-18 years old according to specific conditions. So far,

no company has come to issue a work permit for juveniles."

As for the violators, he indicated that there are two penalties; a criminal penalty for violating Article 10 of the labor law, punished by a fine ranging from KD 2,000 to 10,000, and/or imprisonment for up to three years. The other penalty is taken against the company; the employer's file will be suspended and followed up to verify that he is not practicing his business. Murad affirmed that any employment of a worker in the labor market

under the name 'training period' or 'part-time job' is considered illegal.

In the meantime, Ibrahim Al-Sabaan, the head of the emergency team at Kuwait Municipality - Hawalli Governorate branch, said, "We have cooperated with the joint committee to control several workers carrying out an activity not mentioned in the company's license. An administrative closure will be requested by the municipality."

"We usually inspect public places, but recently it was monitored that booth workers escaped when we enter the mall, so we formed the team today to monitor those violations. A violation has now been issued and there will be a serious penalty on the worker or the license holder of a fine ranging from KD 500 to 1,000 and a travel ban," he noted.



Dr Fahd Al-Murad



Ibrahim Al-Sabaan

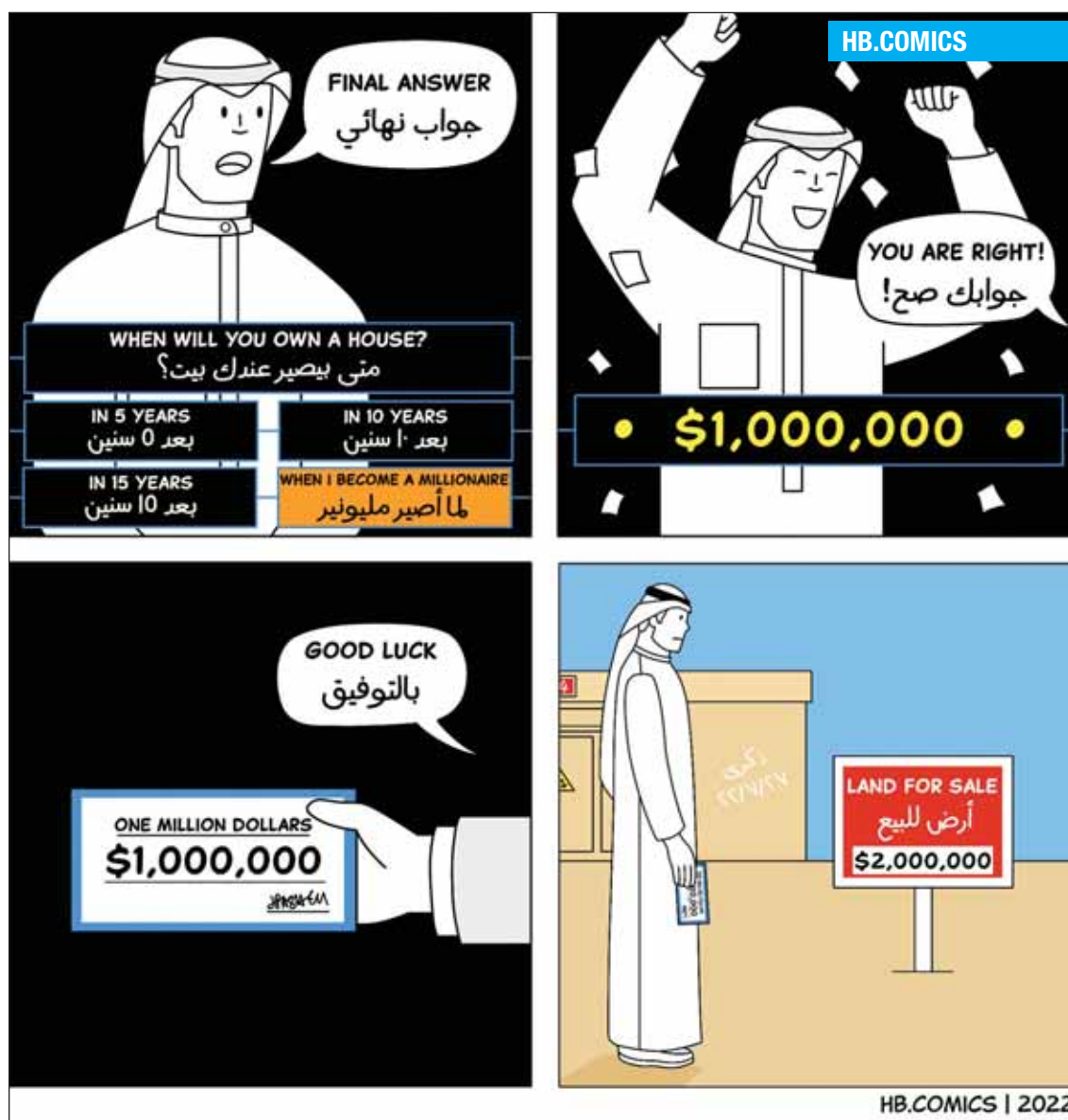
Local

Kuwait Times

The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

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Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.comSudad Al-Sabah
commends
Bahraini official

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti poet Sheikh Dr Sudad Al-Sabah sent a supporting letter to Sheikh Mai bint Mohammad Al-Khalifa, Head of Bahrain's culture and antiquities authority, after media reports that she lost her job after she refused to shake hands with the Zionist entity's Ambassador in Manama last month during the funeral of American Ambassador to Bahrain, as she left when she learned the Ambassador was present, and asked the American Embassy not to publish any picture of her in the funeral. Sheikh Dr Sudad Al-Sabah said in her letter to Sheikh Mai, "A kiss on your hand that insisted to remain clean, and a kiss for the heart that did not accept to compromise. You were during your years of work a torch of hope and a model for success I am very proud of you."

KFAS declares
winners of 2021 Jaber
Al-Ahmad's award

KUWAIT: Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) on Wednesday announced the winners of Jaber Al-Ahmad Award for Young Researchers in 2021. In a press statement, KFAS Director General Khaled Al-Fadhel said that Dr Abdullah Al-Azmi, a professor at Mathematics Department of Faculty of Science at Kuwait University, won the prize in the field of natural sciences and mathematics, while Dr Ahmad Al-Lafi from the Department of Food and Nutrition in the College of Biosciences at Kuwait University won the award of biological sciences.

Dr Mashari Al-Mousa from the Department of Arabic Language at the College of Arts at Kuwait University won the social and human sciences award, and Dr Hisham Ibrahim Al-Majmad from the Accounting Department at the College of Business Studies at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, won the award for administrative and economic sciences. The award was withheld in the field of engineering sciences and the field of medical and allied sciences. Fadhel wished further success for researchers who enrich sciences in various fields.

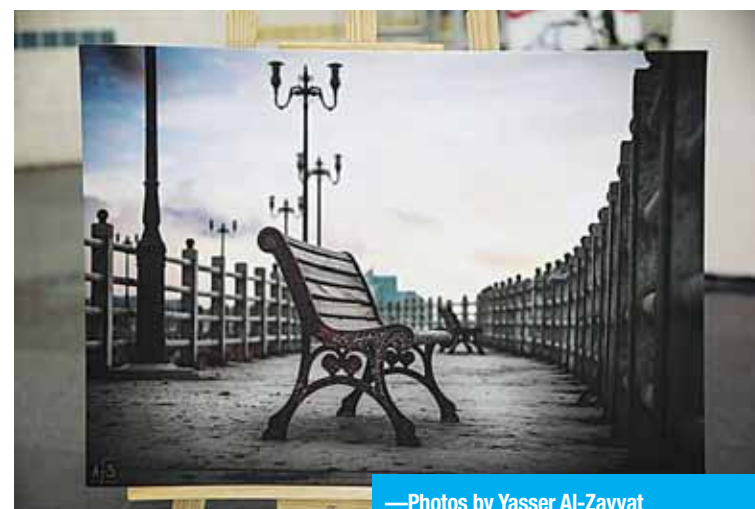
The Prize for Young Researchers was established in 1988, initiated by the late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to honor young Kuwaiti scientists and researchers who hold a PhD in various fields of knowledge and encourage them to increase their scientific activity for the benefit of the society. —KUNA



Khaled Al-Fadhel

Art show sheds light on importance
of birds to Kuwait's environment

‘Feather and Art’ held in cooperation with the Kuwaiti Awareness Team of Birds



—Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (GSSCPD) organized on Wednesday an exhibition entitled 'Feather and Art' in cooperation with the Kuwaiti Awareness Team of Birds.

Mohammad Anber, Vice President of the Kuwaiti Awareness Team of Birds, told Kuwait Times that the exhibition was held to raise awareness of the birds through pictures and paintings, adding "We are participating in the exhibition in cooperation with GSSCPD. Today's exhibition is diverse and is the first of its kind to combine pictures of painters and photographers."

He pointed out that his team is the first in the Middle East that combines talking birds' species and birds of prey. "We are an environmental volunteer team," he noted. "We aspire to raise a conscious generation to preserve the environment. We aim to create an educated and aware generation of

the importance of endemic and migratory birds in environmental balance and work to make Kuwait and the Gulf States capitals for awareness and environmental culture."

Anber affirmed that the Kuwaiti team is against poaching. "The ecological balance must be preserved. For example, one owl eats between 1,000 to 2,000 mice per year," he said. "If we killed or hunted owls, the number of mice will increase, will start attacking homes and areas and we will get back to the plague era."

"We have been working on community awareness for the past six years, by organizing exhibitions and awareness campaigns in schools and universities and cooperation with government ministries. We visited

almost 80 percent of Kuwait schools. The Kuwaiti people became more aware, and we see this through the children in schools. We must build an environmentally conscious generation," he added.

The Kuwaiti Awareness Team of Birds aims to spread environmental awareness, assist governmental agencies and spread the culture of the environment. It also aims to spread the culture of not hunting endemic and migratory birds, raise awareness about how to keep birds, dissemination of public information on endemic and migratory birds, and enrich bird breeders' information in terms of breeding and nutrition.

The two-day exhibition aims to spread aware-

meetings, attending weekly training sessions, and trying on different roles within the company, including being a rider for a day.

Seham Al-Husaini, General Manager at Deliveroo, stated that: "At Deliveroo, we proudly support the communities we operate in, and a large part of that community is our youth. By launching this program, we hope to give students a chance to gain real-life work experiences; in turn, these experiences will help them acquire hands-on knowledge that will complement all the skills they acquired from the classroom setting. Additionally, we hope we can ease the post-graduation transition phase by providing our interns with the tools, skills, and networking opportunities they will need to advance in the local job market."

Husaini continued: "We believe a great workplace represents the diversity of the world we live in. All you need is a passion for food and a desire to be part of



ness about the environment and the importance of birds in the Kuwaiti environment. The exhibition is held in the lobby of GSSCPD premises on the Arabian Gulf Street. It is open on July 27-28, 2022, from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Deliveroo launches summer internship
program in partnership with LOYAC

KUWAIT: Deliveroo is launching a summer internship program geared towards university students in partnership with LOYAC, a nonprofit organization working towards the overall development of the youth. The program will offer the interns a chance to apply their practical and theoretical skills across various departments at Deliveroo, where students will witness day-to-day job duties first-hand and acquire knowledge from real work experiences.

The four weeks internship will start on July 31, with a comprehensive orientation, which will help students ease into the workplace and get to know their fellow

colleagues, job requirements, and expectations. The interns were accepted into Deliveroo's competitive internship program after having undergone an initial interview by LOYAC, and passing their second and final interview with the Deliveroo team.

Deliveroo employees will work closely with interns to ensure they are mentored and gain learnings from multiple departments across the business. Interns will be rotating through the company's business development, sales, marketing, commercial, onboarding, and operations departments. During the four-week program, the interns will be shadowing their colleagues in



Seham Al-Husaini

one of the fastest-growing food delivery companies around." Deliveroo recently celebrated its third year of business in the Kuwaiti market, delivering hundreds of thousands of meals to hungry customers around the country. Since its launch, Deliveroo has set itself apart with its unbeatable customer service, and was recently named the "Best Delivery App" by Service Hero, which provides the region's only consumer-powered customer satisfaction index. With exclusive restaurant partners, special offers and meal deals, Deliveroo Kuwait is always here to deliver.



LAC STE. ANNE, Canada: Pope Francis participates in the Lac Ste. Anne Pilgrimage and Liturgy of the Word at Lac Ste. Anne, northwest of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. — AFP

Pope visits sacred lake in Canada

‘Finally a pope himself is finally acknowledging yes, I’m sorry’

LAC STE. ANNE, Canada: Pope Francis called for “healing” Tuesday as he joined a pilgrimage to a sacred lake in Canada, one day after making a landmark apology for the abuse of Indigenous children at Catholic-run schools.

The 85-year-old pontiff prayed for the Church to choose “truth” over “defending the institution” as he visited Lac Ste Anne, some 80 kilometers (50 miles) west of Edmonton, where some of Canada’s Indigenous people began their relationship with Catholicism generations ago. The lake is one of the most important pilgrimage sites in North America. Every year since the end of the 19th century, thousands of pilgrims mainly from Canada and the United States have come to bathe and pray in the healing waters, according to Indigenous rites.

Hundreds of faithful, many of them Indigenous, fell silent as the pope, who has been suffering with knee pain, was wheeled carefully to the water’s edge and prayed in silence there for several minutes. He was then wheeled to a shrine, sprinkling some of those assembled with water he had blessed from the lake on the way, as Indigenous people drummed and chanted.

Lamenting the “terrible effects of colonization, the indelible pain of so many families, grandparents and children,” Francis told those gathered for a liturgical cel-

ebration that their presence was “testimony of resilience and a fresh start.”

“All of us, as (a) Church, now need healing: Healing from the temptation of closing in on ourselves, of defending the institution rather than seeking the truth,” the pope continued. Tuesday marked the second day of



Testimony of resilience

what Francis has called a “penitential” journey, a major tour of Canada which he began Monday with the long-awaited apology to a gathering of Indigenous people in the community of Maskwacis, south of Edmonton.

From the late 1800s to the 1990s, Canada’s government sent about 150,000 children into 139 residential schools run by the Church, where they were cut off from their families, language and culture. Many were physi-

cally and sexually abused, and thousands are believed to have died of disease, malnutrition or neglect.

‘Part of a process’

For some, the healing had already begun. Cindy Dearhead, a First Nations woman who was a student in one of the infamous schools, said she felt the pope’s apology was “important.” “It was a long time coming, but finally a pope himself is finally acknowledging yes, I’m sorry,” she told AFP at Lac Ste Anne.

“For those of us that suffered into generations of trauma, maybe we can have healing and can understand what our parents came through and maybe feel better.” But for many others that healing may well depend on what comes next.

“I think the apology has always been one thing, part of a process of reconciliation. To me, the actions that need to come behind it are very important,” said Chief Peter Powder of the Mikisew Cree First Nations.

At Lac Ste Anne, the leader of the world’s 1.3 billion Catholics appeared tired and weakened by knee pain that has seen him use a wheelchair often in recent months. His pilgrimage came hours after he delivered a mass to tens of thousands of people thronging a stadium in Edmonton, the capital of Alberta, one of the largest open-air events of his visit.

There he prayed for a “future in which the history of violence and marginalization suffered by our Indigenous brothers and sisters is never repeated.” At both events traditional music filled the air, while Indigenous people in the crowd were recognizable by their orange shirts-intended to symbolize what they endured in the country’s infamous residential schools. Francis greeted the crowds both times-in his wheelchair at the lake, and in the popemobile at the stadium-kissing babies and blessing children.

Generational trauma

Since May 2021, more than 1,300 unmarked graves have been discovered at the sites of the former schools, sending shockwaves through Canada-which has slowly begun to acknowledge this long, dark chapter in its history.

More than 4,000 children have been identified as dying in the schools, but the true toll is estimated to be at least 6,000. The abuse created trauma for generations. On Wednesday the pope will fly to Quebec City, before ending his trip on Friday in Iqaluit, capital of the northern territory of Nunavut and home to the largest Inuit population in Canada. There he will meet again with former residential school students, before returning to Italy. — AFP

Russia to quit International Space Station ‘after 2024’

MOSCOW: Moscow said Tuesday it was leaving the International Space Station “after 2024” amid tensions with the West, in a move analysts warned could lead to a halt of Russian-crewed flights. The confirmation of the long-mooted move comes as ties unravel between the Kremlin and the West over Moscow’s military intervention in Ukraine and several rounds of devastating sanctions against Russia, including its space sector.

Space experts said Russia’s departure from the International Space Station would seriously affect the country’s space sector and deal a significant blow to its programme of crewed flights, a major source of Russian pride. “Of course, we will fulfil all our obligations to our partners, but the decision to leave this station after 2024 has been made,” Yuri Borisov, the new head of Russian space agency Roscosmos, told President Vladimir Putin, according to a Kremlin account of their meeting.

“I think that by this time we will start putting

together a Russian orbital station,” Borisov added, calling it the domestic space programme’s main “priority”. “Good,” Putin replied. The ISS is due to be retired after 2024, although US space agency NASA says it can remain operational until at least 2030.

The ISS was launched in 1998 at a time of hope for US-Russia cooperation following their Space Race competition during the Cold War. The United States said it was taken by surprise by the announcement. “It’s an unfortunate development given the critical scientific work performed at the ISS, the valuable professional collaboration our space agencies have had over the years,” State Department spokesman Ned Price said.

In a statement to AFP, NASA administrator Bill Nelson said the agency “has not been made aware of decisions from any of the partners, though we are continuing to build future capabilities to assure our major presence in low-Earth orbit”.

Until now, space exploration has been one of the few areas where cooperation between Russia and the United States and its allies had not been wrecked by tensions over Ukraine and elsewhere.

Russia is heavily reliant on imports of everything from manufacturing equipment to consumer goods, and the effects of Western sanctions are expected to wreak havoc on the country’s economy in the long term. Space expert Vadim Lukashovich said space science cannot flourish in a heavily sanctioned country.—AFP



MOSCOW, Russia: Russian President Vladimir Putin meets with Russia’s space agency Roscosmos head Yuri Borisov at the Kremlin in Moscow. — AFP

Sri Lanka arrests protest leaders, extends emergency

COLOMBO: Two activists who helped lead mass demonstrations that toppled Sri Lanka’s president were arrested Wednesday, police said, as parliament extended tough emergency laws imposed to restore order. Gotabaya Rajapaksa was forced to flee when tens of thousands of protesters, incensed by the island

nation’s unprecedented economic crisis, stormed his residence in the capital Colombo. He later flew to Singapore and tendered his resignation while his successor Ranil Wickremesinghe declared a state of emergency and vowed a tough line against “trouble-makers”.

Police said in separate Wednesday statements that they had arrested activists Kusal Sandaruwan and Weranga Pushpika on unlawful assembly charges. After Rajapaksa fled, Sandaruwan was seen in social media footage counting a large cache of banknotes found in the president’s home.

Police have also released photographs of 14 suspects wanted in connection with an arson attack on Wickremesinghe’s home on the same day the presi-

dent’s office and residence were overrun. The arrests of the two activists come a day after student leader Dhaniz Ali was nabbed when he boarded a Dubai-bound flight at the country’s main airport in the evening.

Police said there was a warrant for his arrest in connection with a magistrate’s court case, without giving further details. Lawmakers also voted Wednesday to formalise the state of emergency imposed by Wickremesinghe until mid-August.

The emergency ordinance, which empowers troops to arrest and detain suspects for long periods, would have lapsed on Wednesday if it had not been ratified by parliament. Police last week demolished the capital’s main anti-government protest camp in a pre-dawn

assault that raised alarm among foreign diplomats and rights groups.

Public anger simmered for months in Sri Lanka before the huge demonstration on July 9 that brought an end to Rajapaksa’s rule. He had been blamed for mismanaging the nation’s finances and steering the economy into a tailspin after the country ran out of foreign currency needed to import vital goods.

Sri Lanka’s 22 million people have endured months of lengthy blackouts, record inflation and shortages of food, fuel and petrol. Protesters had also demanded the resignation of Wickremesinghe and accused him of protecting the Rajapaksa clan, who have dominated Sri Lankan politics for much of the last two decades. — AFP

said. “But that’s not what I will do. I can’t do that.

“They really want to damage me so I can no longer go back to work for you,” he said. “And I don’t think that’s going to happen,” he added, prompting chants from the crowd of “Four more years!”

‘Cesspool of crime’

Trump lashed out repeatedly at Democratic President Joe Biden, blaming him for the country’s ills. “We are a nation in decline,” he said. “We are a failing nation.” “Inflation is the highest in 49 years,” Trump said “Gas prices have reached the highest in the history of our country.”

He accused Biden of allowing an “invasion” by millions of migrants crossing the southern border. “The next Republican president must immediately implement every aspect of the Trump agenda that achieved the most secure border in history,” he said.

Trump said the United States “is now a cesspool of crime.” “We have blood, death and suffering on a scale once unthinkable,” he said. “Democrat-run cities are settling all-time murder records.” He accused Biden of having “surrendered in Afghanistan,” and allowing Russia to invade Ukraine. “It would never ever, ever have happened if I was your commander-in-chief,” he said. Since taking his last Air Force One flight from Washington to Florida on January 20 last year, Trump has remained the country’s most polarizing figure, continuing his unprecedented campaign to sow doubts about his 2020 election loss to Biden.

For weeks, Washington has been riveted by hearings in Congress about the January 6 storming of the Capitol by a Trump mob and his attempts to overturn the election. With Biden’s approval rating currently below 40 percent and Democrats forecasted to lose control of Congress in November midterm elections, Trump is apparently bullish that he could ride the Republican wave all the way to the White House in 2024. On the Democratic side, fury at Trump is also providing energy in the run-up to the midterms. The House committee hearings have laid out evidence that Trump oversaw nothing less than an attempt to break US democracy, first through trying to rig electoral procedures behind the scenes and finally in encouraging a mob to attack legislators certifying his loss.—AFP

International

Biden busts out of COVID isolation with gym session

‘I can walk out to the balcony and holler at you’

WASHINGTON: Audio-bombed by a barking pet dog, wondering if he looks OK on video conference, and finally being allowed to hit the gym — Joe Biden may be the most powerful man in the world but the ups and downs of COVID isolation are the same as for anyone else. Tuesday was Biden's fifth day confined to quarters and his doctor, Kevin O'Connor, said the president has now completed a five-day course of the therapeutic Paxlovid, with nearly all symptoms of the coronavirus gone.

“His symptoms have now almost completely resolved,” O'Connor said in a memorandum. Biden is expected to be released from isolation once he's had a negative test. But little question that the 79-year-old is already beyond ready, at least mentally.

While the doctor focused mostly on items like healthy oxygen saturation, pulse and temperature, the line really speaking to Biden's state was that he “feels well enough to resume his physical exercise regime.”

Unlike his predecessor Donald Trump, who mused



Symptoms have completely resolved

that gyms and the like may actually be bad for you. Biden works out every morning, as well as taking gentle bike rides at home in Delaware on weekends. “He asked last night to exercise,” Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said. “He likes to do weights, he likes to do the treadmills.”

On-screen jokes

The announcement last week that he had tested pos-



US President Joe Biden

itive for COVID-19 meant Biden had to cancel domestic travel plans and reduce work hours in the White House, although staff emphasized that he continues to carry out full duties.

Although he is expected to return to working in person this week, Tuesday was another virtual day, with the president meeting executives from South Korean giant

SK on plans to invest \$22 billion in semiconductors and other high-tech industries.

While visitors and senior staff gathered in the White House's Roosevelt Room, Biden appeared on a video screen, laughing as he pointed out that he was in fact just a few doors away in the same building. “I can walk out to the balcony and holler at you,” he said.

Between discussing weighty issues of South Korean-US ties, Biden revealed the more human aspects of working from home that would be familiar to much of the planet over the last couple years. “I’m feeling great. I hope it comes across” on screen, Biden quipped. “I hope I look as good as I usually do, which is not that good.” Then during an exchange with the executives on skilled workforces, a loud dog bark — possibly Biden's German Shepherd Commander — was heard interrupting the live feed. Jean-Pierre said Biden is clearly on the mend. “It brought a smile to my face when I saw he wants to work out,” she said. — AFP

Russians get a taste of Crimea summer vacation

SEVASTOPOL: Russian tourist Alexandra Rumyantseva is tanning on a beach in Moscow-annexed Crimea, not far away from the front lines of Ukraine's eastern and southern territories. Sitting on a rock in a white bikini by clear Black Sea waters on the outskirts of Sevastopol, Rumyantseva looks up as a Russian fighter jet whizzes through the perfectly blue sky. “Of course, I cannot say that we are in a fully relaxed state,” she told AFP. The front is around 300 kilometres (190 miles) north of Sevastopol —

Crimea's largest city and home to the Russian Black Sea fleet.

Despite the fighting nearby, the Saint Petersburg charity worker chose to have her beach break with her husband and two sons on the peninsula.

Moscow's intervention in Ukraine, the onset of Western sanctions, severed air links with Europe and mounting economic troubles at home have made a lot of popular tourist destinations in Europe and elsewhere off limits to Russian tourists.

But even getting to Crimea, annexed by Russia from Ukraine in 2014 and a popular beach destination, is difficult. Russia's balmy Black Sea coast and Crimea have become hard to reach due to the closure of airspace in the south over the fighting in Ukraine.

Rumyantseva's family drove 2,500 kilometres. They used a land bridge Moscow built to connect the peninsula to mainland Russia. Rumyantseva said there were rumours the bridge could be blown up and that “many

were worried”, but the family decided to risk it anyway. On their way, they saw a military convoy, seemingly on its way to the front.

‘People are scared’

When AFP visited Sevastopol on a hot July day, Russian warships were visible in the distance as beachgoers cooled off in the sea.

Aside from the ships and occasional jet sounds, few signs pointed to the full-scale military campaign next door. Teenagers jumped off rocks and bare-chested men made shashliki (grilled meat), a Russian summer favourite. In the city centre, Russian patriotic music rang out and souvenirs featuring the letter Z — a symbol of Moscow's forces fighting in Ukraine — were offered to visitors. Fewer tourists than usual have showed up in Crimea this summer.

“It seems like it is mainly locals here,” said 28-year-old Anna Zaluzhnaya, who works in the food industry, as she lounged in the sun. Local business-people, who rely on tourism as the peninsula is largely cut off from the world due to sanctions, are feeling the effects.

Albert Agagulyan, 69, runs a small kebab joint on a beach outside Sevastopol. The retired fighter pilot said he could not afford to send his child to summer camp this year. “People are not coming here because they are scared,” he added.

‘Worried by these events’

Crimea borders the southern Ukrainian region of Kherson — now controlled by Moscow — and the southeastern region of Zaporizhzhia — partially occupied by the Russian army — is also nearby. Kyiv has pledged to retake lost southern territories captured by Russian troops, and some believe that the possibility of Ukrainian strikes on Crimea cannot be ruled out.

While some prefer not to discuss politics, locals like Viktor Borodulin say they have been closely following Moscow's military campaign in Ukraine.

“I am very worried by these events,” said the 77-year-old engineer. He said he was particularly saddened by the sinking of the Russian cruiser Moskva in April. Borodulin waxed nostalgic for the Soviet past and lit up when he spoke of the possibility of buying fruit and vegetables from Moscow-occupied southern Ukraine. “Today I even bought some products from Kherson,” he said. “For me, it is a great joy.” — AFP



SEVASTOPOL: People relax on a beach of the Black Sea in Sevastopol, the largest city on the Crimean Peninsula and its most important port and naval base. — AFP

Powerful quake hits northern...

Continued from Page 1

cracks,” police chief Major Nazareno Emia added. “Power was cut off and internet as well.” Two construction workers in the nearby landlocked province of Benguet died in separate incidents, police said.

Another person was killed when boulders smashed into the building site where he was working in Kalinga province, police said. Six other workers were injured. Police said an elderly woman in Suyo municipality in Ilocos Sur province suffered fatal injuries after she was buried by a landslide while out walking. In Vigan City, a UNESCO World Heritage site in Ilocos Sur, centuries-old structures built during the Spanish colonial period were damaged, police said.

Ring of Fire

The Philippines is regularly rocked by quakes due to its location on the Pacific “Ring of Fire”, an arc of intense seismic activity that stretches from Japan through Southeast Asia and across the Pacific basin. Wednesday's quake was one of the strongest recorded in the Philippines in years and was felt across swathes of Luzon island, the most populous in the archipelago.

It was followed by nearly 300 aftershocks, the local seismological agency said. Several of the subsequent quakes measured from magnitude 4.7 to 5.2, according to USGS.

Residents and office workers in Manila were evacuated from high-rise buildings. “I grabbed money and our belongings and then I went out with my parents,” said Christina Gonzales, 19, after fleeing a city hotel. Verified video footage posted on Facebook showed the Bantay Bell Tower in the popular tourist destination of Vigan partially crumbling.

Two visitors suffered minor injuries from falling debris, an official said. Other buildings in the city were also damaged. “We can't rule out the possibility of another strong earthquake,” said Renato Solidum, director of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, whose family stronghold is in the north, said he would delay visiting the region to avoid causing disruption. He urged people to remain in emergency shelters until their homes have been checked for damage.

Military personnel have been deployed to Abra to help with rescue operations. At least 58 landslides have been reported. Interior Secretary Benjamin Abalos said. National disaster agency spokesman Mark Timbal said road-clearing operations were under way. There had been no reports of damage to local dams. In October 2013, a magnitude 7.1 earthquake struck Bohol Island in the central Philippines, killing more than 200 people and triggering landslides. — AFP



VIGAN: A car is buried under debris from a ruined old house in Vigan city, Ilocos Sur province north of Manila on July 27, 2022, after a 7.0-magnitude earthquake hit the northern Philippines. — AFP

Hong Kong must repeal national security law: UN

GENEVA: A UN watchdog voiced alarm Wednesday at deteriorating rights in Hong Kong, especially calling on the Chinese territory to repeal the sweeping National Security Law imposed by Beijing two years ago.

The UN Human Rights Committee, made up of 18 independent experts, said it was “deeply concerned about the overly broad interpretation of and arbitrary application of the law.” It said that the law had reportedly led to “the arrests of over 200 persons since its enactment in 2020, including 12 children, on grounds of endangering national security.” The committee, which oversees respect for global rules on civil and political rights, said Hong Kong should “take concrete steps to repeal the current national security law and, in the meantime, refrain from applying the law.”

The 2020 security law, imposed amid a sweeping crackdown after pro-democracy protests engulfed the city, criminalised subversion, secession, terrorism and collusion with foreign forces. Since the law took effect, opposition has been quashed and most leading democracy figures have fled the country, been disqualified from office or jailed. In its fourth regular review of Hong Kong, long a semi-autonomous territory that earlier this month marked the 25th anniversary of its handover from Britain, the committee lamented that the security law had been enacted “without consultation with public and civil society” in the city.

It warned that the security law's “lack of clarity” made it difficult to determine what behaviours and conduct constituted a criminal offence. It also decreed that the law resuscitated sedition as an offence for the first time in decades, pointing to how it was used to charge academics, journalists and others “for having exercised their legitimate right to freedom of speech.”

“The Committee is concerned about the adverse effect of the overly broad interpretation and arbitrary application of the national security law and sedition legislation, and its impact on the exercise of freedom of expression,” it said. — AFP



WUHAN: Workers wearing protective suit walk next to Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan, in China's central Hubei province. — AFP

New studies point to natural COVID origin

GENEVA: The World Health Organization on Wednesday welcomed new studies concluding that COVID-19 first emerged at an animal market in China's Wuhan, but insisted it was too early to rule out other theories. “All hypotheses remain on the table,” WHO emergencies director Michael Ryan told reporters from the UN health agency's Geneva headquarters. Solving the mystery of where the SARS CoV-2 virus came from and how it began spreading among humans is viewed as vital to averting future pandemics.

The two main theories that have been hotly debated since COVID first surfaced in China in late 2019 have centered on the virus naturally spilling over from bats to an intermediary animal and into humans or escaping due to a lab accident. Two peer-reviewed studies published in Science Tuesday claimed to have tipped the balance in the debate about the virus's origins, concluding it must have been introduced naturally through the wildlife trade at the Wuhan market.

The first paper analyzed the geographic pattern of COVID cases in the outbreak's first month, December 2019, showing the first cases were tightly clustered around Wuhan's Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market. The second examined genomic data from the earliest cases to study the virus' early evolution, concluding it was unlikely the coronavirus circulated widely in humans prior to November 2019.

Ryan welcomed the studies. “This is a scientific detective story that goes on. Each new piece of information adds to the overall assessment,” he said, stressing though that “all hypotheses remain on the table until you can prove that one hypothesis is the explanatory hypothesis.” Maria Van Kerkhove, WHO's technical lead for COVID-19, welcomed the studies, as well as another one published this week looking at environmental samples. WHO experts, she said, had already evaluated the studies, which were previously posted as “preprints” before being vetted by scientific peer review. “These are good analyses,” she told reporters, but stressed that more studies on the ground in China and beyond were needed before any final conclusions could be drawn. “What is really critical ... is looking further within China, further within Wuhan, and in the markets within Wuhan” with further studies to “look at where the animals who were sold at those markets came from... and looking at the people who worked at those source farms”, she said. — AFP

International

US will 'bear all consequences' if Pelosi visits Taiwan: China

Ties between the two global superpowers have continued to deteriorate

BEIJING: China warned Wednesday that Washington would "bear the consequences" if US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visits Taiwan, with tensions soaring ahead of an expected phone call between the two countries' leaders. Beijing has hit back hard against the United States after reports emerged last week that Pelosi, a Democrat who is second in line to the presidency, could visit the self-ruled island of Taiwan in August.

The potential visit is likely to dominate a phone call between Chinese President Xi Jinping and US counterpart Joe Biden, which the US leader has said he expects will take place this week. Ties between the two global superpowers have continued to deteriorate under Biden's presidency, over issues including Taiwan, human rights and technology sector competition.

Beijing this week warned that it was "getting ready" for a possible visit by Pelosi, which would be the first to Taiwan by a sitting US House speaker since 1997. "We are firmly opposed to Speaker Pelosi's visit to Taiwan," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said at a regular press conference Wednesday.

"If the US pushes ahead and challenges China's bottom line... the US side will bear all the consequences," he added. A possible visit by Pelosi-yet to be confirmed by the senior Democrat-has stirred

alarm in Biden's administration, which fears the trip may cross red lines for China.

It also comes at an especially fraught time as Chinese President Xi Jinping prepares to cement his rule later this year at a major party meeting amid economic headwinds. Last week Biden said the US military thought a visit was "not a good idea right now".

'Show support'

Democratic Taiwan lives under constant threat of being invaded by China, which views it as part of its territory to be seized by force if necessary. China's air incursions near Taiwan have risen sharply this year as Beijing works to isolate the island on the international stage.

Pelosi told reporters last week it was "important for us to show support for Taiwan", while denying Congress was pushing for independence for the island. In 1979 Washington switched relations from Taipei to Beijing, and successive administrations have been careful to recognise only "one China" by not sending top-ranking

officials to Taiwan.

Washington has had a long-standing policy of strategic ambiguity on whether it would intervene militarily in the event of a Chinese attack on the island. Biden recently said the United States was ready to defend Taiwan militarily in an invasion-going beyond just providing weapons-although the White House has walked back his remarks.

The US State Department in April approved the potential sale of equipment, training and other items to support Taiwan's Air Defense System in a deal valued at up to \$95 million. But Taiwan enjoys bipartisan backing in divided Washington and China's warnings have only fuelled calls for Pelosi to go ahead.

She has long been an outspoken critic of Beijing's human rights record, in 1991 outraging her hosts by unfurling a banner in Tiananmen Square in memory of pro-democracy demonstrators killed there two years earlier.

Taipei has said it welcomes visits from any "friendly foreign guests" and Premier Su Tseng-



Trip may cross red lines for China

Singapore extends visa for Sri Lanka's ex-leader

SINGAPORE: Singapore has extended a short-stay visa for Sri Lanka's deposed president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, local media in the city-state reported on Wednesday. Rajapaksa fled his country on July 13, after his official residence was stormed by thousands of protesters who had demonstrated for months against the island nation's painful economic crisis.

He first escaped to the Maldives in a military plane and travelled on to Singapore, where he has been staying on a short-term visit pass since July 14. Rajapaksa's 14-day visit pass has been

extended, allowing him to stay until August 11, the Straits Times newspaper reported Wednesday, without citing a source.

Singapore's Immigration and Checkpoints Authority told AFP it had no further comment apart from a previous statement that confirmed Rajapaksa was allowed to enter Singapore. Authorities had earlier said Rajapaksa entered the country on a "private visit" and was not seeking asylum.

Sri Lanka's cabinet spokesperson Bandula Gunawardena told reporters in Colombo on Tuesday that Rajapaksa is

not in hiding and is expected to return to his country, but added that the government has not been informed about his travel plans.

"He is not in hiding and my understanding is that he will return, but if there is anything to the contrary, the state authorities will inform him and ensure that there is no danger for the ex-president," he said. Protesters blamed Rajapaksa's government for mismanaging the country's finances, with the island nation defaulting on its \$51 billion debt and unable to afford to import even the most basic necessities.

The country of 22 million people has suffered through months of lengthy blackouts, acute food and fuel shortages and galloping inflation in its most severe economic downturn since gaining independence. —AFP



Gotabaya Rajapaksa

Japan's baby hatch hospital offers mothers 'last resort'

KUMAMOTO: When the alarm sounds at Jikei hospital in southern Japan, nurses race down a spiral staircase. Their mission: to rescue an infant left in the country's only baby hatch. For 15 years, the clinic has been the only place in Japan a child can be anonymously and safely abandoned.

The pioneering hospital in the Kumamoto region also offers a 24/7 pregnancy support hotline and the country's only "confidential birth" programme. These have made it the target of criticism, but head doctor Takeshi Hasuda sees the facility as a vital safety net.

"There are women out there who are ashamed that they did something horrible (by getting pregnant) and are so scared," he told AFP. "For these women, a place like ours that bars no one and makes them think 'even I will be welcome' counts a lot, I think."

Nurses try to arrive at the hatch, with its stork illustrations and meticulously tended baby bed, within a minute of the alarm sounding. "If we find mothers lingering nearby, we ask if they're comfortable sharing their stories with us," said hospital staffer Saori Taminaga.

They offer to check the health of mothers, providing support and encouraging them to leave information that could help a child learn their origins later. "If they try to go, we persist and keep pushing until just before they leave the grounds. Once that happens, it's time for us to give up."

The Catholic-run hospital opened its baby hatch in 2007, modelled on a German scheme. Baby hatches have existed globally for centuries and are used today in places including South Korea, Pakistan and the United States.

But they have been banned in some countries, such as Britain, and criticized by the UN for violating a child's right to know their parents and identity.

'Alienated by society'

Jikei hospital sees the hatch as a way to prevent child abuse and deaths in Japan, where police recorded 27 child abandonments in 2020 and at least 57 children died from abuse the year before. Hasuda says children abandoned at the hospital include those who were "the result of prostitution, rape and incest", with mothers finding nowhere else to turn.

"I think the most important role our baby hatch system has played so far is to provide a sort of last resort for women left alienated by society," he said.



KUMAMOTO, Japan: Photo shows staff working in a nursery room at Jikei hospital in Kumamoto. When the alarm sounds at Jikei hospital in southern Japan, nurses race down a spiral staircase. Their mission: To rescue an infant left in the country's only baby hatch. —AFP

In all, 161 babies and toddlers have been dropped at the hospital-with some coming from the Tokyo region, about 1,000 kilometres (621 miles) away, and beyond. But the hatch has also faced scepticism in Japan, partly because of traditional ideas about what constitutes a family, according to Chiaki Shirai, an expert on reproduction and adoption studies at Shizuoka University.

The country uses a registration system that lists births, deaths and marriages in a family going back generations. The crucial piece of administrative data also shapes views on family structure. It has "entrenched the idea in Japanese society that whoever gave birth to a child must raise the child," to the point where children are almost considered "the property" of parents, Shirai told AFP.

"Children who are abandoned and shown as having no family in the registry are heavily stigmatised." Despite the anonymity offered by the hatch, child welfare officials typically try to trace the family of infants abandoned at the hospital. As a result, around 80 percent later learned their family's identity, and 20 percent have returned to parents or relatives.

'It's all your fault'

Jikei hospital has expanded the services it offers marginalised women, adding a "confidential birth" pro-

gramme to a pregnancy hotline that fields thousands of calls a year. Two babies have been delivered under the programme, which the hospital says is intended to discourage risky, solitary deliveries at home.

Both mothers told the Jikei they had been abused by their parents and wanted their children to be put up for adoption, Hasuda said. Under the scheme, a mother's identity is revealed to a single staffer and kept confidential for possible disclosure to the child later on.

The programme has also faced opposition-and while the government has not declared it illegal, it has balked at legislation to formalise it. Shirai said women who resort to confidential births or the baby hatch face judgement for not choosing other options, including abortion.

"You could have chosen an abortion but didn't. Now it's all your fault" is the kind of sentiment," she said. Abortion has been legal in Japan since 1948 and is available up until 22 weeks, but consent is required from a male partner. Exceptions are granted only in cases of rape or domestic abuse, or if the partner is dead or missing.

Hasuda, too, feels society often prefers to blame women rather than help them. "Society's motivation to sympathise with them or help them out seems to be low, if not completely non-existent," he said. —AFP

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Hasuda, too, feels society often prefers to blame women rather than help them. "Society's motivation to sympathise with them or help them out seems to be low, if not completely non-existent," he said. —AFP

lision after the planes came close to each other".

"We will write to the Iranian authorities to investigate the incident as the ATC (air traffic control) should not have cleared the Peshawar-bound flight to descend," he added. Khoshkhoo said the planes had been equipped with the system that "gives the necessary warnings from a long distance," adding that "such incidents have also happened in other countries".

Sanctions-hit Iran has suffered several air disasters in recent years, with officials complaining of difficulties in acquiring spare parts to keep its ageing fleets in the air. In January 2020, a Ukraine International Airlines plane was shot down by Iran's armed forces shortly after taking off from Tehran, killing all 176 people on board. —AFP



US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi

chang on Wednesday said Taiwan was "very grateful to Speaker Pelosi for her support and friendliness... over the years".

A previous House speaker, Newt Gingrich, visited in 1997 but the Republican was from the rival party of the White House and Beijing's reaction was relatively muted. CIA chief Bill Burns said last week that Xi appears committed to the option of using force against Taiwan, despite lessons from Russia's struggles in Ukraine. "I wouldn't underestimate President Xi's determination to assert China's control" over Taiwan, he said. —AFP

Tunisian envoy's remarks on new constitution

A referendum was held in Tunisia on July 25, 2022 on the constitution that President Kais Saied, President of the Republic of Tunisia, presented to the Tunisian people to express their opinion thereon.



The voting process, which took place under the supervision of the Independent High Authority for Elections in a transparent and impartial manner, and in which approximately 2.9 million voters cast their ballots, with a turnout of almost 30%, constitutes a historic step on the path to Tunisia's future. This process aspires to establish a new republic based on the immunity of the state and the sovereignty of its people, to strengthen its affiliation to the Arab and Islamic nation, and to move towards greater interaction with its Mediterranean, African and international environment.

The fact that the Constitution received the support of 94.6% of the electorate confirms the correctness of the new policy of the State and constitutes a further impetus towards the effective achievement of all the goals of the new Constitution, particularly with regard to the adherence to the principles of democracy and the development of the State institutions.

The aim is to keep pace with the requirements of development and modernity and to respond to the concerns and aspirations of citizens with regard to quality education, health, employment and dignity.

All these rights are guaranteed by the constitutional document which enjoy the same protection and importance as other rights and freedoms such as freedom of conscience and belief, freedom of the media and publication, the right of access to information, freedom of political practice, freedom to form associations and trade unions, the right to demonstrate and to strike, etc.

In parallel with the adoption in the new constitution of the principles of a presidential republican regime, with the aim of consolidating democratic participation in the service of development, a second legislative chamber has been created alongside the House of People's Representatives: The National Council of Regions, whose main mission is to assist in monitoring development projects in the different regions of the country to ensure that development is fair.

The new constitution will also establish the Higher Council for Education, which will be responsible for reviewing national policies and plans in the areas of education, vocational training and employment, which are essential for achieving sustainable development.

The constitution of July 25, 2022 is the starting point of a new stage, whose ideal objective is to take advantage of all the resources of the State and human energies in order to restore economic well-being, within the framework of an approach that adopts reform, transparency and seriousness. It also aspires to further activate its Arab and international partnerships, mainly with the State of Kuwait, in an atmosphere of sincere brotherhood, fruitful cooperation and mutual respect.

The Embassy of the Republic of Tunisia seizes this national occasion to renew its warmest thanks to the Kuwaiti authorities for all the facilities they provided to facilitate the referendum process that took place at the Mission's headquarters on July 23, 24 and 25, 2022.

Embassy of Tunisian Republic

Iran probes jets' near-miss claim

TEHRAN: Iran is investigating a claim of a near-miss in its airspace between two Pakistani passenger jets due to human error by air traffic controllers, state media said on Wednesday. The report comes a day after Pakistan International Airlines said two of its planes flying at high altitude over Iran came within 1,000 feet (300 metres) of each other on Sunday.

The Pakistani flag carrier said Iranian air traffic controllers had cleared Peshawar-bound PIA flight PK-268 to descend to 20,000 feet from

36,000, leading to the close call with PIA flight PK-211 which was at 35,000 feet and en route to Dubai.

The Civil Aviation Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran said an investigation had been launched into the near-miss. "Appropriate measures have been taken to obtain documents of the country's control centre, and we requested reports from the pilots of the planes for further investigation," said CAO deputy head Hassan Khoshkhoo.

"Normally, after receiving all the documents, the issue is reviewed... and the final result is announced," he told state broadcaster IRIB. PIA spokesman Abdullah Hafeez Khan told AFP a cockpit "collision avoidance system helped the two pilots to correct the course and avoid a col-

THURSDAY, JULY 28, 2022

Business



Zain HQ building

Zain first telecom operator in Kuwait to launch next-gen FTTR technology

Fiber-to-the-room technology guarantees unmatched home-wide Internet coverage of up to 1 Gbps

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced the launch of next-generation Fiber-to-the-Room (FTTR) technology, becoming the first telecom operator in Kuwait to offer this revolutionary technology in the Kuwaiti market. This advanced tech solution is set to offer Zain customers with an unmatched home broadband experience, guaranteeing an ultra-fast and stable Internet connection of up to 1 Gbps all around the house, especially large houses with multiple rooms, floors, and basements. FTTR allows customers to enjoy digital entertainment services at the highest possible quality with no interruptions. The service is provided by Huawei, the global telecom networks and technologies leader.

Commenting on the new launch, Zain Group and Zain Kuwait Chief Technical Officer Nawaf Al-Gharabally said: "Today we announce the launch of next-gen FTTR technology, after Zain's network successfully passed all operational tests to assess its readiness and technical capabilities to operate this service at the highest quality. This is yet another technical feat that proves Zain's leadership and capabilities in bringing the latest and most advanced technologies to the Kuwaiti market".

Al-Gharabally added: "This successful



Zain Group and Zain Kuwait Chief Technical Officer Nawaf Al-Gharabally

- New technical feat proves Zain's capabilities in bringing latest and most advanced technologies to Kuwaiti market
- Zain's network successfully passed all operational tests, commercial launch soon
- FTTR a foundation for empowering smart homes and enriching digital lifestyle
- We continue to explore and invest in home broadband to achieve our customers' aspirations

implementation in Kuwait comes in line with our strategic direction across Zain Group to offer this revolutionary technology in our other opcos, such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain. This is a clear reflection of Zain's efforts in leading tech innovation across the Middle East region".

Al-Gharabally continued: "FTTR offers the needed foundation to empower smart homes and enrich a digital lifestyle, as it complements our existing Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) service and expands optical

fibers to each room and floor in a house with a unique design and high-quality execution. FTTR supports Wi-Fi 6 and guarantees consistent speeds of up to 1 Gbps across the house, resulting in a seamless Internet experience in every room and floor".

Al-Gharabally noted: "Zain plays a leading role in pushing forward the digital transformation vision of the region, and we always seek to adopt technologies that contribute to building a powerful and sus-

tainable feature in our markets. This is why we continue to explore and invest in home broadband technologies to achieve our customers' aspirations. We are preparing to commercially launch the service soon after finalizing all the official regulatory requirements". This announcement reflects Zain's efforts in presenting Kuwait's biggest and most powerful 5G network. Back in June 2019, Zain was the first operator to offer 5G technology in the GCC region via the Kuwaiti market with nation-

wide coverage of all areas. The company succeeded in designing the first integrated network for 5G services built on a world-class infrastructure, ultimately transforming the telecom sector across the country and region.

In May 2022, Zain launched voice over 5G services, becoming the first telecom operator globally to commercially launch Vo5G with nationwide coverage in all of Kuwait's areas and on the all-new Samsung Galaxy S22 lineup.

Bitter harvest: Malaysian palm oil farmers face labor crunch

IJOK, Malaysia: Overripe palm oil fruits hang untouched in trees while others lie rotting scattered around a plantation, as Malaysian farmers reap the bitter harvest of a severe labor shortage. The tropical country is the world's second-biggest producer of the edible vegetable oil, which is found in many everyday goods from chocolate to cosmetics. The sector has long been reliant on migrants from neighboring Indonesia for back-breaking plantation work, which is shunned by most in more affluent Malaysia. Lengthy COVID border closures had already reduced the foreign labor force, but now bureaucratic hurdles and a ban by Indonesia on sending new workers have dramatically worsened the problems.

"A lot of bunches of fruit are rotting on the trees," Suzaidee Rajan, 47, who owns a 300-acre (120-hectare) plantation in Ijok, central Selangor state, told AFP. "We usually harvest twice a month. But now due to the labor shortage, we can (do so) just once a month. Our income has plunged and locals are angry."

With just four foreign workers—two fewer

than the number he needs—Suzaidee now has to drive into his plantation and load the fruit onto a lorry himself. Palm oil is a controversial commodity, blamed by environmentalists for fuelling the destruction of rainforest in Malaysia and Indonesia, which together produce 85 percent of global output.

Green groups say rapid expansion of plantations has destroyed rare animals' habitats, while there have been allegations of foreign workers being abused and mistreated on some estates. The sector nevertheless remains a major contributor to Malaysia's economy, and has continued to attract foreign workers who can earn higher wages than back home. Agricultural firms run large estates, while there are also numerous small-scale farmers like Suzaidee.

'Darkness on horizon'

Other Malaysian industries, including construction and manufacturing, also rely on migrant workers from across Asia, and suffered as a result of lengthy pandemic border closures. While authorities ended a freeze on hiring foreigners in February, laborers have been slow to return because of red tape and difficult negotiations with countries of origin. Problems in the plantation sector have been particularly acute, however, and look set to get worse after Indonesia banned sending new workers to Malaysia earlier this month.

Hermono-Indonesia's ambassador in Kuala Lumpur, who goes by one name—said Jakarta took the decision as Malaysia was not abiding by an agreement aimed at protecting his compatriots.



IJOK, Malaysia: This picture taken on June 30, 2022 shows a foreign worker collecting palm oil fruits in Ijok, in Malaysia's Selangor state. — AFP

The Malaysian estate owners' association says there is currently a shortage of about 120,000 workers. And this month Minister Zuraida Kamaruddin, who oversees the plantation sector, said the industry lost 10.46 billion ringgit (\$2.35 billion) in the first five months of 2022 as palm oil fruit was left unharvested. "I can see only darkness on the horizon unless migrant workers are brought into the country immediately," farmer Sahman Durai, who has a plantation in Ijok, told AFP. "My earnings are falling while inflation and production costs are rising." After the Indonesian ban was announced, Malaysia's human resources ministry vowed to address Jakarta's concerns quickly to ensure it is reversed.—AFP

Gazprom slashes Nord Stream gas deliveries to Europe

BERLIN: Russian energy giant Gazprom drastically cut gas deliveries to Europe via the Nord Stream pipeline on Wednesday to about 20 percent of its capacity, German authorities said. The Russian state-run company had announced Monday that it would choke supply to 33 million cubic metres a day—half the amount it has been delivering since service resumed last week after 10 days of maintenance work. EU states have accused Russia of squeezing supplies in retaliation for Western sanctions over Moscow's war in Ukraine. Gazprom cited the halted operation of one of the last two operating turbines for the pipeline due to the "technical condition of the engine".

The German economy ministry dismissed the explanation, saying there was "no technical reason for a reduction of deliveries". Klaus Mueller, head of Germany's energy regulator, said gas flows had dropped to 20 percent of the pipeline's capacity on Wednesday from 40 percent. "We'll see today if it stays that way," he said in a statement. Mueller praised consumers and industry for voluntarily reducing energy use, saying that even correcting for warmer summer temperatures, recent consumption had been cut between five and seven percent.

He said this would allow Germany to add

to its gas reserves, currently at about 65 percent. Economy Minister Robert Habeck outlined targets last week to reach 95 percent by November 1 ahead of the cold German winter.

'War strategy'

"In the autumn the situation will change and gas use will rise," Mueller said, noting the country's strong reliance for its heating on gas, traditionally imported from Russia. "Germany has got to use less gas," he said, calling energy part of Russian "foreign policy and war strategy". In parallel, Italian energy major Eni said Gazprom had informed the group it would only deliver "approximately 27 million cubic meters" on Wednesday, down from around 34 million cubic meters in recent days.

The European Union on Tuesday agreed a plan to reduce gas consumption in solidarity with Germany. German daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung called the bloc's plan a "lesson in humility for the EU's would-be schoolmaster," Germany. "Suddenly we are not the strong ones and are dependent on others' help," it said. The Rheinische Post newspaper said the EU agreement was welcome, but its bid to reduce natural gas demand by 15 percent was "modest at best".—AFP

Business

KFH reports KD 138.1m net profit for its shareholders for H1 of 2022

Al-Marzouq: Net finance income reached KD 320.2 million, an increase of 9.7%

KUWAIT: Chairman of Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq said that KFH has, by the grace of Allah, reported net profit of KD 138.1 million for the first half of 2022 for KFH shareholders; an increase of 35.1 percent compared to the same period last year.

Earnings per share for the first half of 2022 reached 14.55 fils; an increase of 31.1 percent compared to the same period last year. Net financing income for the first half of the year reached KD 320.2 million; an increase of 9.7 percent compared to the same period last year.

Net operating income for the first half of

first half of 2022 reached KD 16 billion, ie, an increase of KD 134 million or 0.8 percent compared to end of year 2021. Shareholders' equity as of the end of the first half of 2022 reached KD 1.9 billion.

In addition, the capital adequacy ratio reached 17.74 percent which is above the minimum limit required by regulators. This ratio confirms the solid financial position of KFH.

Solid financial results

Al-Marzouq added that KFH has successfully achieved solid financial results and growth in all key financial indicators for the

stress tests according to strict scenarios, KFH proved the success of its risk management strategy in general during the previous period. This has helped KFH in expanding the range of solutions against any sudden challenge, reducing risks and exposures. Also, the prudent conditions applied by KFH in granting financing allowed it to be more capable of determining the quality of its current and potential customers, having growing confidence in weathering challenges and benefiting from future opportunities as well as dealing with exposures to financing risk.

He added: "Under the umbrella of its dig-

Leadership and excellence

Meanwhile, the Acting Group Chief Executive Officer at KFH, Abdulwahab Essa Al-Rushood said that the first-half 2022 profits confirm KFH's strong standing and allow it to benefit from the strong growth in consumer finance and expected rise in awarding projects. "Along with the strong credit quality it enjoys, KFH continues its efforts to maximize profitability and ROE and maintain strong operational performance," he added. He pointed out that the solid financial performance achieved by KFH during the previous period helped it take the leadership of local banks in many financial indicators.

Sustainability

Al-Rushood pointed out the pioneering social role of KFH and its contributions to many strategic initiatives, most notably signing an agreement with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) to implement relief and medical projects in cooperation with the Jordan Red Crescent Society, and two agreements with the King Hussein Cancer Foundation and KRCS to treat cancer patients, in addition to many environmental, youth and sustainable initiatives.

Developing human resources

"As part of the importance KFH attaches to supporting and encouraging its employees, the Bank has recently launched "Gadha" program to recognize their contributions in developing the institution and achieving the highest level of customer satisfaction. Also, KFH honored the graduates of Harvard Executive Development Program, titled "Leading in a World Transformed" as part of (Kafa'a) initiative launched by Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) in collaboration with the Kuwaiti banks and organized by Institute of Banking Studies (IBS)", Al-Rushood said.

Global appreciation

Al-Rushood expressed his pride of the global appreciations KFH has recently received by winning several prestigious awards, the latest of them were three awards for best sukuk issuances of a financial institution by EMEA Finance. He said that these new awards reflect the achievements and successes KFH made in the Islamic finance industry, and its high efficiency that enabled it to play a prominent role in developing the sukuk market.

In conclusion, Al-Rushood expressed his appreciation for the trust of shareholders and customers and the support of the Board of Directors, and praised the role of regulatory authorities and the efforts of employees and all partners and stakeholders. He also stressed KFH's pursuit of enhancing customer experience and maintaining leadership in Islamic financial services industry.



Hamad Al-Marzouq

- Finance portfolio reached KD 12.2 billion; an increase of 7.6 percent
- Total assets reached KD 22.8 billion; an increase of 4.6 percent
- Growing confidence in weathering the challenges and benefiting from future opportunities
- KFH enjoys high liquidity ratios and solid capital base that support business growth
- Deepening KFH's role in the SME sector and in supporting youth



Abdulwahab Al-Rushood

- Thanks to its standing, KFH is able to benefit from the strong growth in consumer finance and the expected rise in awarding projects
- KFH won three prestigious awards for Sukuk issuances by EMEA Finance
- Unique digital banking solutions and higher customer experience

the year reached KD 308.3 million; an increase of 24.3 percent compared to the same period last year. The cost to income ratio also improved, to reach 32.6 percent compared to 38.0 percent for the same period last year, driven by an increase in total operating income and a decrease in total operating expenses during the period.

Financing receivables as of the end of the first half of 2022 reached KD 12.2 billion, ie, an increase of KD 858 million or 7.6 percent compared to end of year 2021. Investment in Sukuk as of the end of the first half of 2022 reached KD 2.9 billion; an increase of KD 204 million or 7.5 percent compared to end of year 2021. Total assets as of the end of the first half of 2022 reached KD 22.8 billion ie, increase of KD 1 billion or 4.6 percent compared to end of year 2021.

Depositors' accounts as of the end of the

fiscal first half 2022 despite local and global economic challenges. This emphasizes KFH's prudent management, its efficient strategy, and its business methodology based on enhancing the leading position KFH enjoys in Kuwait and the markets it operates in, as well as on providing high-quality services, products and financial solutions on a par with the highest industry standards.

He explained that KFH maintained remarkable ratios in terms of ROA, ROE, optimization, maximizing profitability, improving asset quality ratios as well as the coverage ratio of provisions for non-performing debt. He noted that KFH enjoys high liquidity ratios and solid capital base that support business growth.

The bank of future

Al-Marzouq said that by conducting

ital strategy and proactive approach that is based on innovation and comprehensive credit assessments, KFH deserves to be named the "Bank of Future" because of its strategy that enables it to meet future challenges and opportunities."

As a future strategy, Al-Marzouq pointed out that KFH increasingly invests in technology by adopting the latest innovations in FinTech, using AI, and providing unique mobile banking services. This could drive the digital development in the industry and successfully activate business continuity plan, if needed. He explained that KFH seeks to deepen its role in SMEs sector and in supporting youth, as they are one of the sustainability elements and one of the most prominent pillars of KFH strategy during the coming period. In doing this, KFH will enhance its leadership position in the market.

For example, KFH ranked first in Kuwait in terms of market capitalization on MEED's list of the MENA's top 100 listed companies. Also, KFH achieved the highest profitability ratios among the Kuwaiti banks, enjoying large franchise and good capitalization.

Strengths

Emphasizing the successful digital transformation strategy, Al-Rushood said that the smart banking services strengthened KFH's uniqueness in providing distinguished and exclusive banking services and products such as KFHGo which helped meet the growing needs of customers. Also, KFH's banking solutions keep abreast of the latest innovations and the highest quality-standards, adding high value to the experience of customers who expect fast and easy services.



بيت التمويل الكويتي
Kuwait Finance House



Financial Results for the First Half of 2022

		30/06/2022	30/06/2021	%
Net Profit for Shareholders	"KD Million"	138.1	102.2	35.1
Earnings per Share	"Fils"	14.55	11.10	31.1
Net Financing Income	"KD Million"	320.2	291.8	9.7
Net Operating Income	"KD Million"	308.3	248.0	24.3
		30/06/2022	31/12/2021	%
Financing Receivables	"KD Million"	12,213	11,355	7.6
Total Assets	"KD Million"	22,790	21,788	4.6
Depositors' Accounts	"KD Million"	16,001	15,867	0.8
Shareholders' Equity	"KD Million"	1,920	1,932	(0.6)

Business

Don't let inflation 'genie' out of the bottle: IMF economist

CBs must stay the course and continue to raise rates until inflation retreats

WASHINGTON: The global economy is facing a worrisome slowdown, but the critical priority for policymakers is to bring raging inflation under control, the IMF's chief economist said Tuesday. With price surges in major economies approaching 10 percent, central banks must stay the course and continue to raise interest rates until inflation retreats, Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas told AFP in an interview.

The International Monetary Fund's updated World Economic Outlook offered a gloomy picture of the global economy, which is slowing sharply and faced with a series of risks that could push it into recession.

Soaring prices for food and fuel, exacerbated by the war in Ukraine, have been squeezing family budgets worldwide, and even leading to unrest in some countries. Aggressive moves by central bankers, including the US Federal Reserve and European Central Bank, are aimed at taming those price pressures, but will also slow the economy. However, Gourinchas warned that allowing inflation

to get out of control is "like (letting) the genie out of the bottle."

Risk of doing too much

If people come to expect inflation will remain high, "this will be a world in which central banks have lost the plot. And it will be very, very difficult to walk that back." But fortunately, "we're not there" yet, he said.

So far, "inflation expectations have remained quite stable. And this is one of the great benefits of having had decades of low inflation environment and credibility by central banks." He acknowledged that there is a risk policymakers will do too much and slam the brakes on growth, but so far they are on the right track. "The point is not to inflict a recession on the global economy," he said. "The point is to bring back price stability."

The goal is to bring inflation back down close to two percent for advanced economies, maybe a bit more for emerging market economies, and even if rate hikes go too far and slow growth, that would

mean more rapid price declines, Gourinchas said.

Signs of hope

Some of the primary risks facing the global economy are beyond the control of policymakers, including the potential for Russia to shut off gas supplies to Europe. But despite the very real possibility that the worst-case scenario comes to pass, Gourinchas nevertheless sees some signs of hope.

Oil prices, which skyrocketed to nearly \$129 a barrel in March, have been easing in recent weeks due to the expectations of a global economic slowdown, and were back to below \$105 on Tuesday for Brent, the European benchmark. There have been "synchronized" moves by central banks around the world, including emerging markets, so "we could see a much faster disinflation path if the energy prices are to continue on that trend," he said. And policymakers in emerging market economies have so far reacted well, allowing their currencies to adjust.

"Their policy frameworks have improved over the years," he said. —AFP



WASHINGTON: International Monetary Fund (IMF) Chief Economist Pierre Olivier Gourinchas speaks during an interview with AFP at the IMF headquarters in Washington, DC, on July 26, 2022. —AFP

Boeing profit falls as CEO eyes resumption of 787 deliveries

NEW YORK: Boeing reported a drop in second-quarter profits on Wednesday due to the continued travails of the 787, but the company said it was close to receiving regulatory approval to resume deliveries of the plane.

"We're on the verge," Chief Executive Dave Calhoun said on CNBC, although he declined to set a date when asked about when he expects Federal Aviation Administration approval to resume deliveries on the Dreamliner aircraft.

Deliveries on the top-selling widebody jet have been suspended for more than a year, a factor that again dragged down revenues.

The aviation giant reported a 67 percent plunge in quarterly profits to \$193 million, as revenues declined 1.9 percent to \$16.7 billion.

The company missed analyst estimates for revenues and earnings-per-share, but stock prices rose after the report, as Boeing confirmed it still expects to have positive cash flow in 2022. Calhoun told CNBC the company was at a "bit of a turning point" in terms of getting past key obstacles. On the 787, the company has been working with the Federal Aviation Administration to address a series of manufacturing issues uncovered in 2020 and since. The company took a \$3.5 billion charge for additional rework costs on the 787 in the fourth quarter of 2021. It said in April it expects another \$2 billion in "abnormal costs" for the 787. At the end of March, Boeing had 115 Dreamliner planes in inventory and was producing the jet "at very low rates."

On Wednesday, the company said it was working with US air safety officials on "final actions" to resume 787 deliveries.

The enhanced regulatory scrutiny of the 787 and other Boeing planes comes on the heels of a pair of crashes in 2018 and 2019 on the 737 MAX, which led to a lengthy global grounding of the plane. But the MAX has since returned to service, enabling Boeing to ramp up production of the planes, collect meaningful revenues and announce significant new orders at the Farnborough Airshow earlier this month. Even so, Boeing's backlog of orders in the pipeline lags that of archrival Airbus, but Calhoun told CNBC he is not worried about the difference.

"We don't need to close that gap," Calhoun said, adding that aviation industry is "supply constrained for as far as I can see."

Boeing's job is "to deliver against our backlog," he said. "My job is to make sure I've got a big enough backlog to continue to increase my rate, stay stable in production and satisfy our customers every step of the way." Shares climbed 2.0 percent to \$159.11 in morning trading. —AFP

Joint centre for Ukraine grain exports opens in Istanbul

ISTANBUL: Turkey on Wednesday formally opened a joint coordination centre for Ukrainian grain exports under a UN-backed deal aimed at resuming shipments for the first time since Russia's February invasion of its neighbor. Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar unveiled the centre at a ceremony held five days after Moscow and Kyiv put their names on a deal designed to deliver wheat and other grain across the Black Sea

KFH launches banking awareness campaign in sign language

KUWAIT: In collaboration with Dr Mohammad Al-Ramzi, sign language instructor, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has released several awareness messages about banking services and products in sign language to ensure extending the messages to people with hearing impairments. This step is part of KFH's effective role under the Central Bank's initiative "Be Aware" campaign that was launched in collaboration with Kuwait Banking Association. KFH continues its efforts in highlighting the banking services and rights of customers with special needs. This comes as part of the bank's efforts to support the banking awareness campaign "Be Aware".

KFH offers all services to this segment of customers to ensure that they obtain banking services without incurring any additional fees or costs. This includes allocating a special branch for them in each governorate, with adequate car parks, wheelchairs, and other means necessary for customers

with special needs.

Banks also allow at least one ATM machine in the branch that provides banking services for people with special needs, which can be easily accessed. It provides complete privacy to the customer through a glass room that opens with the card and enables the usage of headphones.

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

KFH is keen on providing its services to people with special needs in an optimal manner. This supports its strategy in serving all customer segments, while facilitating their access to banking services easily and as per the

KIB offers enhanced, high-quality service

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) continues to provide exceptional customer service as part of its full-fledged banking experience, focusing its Contact Center's efforts on catering to customers wherever they are and responding to their needs and inquiries at all times - especially during cases of banking emergencies.

Therefore, with the travel season set to continue for the remainder of the summer months, KIB remains committed to supporting its customers during their stay outside the country, keeping all channels of communication open and available around the clock. Should they require any assistance, customers outside Kuwait are always able to contact the Bank, choosing what suits them between its offline and online options.

In addition to its international phone service (reachable at +965 22957300), traveling customers can reach KIB through any of its digital means - including its Live Chat service and the KIB Online portal, both available on

its website (www.KIB.com.kw), as well as through its local and international video call service that can be accessed through the KIB mobile banking app. KIB's WhatsApp messaging service is also available for general inquiries about products and services (accessible through the Bank's local number 1866 866).

Within this vein, Deputy General Manager of KIB's Retail Banking Department, Musab Alshalan, stated that the Bank is also uncompromising when it comes to protecting its customers' purchases outside Kuwait, securing their transactions which have been internationally processed through their banking cards. He also stressed that customers should contact the Bank immediately through the aforementioned channels, or by directly contacting relationship managers available only for KIB's Black segment, in the event of losing their debit or credit cards abroad, in order to have them speedily replaced and shipped securely by approved express carriers.

He also pointed to some of the benefits offered by KIB's premium credit cards to customers, which include free travel insurance services and several others. Moreover, Alshalan further highlighted some of the services provided by the Bank to assist its customers in emer-

NBK offers its customers ATM booking service for events, special occasions

KUWAIT: Pursuing its goal to meet all customers' needs and offer them the latest products and services that live up to their expectations, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) announced a new service that enables its customers to be provided with an NBK ATM designed specifically for events and occasions.

NBK customers can avail this service by visiting the bank's website and making an ATM booking. Once the request is registered through the website, the ATM Support Team will contact the customer to confirm the booking and make other arrangements. The bank will also send an e-mail back to confirm their requests. The ATM booking request should be 3 days prior to the date that the ATM machine is to be deployed, and only for cash

withdrawal, including the following denominations: "KD 5, KD 10, and KD 20."

But a Russian missile strike Saturday on Ukraine's Black Sea port of Odessa threatened to immediately unravel the first deal signed up to by the warring parties since the war started. "The staff working at this centre are aware that the eyes of the world are upon them," Akar told reporters in his opening address. "It is our hope that the centre will make the greatest contribution possible to humanitarian needs and peace." The centre will be staffed by civilian and military officials from the two warring parties and delegates from Turkey and the UN.

Their primary assignment involves monitoring the safe passage of Ukrainian grain ships along established routes and overseeing their inspection for banned weapons on the way into and out of the

Black Sea. Akar said ships will be inspected by "joint teams" and monitored by satellite from the centre at an Istanbul military academy.

Ukraine announced the resumption of operations at the three Black Sea ports designated by the deal at the same time as Akar formally unveiled the Istanbul centre. Officials in Kyiv said they hope to send the first grain ships to world markets later this week. The blockage of deliveries from two of the world's biggest grain exporters has contributed to a spike in prices that has made food imports prohibitively expensive for some of the world's poorest countries. UN estimates say nearly 50 million people began to face "acute hunger" around the world as a direct consequence of the war.

NATO member Turkey has taken pride in being



Mohammed Al-Awadhi and Dr. Mohammad Al-Ramzi

highest quality and safety standards. KFH supports the "Be Aware" campaign activities with the aim of spreading financial education in society and raising awareness among the public about their rights regarding dealing with banks, so that they are aware of financial and banking transactions. This is through publishing videos, educational materials and awareness messages through the bank's social media channels, website, ATM screens, display screens in branches, in addition to newspapers

and other media outlets.

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

agency situations, including priority issuance of any of its banking cards. Upon contacting KIB's customer support, customers can have their urgently required cards instantly processed and delivered through KIB's branches across Kuwait.

Concluding his statement, Alshalan reaffirmed KIB's commitment to ensuring the highest level of customer service, maintaining the performance and efficiency of its Contact Center in managing the Bank's communication channels - remaining available to its customers 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It serves to note KIB's proficiency in attending to its customers' banking and financial emergencies, whether in Kuwait or abroad, providing immediate and effective solutions to address any problem facing customers within this context.



Musab Alshalan

exceptional and innovative services," he added.

National Bank of Kuwait boasts its success over the past years in maintaining the highest banking service levels. It continuously strives to provide its customers a more innovative banking experience that always goes in line with their growing and changing needs, which helped it maintain its leading regional position. National Bank of Kuwait has the largest branch network covering all areas in Kuwait, as well as the largest ATM network serving local and international bank cardholders, in addition to CDMs, ITMs and ATMs designated for special needs customers.



Maitham Al-Salem

able to maintain open diplomatic relations with both Moscow and Kyiv throughout the conflict. The deal came together just days after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan discussed Ukraine with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Tehran. Erdogan is due to meet Putin again in the Russian leader's Black Sea retreat in Sochi on August 5.

But Ankara has also issued measured criticism of Russia's strike on Odessa last Saturday. "The Odessa attack worried everyone. We were worried too," Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said in an online interview on Wednesday.

"At the end, this was not an attack that could have blocked the harbor's functioning. But this kind of attack should not be repeated. We hope that the agreement might function without any issues." —AFP

Business

Al-Bahar: NBK will continue to grow its international operations

NBK Deputy Group CEO on the sidelines of the analyst conference for 2Q 2022

KUWAIT: Shaikha Al-Bahar, Deputy Group CEO of National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), emphasized that the Bank remains on course with its strategic priorities. "In Kuwait, we expect the improved economic outlook to generate more opportunities and specifically strengthen the demand for business credit, while we gradually see a revival of project tendering and award activity," she said.

On the sidelines of the analyst conference for the results of 2Q 2022, Al-Bahar mentioned: "We will continue to grow our international operations with more focus on key growth markets, most importantly GCC and Egypt as we target further diversification of our balance sheet and income streams and grow the contribution of international operations to the Group's bottom line." "Our business diversification continues to serve us as we benefit from the region's economic recovery and NBK's wide spectrum of product and service offerings," she added.



Shaikha Al-Bahar

tics, integrating ESG into our business decision-making processes and growing our pledge to global sustainability reporting. During the period, we continued to deliver on our six pillars of sustainability and working our way towards achieving our predetermined sustainability targets, she added.

Digital excellence

Al-Bahar stated: "We continued to invest in positioning NBK for the future of banking, and building a next generation digital banking experience. We have made great efforts in uplifting various channels with regular enhancements to the digital journey for our customers, the number of services we provide digitally, most importantly through mobile banking application." "While utilizing data analytics, robotics and machine learning to improve our operational efficiency and offer personalized experience to meet the evolving banking needs of our clients. Our digital transformation efforts are group wide as we have been upgrading the digital experience of our customers across various business segments and in all our key strategic markets," she elaborated.

Sustainable growth

Al-Bahar pointed out that the efforts in the ESG space are topping the agenda of the Group. We will continue improving our ESG-related operational prac-

Market leader

Al-Bahar stated: "As we started seeing the recovery of post pandemic growth, the competitive landscape in retail lending became more aggressive. As banks started competing on acquiring market share we witnessed an increased focus on price competition. As the market leader and one of the largest players in the retail sector, we opted to defend our market share through offering zero interest loans in the market earlier this year." "With our diversified and low cost funding base we can afford to aggressively defend our market share through lower pricing and we have been extremely successful in doing so in recent months."

"This is not an ideal operating landscape as it puts some pressure on margins in the short term especially considering the current environment of increasing rates but we will continue to defend our market leadership with focus on customer acquisition."

Weyay

Al-Bahar said: "Our core markets have young popu-

lation (Kuwait, GCC and the Arab world in general) so this required special attention to the youth. So we are well established across our markets and there is a lot of upside potential for us to drive from our presence in the region, so we successfully launched Weyay as we were and still are targeting the youth."

"The achievement so far is way beyond the targets, it is very successful and we are offering products and soon it will be a comprehensive platform for our clients." "Digital banking is the future and we are investing heavily in technology and IT investments and so on," she noted.

Dividend distribution

Commenting on NBK's distribution of interim dividends, Al-Bahar said: "The Bank's dividend policy is determined, in view of capital requirements amongst other factors. The bank has always had a very stable dividend policy as we have always targeted a payout ratio in the range of 50 to 60 percent."

"Our capital ratios remain very strong in line with our internally set targets and buffers and this allows us to continue to maintain a healthy payout ratio." "Our interim dividend distribution is not an indication of any changes to our dividend policy and the year-end distribution will follow the same guidelines in the context of our specified dividend policy," she added.

Infrastructure gap

On a question about her expectations for the pace of project awarding, Al-Bahar explained: "The improved health situation and the ease of restrictions post pandemic have lifted project activity in 2021 where project awards reached KD 1.5 billion. With the recent hike in oil prices and the expected surpluses, we expect the government to continue with its commitment to spend on infrastructure and accelerate project tendering and awards to compensate for the slower execution during the past 2 years and the impact of the pandemic."

Al-Bahar expected a bigger role for the private sector in Kuwait's infrastructure development plan going

forward. Recent discussion and engagements with various government agencies along with the discussed tenders affirms the government's intentions to give a bigger role to the private sector in future development projects. "This of course creates opportunities for banks to lend across different models of financing: being a PPP or a BOT project. For that, we are optimistic about the projects pipeline and its outcomes," she added.

Diversified income

On his part, Sujit Ronghe, Acting Group CFO said that NBK's results for the first half reflected focus on core banking activities, diversified income, and the ability to generate profits from these activities. Ronghe mentioned: "Net interest income of KD 348.3 million for 1H22, a growth of 4.4 percent over 1H21 was largely driven by higher volumes of loans and other interest earning assets across segments and geographies."

"Fees and commissions income was also 10.8 percent higher than 1H21 reflecting strong contributions from a well-diversified pool of geographies and lines of business."

Cost of risk

On the expectations for the cost of risk, Ronghe said: "second quarter or first half-year cost of risk is in no way an indicator of what could happen in the future, because it was a fallout of recoveries made during the period. We expect this year to benefit from the recoveries we saw in the first six months and I would say the cost of risk would be materially lower than what we saw last year." Ronghe explained: "A healthy buffer helps the Bank to not only comply with the provisions required by the Central Bank of Kuwait, but also for any ECL challenges going forward." "As regards the tightened credit provisioning, judgmental or precautionary general provisions has been a feature of our provisioning regime since the global financial crisis. Our provision coverage ratio even in earlier years was higher than 300, which is in line with the Bank's conservative credit provisioning policy," he noted.



STUTTGART, Germany: In this file photo taken on February 01, 2022 the slogan "We are Mercedes-Benz" is displayed at the former Daimler AG headquarters in Stuttgart, southern Germany. German automaker Mercedes-Benz said on July 27, 2022 it was upgrading its forecast for full-year sales as its decision to focus on top-of-the-range models begins to pay off despite supply constraints in the industry. —AFP

Mercedes ups sales forecast as model re-focus pays off

FRANKFURT: German automaker Mercedes-Benz said Wednesday it was upgrading its forecast for full-year sales as its decision to focus on top-of-the-range models begins to pay off despite supply constraints in the industry. The Stuttgart-based group said in a statement that its net profit inched forward to 3.2 billion euros (\$3.3 billion) in the second quarter from 3.1 billion euros a year earlier on a seven-percent increase in revenues to 36.4 billion euros. Unit sales, however, declined by seven percent in the period from April to June, as a shortage of semiconductors—a key component in cars' electrical systems—put the brakes on production.

Alphabet's profit slips as growth slows

SAN FRANCISCO: Google parent Alphabet reported Tuesday its profit and revenue slipped as the internet giant's long sizzling ad revenue growth cooled, but the market seemed relieved the news wasn't worse. Big tech firms are grappling with multiple problems, from inflation to the war in Ukraine, and results in general for the quarter have not been great so far.

Alphabet's revenue in the latest quarter grew 13 percent to \$69.7 billion, with its global search and cloud computing services bringing in most of the money—but this was under analysts' expectations. "I think it's a good time to sharpen our focus," Alphabet chief executive Sundar Pichai told an earnings call. "It's a

Mercedes its resilient revenue figures resulted from its decision to focus on higher-end models with larger margins. The carmaker said it was raising its revenue outlook for the full year to "significantly above" the 167.9 billion euros it booked last year.

Mercedes also raised its forecast for underlying or operating profit. Chief executive Ola Kallenius said the group had managed the bottlenecks in supply as well as "increasingly complex macroeconomic and geopolitical challenges."

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has clouded the outlook for the economy in Europe and raised fears of a recession, as Moscow threatens to cut off gas supplies to the continent. Mercedes, whose home market would be acutely affected by a shutdown in gas supplies, said it was looking at ways of "substituting the use of natural gas in vehicle production."

And the carmaker said it could reduce its usage by "around 50 percent". Mercedes was also steeling itself against a general economic downturn, but had "good reasons to remain confident, with ongoing strong demand", Kallenius said. —AFP

chance to digest and make sure we are working on the right things."

Net income at Alphabet fell 13 percent year-over-year to \$16 billion in the latest quarter, but the flow of online ad dollars that fuels the company's fortunes has slowed as inflation, war and other troubles vex the overall economy.

"Google's earnings miss this quarter proves it's not immune to the challenges facing the digital advertising industry at large," said analyst Evelyn Mitchell. "Still, with its tremendous market share in search advertising, Google is relatively well positioned to weather the rough waters that lie ahead," she added. The internet giant's stock was up about 4.5 percent in after-hours trading, as the market appeared relieved by the results.

Slowing hiring

Google was also paying more to acquire online "traffic" from which it makes money, the earnings report showed.

Meanwhile, revenue from ads on video-sharing platform YouTube was up only slightly in the quarter. Google has looked to YouTube as a source of growth

Fed poised to attack inflation with rate hike

WASHINGTON: The Federal Reserve was poised to announce another big interest rate increase, the fourth this year, in its ongoing battle to tamp down price pressures that have been squeezing American families. US central bankers are hoping that their aggressive stance will start to cool red-hot inflation that topped nine percent in June, the highest in more than 40 years, without derailing the world's largest economy. President Joe Biden is paying the political cost for surging prices, which he blames mostly on Russia's war in Ukraine, which has sent global food and energy prices soaring.

Biden insists the American economy will avoid a recession, but even as his approval ratings have cratered, he has supported the Fed in its battle to quell inflation. Fed Chair Jerome Powell and others have made it clear they are willing to risk a downturn and will keep raising interest rates until they see clear evidence inflation is moving back towards the two percent goal. The policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee is widely expected to announce another three-quarter-point increase in the benchmark borrowing rate at the conclusion of its two-day policy meeting at 1800 GMT. From zero at the start of the year, the Fed has raised the policy lending rate to a range of 1.5 to 1.75 percent, which has pushed mortgage rates higher and slowed housing sales for five straight months. Economists say this has been the most aggressive Fed tightening cycle since the 1980s, when stagflation—a wage-price spiral and stagnant growth—crippled the US economy.

The challenge for policymakers is to quell inflation before it becomes dangerously entrenched, but without sending the world's largest economy into a recession that would reverberate around the globe. While prices have continued to rise, with home prices hitting a new record, there are signs the pace of the increases has begun to slow, which may allow the central bank to ease up on its rate increases.

Global oil prices are trending down, with the US benchmark WTI falling to below \$95 a barrel from its peak of more than \$123 in March, and gasoline prices at the pump have fallen 69 cents from the record of just over \$5 a gallon in mid-June.

as people spend growing amounts of time looking at online videos. "In the second quarter our performance was driven by Search and Cloud," Pichai said. Earnings season has gotten off to a rough start with less than stellar news from both Netflix and Snapchat's parent firm, a decidedly different world than seen during the pandemic surge.

Netflix reported last week losing subscribers for the second quarter in a row as the streaming giant battles fierce competition and viewer belt tightening, but the company assured investors of better days ahead.

The loss of 970,000 paying customers in the most recent quarter was not as big as expected, and left Netflix with just shy of 221 million subscribers. The company said in its earnings report that it had expected to gain a million paid subscribers in the current quarter.

At the same time, Snapchat's owner announced plans last week to "substantially" slow recruitment after bleak results wiped some 30 percent off the stock price of the tech firm, which is facing difficulties on several fronts.



WASHINGTON: In this file photo taken on May 04, 2022, the seal of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors is displayed across from the Marriner S Eccles Federal Reserve building Federal Reserve building in Washington, DC. —AFP

Recession risk

Meanwhile, the job market has remained strong, consumer demand has not fallen dramatically, and surveys show inflation expectations in the months ahead have started to trend lower. Policymakers want to engineer a "soft landing," taming inflation without causing a downturn, but economists warn they face an increasingly narrow path to success and it would be easy to overshoot by being too aggressive.

"The Fed is now stuck between a rock and a hard place, with no easy way out without the economy feeling pain," KPMG chief economist Diane Swonk said in an analysis, noting that "Powell has started to underscore that reality by admitting a recession could occur." In fact, it is rare that the central bank moves so decidedly without causing a downturn, and there are signs of concern among Fed policymakers. Kansas City Fed President Esther George dissented at the June meeting, saying she preferred a smaller half-point rate hike and warning that going too fast could be "unsettling" and raise recession fears. —AFP

VACANCY FOR ACCOUNTANT

Job Profile

- Financial Accounting – should be independently able to finalize company accounts up to the audit stage.
- Financial modelling – Preparation of financial projections with P&L, Balance Sheet, Cash flows and Capital Budgeting Techniques.
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- Good working knowledge of IFRS, ISAs (IFAC).
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- CA/ACCA/CMA with 6 - 10 years of experience for positions in Finance department.
- Previous experience in Oil and Gas Sector will be an advantage.
- Preference will be given to candidates residing in Kuwait with transferable Visa.

For qualified candidates to submit their resumes to:
general@ipg.com.kw

Gaming time has little effect on short-term mental health

The short-term mental-health impact of playing video games “is probably too small” to be noticeable, according to a major study by the University of Oxford published Wednesday. “Our study finds little to no evidence of connections between gameplay and well-being,” said Andrew K. Przybylski, a researcher at the university’s Oxford Internet Institute. The study surveyed 38,935 players from the English-speaking world, asking them to rate their mental well-being and comparing it with the amount of time they spent gaming in the previous two weeks.

“Many have warned about video games’ possible addictive qualities and their potential harm to players’ well-being, leading to far-reaching and widely contested health policy decisions,” said the study, published by the Royal Society. In China, children are only allowed to game for one hour each day on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

“Our results show that the impact of time spent playing video games on well-being is probably too small to be subjectively noticeable and not credibly different from zero,” the study said. Game publishers including Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo provided researchers with the time each respondent spent playing, with their consent.



It followed players of seven titles—“Animal Crossing: New Horizons,” “Apex Legends,” “Eve Online,” “Forza Horizon 4,” “Gran Turismo Sport” and “The Crew 2”—over a six-week period, taking surveys at two-week intervals. The study’s authors said that more work was needed to identify the causal effects over a longer time period. “Although we studied the play and well-being of thousands of people across diverse games, our study

barely scratched the surface of video game play more broadly,” they said. “Our conclusions regarding the causal nature of the observed associations are tentative. “Studies with both a higher measurement resolution and a longer overall time span are needed to detect potential more transient or slower effects,” the authors said. —AFP

Shakira wants day in Spanish court, rejects plea deal

Colombian superstar Shakira rejected a plea deal on Spanish tax fraud charges and wants to prove her innocence in court, her lawyers said Wednesday. Prosecutors accuse the 45-year-old “Hips don’t Lie” songstress of defrauding the Spanish tax office out of 14.5 million euros (\$14.7 million) on income earned between 2012 and 2014.

They say she moved to Spain in 2011 when her relationship with FC Barcelona defender Gerard Pique became public but maintained official tax residency in the Bahamas until 2015. Her lawyers said Wednesday that the possibility to reach an agreement remained until a trial opens in a Barcelona court. A formal referral to court has not yet been announced. Shakira is “absolutely certain of her innocence” and “doesn’t accept this deal” with the prosecutor and has decided to let the case go to court, her lawyers said in a statement.

They added Shakira was “confident” her innocence would be proven in court. The prosecutor did not immediately respond to AFP’s request for comment. In the statement, Shakira slammed the “complete violation of her rights” and “abusive methods” by the prosecutor.

She also claimed the prosecutor was “insisting on claiming money earned during

my international tours and the show ‘The Voice’” on which she was a judge in the United States, when she was “not yet resident in Spain”. Shakira was on the singing competition show between 2013 and 2014. Shakira’s defense team argues she moved to Spain full time only in 2015 and has met



Shakira

all tax obligations. She says she has paid 17.2 million euros to the Spanish tax authorities and she has “no debt to the treasury for many years”.

They say that until 2014 she earned most of her money from international tours, did not live more than six months a year in Spain and was therefore not resident under tax law. A Barcelona court in May dismissed an appeal from the singer to drop the charges. Shakira had also been named in one of the largest ever leaks of financial documents in October 2021, known as the “Pandora Papers”, among public figures linked to offshore assets. Shakira, who has sold over 60 million albums, separated from Pique in June. The couple have two children. — AFP



In this file photo Buzz Aldrin’s Inflight Coverall Jacket, worn on his Apollo 11 mission to the Moon, is displayed during a media preview at Sotheby’s in New York. — AFP

Buzz Aldrin’s Apollo 11 jacket sold for \$2.7 million

The jacket worn by US astronaut Buzz Aldrin during his 1969 flight to the Moon aboard Apollo 11 was sold at auction for \$2.7 million in New York Tuesday, Sotheby’s announced. The white jacket, adorned with an American flag, NASA’s initials, a patch for the Apollo 11 mission and the name “E. ALDRIN,” is part of a personal collection of items the 92-year-old astronaut decided to put up for sale. “The exceptionally rare garment was chased by multiple bidders for almost ten minutes before selling to a bidder on the phone,” Sotheby’s said in a statement.

“After deep consideration, the time felt

right to share these items with the world, which for many are symbols of a historical moment, but for me have always remained personal mementos of a life dedicated to science and exploration,” Aldrin, the last living member of Apollo 11’s three-member flight crew, said in a statement last week. He explained the jacket was separate from the spacesuit he wore while walking on the moon with fellow astronaut Neil Armstrong, but that he wore it while flying to and from the Moon.

“I wore this Inflight Coverall Jacket... in the Command Module Columbia, on our historic journey to the Moon and back home again during the Apollo 11 mission,” Aldrin said. The suits worn on the Moon by Aldrin and Armstrong are part of the National Air and Space Museum’s collections in Washington. In total, the New York auction garnered \$8.2 million for 68 items sold out of the 69 offered, including \$819,000 for a flight plan. — AFP

From Cruz to Blanchett: Venice serves up film festival stars

The Venice Film Festival will welcome stars from Penelope Cruz to Cate Blanchett and host world premieres from directors Darren Aronofsky, Alejandro Inarritu and Luca Guadagnino, organizers said Tuesday. A total of 23 movies are in competition for the Golden Lion, the top prize awarded to the best film on the final day of the “Mostra”, the prestigious festival on the glitzy Venice Lido running from August 31 to September 10.

Calling the 79th annual festival an “open window on the world”, Artistic Director Alberto Barbera, during his online presentation, denounced the arrest of three filmmakers in Iran earlier this month which sparked condemnation across the international film community. One of them, award-winning dissident filmmaker Jafar Panahi, 62, will be competing this year at Venice with his film “Kheir Nist” (“Bears Do Not Exist”), in which he also acts.

Panahi, who was ordered last week by a court to serve a six-year sentence for “propaganda against the system” originally handed down in 2010, won the Golden Lion in 2000 for “The Circle”, a critique of women’s treatment in Iran. This year’s red

carpet should see no shortage of stars, with Julianne Moore presiding over the jury, and top talents Hugh Jackman, Timothee Chalamet, Don Cheadle and Colin Farrell all starring in films in competition.

Spain’s Penelope Cruz—who won Venice’s best actress award last year for her work in “Parallel Mothers”—returns in “Immensity”, a family drama set in 1970s Rome by Italy’s Emanuele Crialese. Australian star Cate Blanchett is also expected to attend, for her work playing an orchestra conductor in “Tar”, the third feature by US director Todd Field.

Fictionalised Marilyn Monroe

This year also marks the return of US director Aronofsky with “The Whale”, a psychological drama in which Brendan Fraser plays an obese writer seeking to reconnect with his estranged daughter. Aronofsky is 2008’s Golden Lion winner for “The Wrestler”, about a down-and-out fighter that won raves for lead actor Mickey Rourke. “The collapse of the American Dream,” said Barbera, is the theme of the highly anticipated “Bones and All” by Italian director Guadagnino. Starring Timothee Chalamet, Mark Rylance and Chloe Sevigny, the film follows a young woman and drifter confronting their cannibalism on a cross-country road trip. A “most personal” film in the main competition, said Barbera, is “Bardo: The False Chronicle of some Truths” by Mexico’s Inarritu, in which a journalist suffers an existential crisis. —AFP



Cate Blanchett (left) and Penelope Cruz

FDCI India Couture Week in New Delhi



Models present creations by designer Rahul Mishra during the FDCI India Couture Week in New Delhi. — AFP photos





Pictures show design plan for the 500-metre tall parallel structures, known collectively as The Line, in the heart of the Red Sea megacity NEOM.

EYE-POPPING: SAUDI PRINCE UNVEILS MIRRORED SKYSCRAPER ECO-CITY

A futuristic Saudi megacity is to feature two skyscrapers extending across a swathe of desert and mountain terrain, according to the latest disclosures on the project by the kingdom's de facto ruler. The parallel structures of mirror-encased skyscrapers extending over 170 kilometers (more than 100 miles), known collectively as The Line, form the heart of the Red Sea megacity NEOM, a plank of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's bid to diversify the Gulf state's oil-dependent economy.

First announced in 2017, NEOM has consistently raised eyebrows for proposed flourishes like flying taxis and robot maids, even as architects and economists have questioned its feasibility. In a presentation Monday night, Prince Mohammed sketched out an even more ambitious vision, describing a car-free utopia that would become the planet's most liveable city "by far".

Analysts noted, though, that plans for NEOM have changed course over the years, fuelling doubts about whether The Line will ever become reality. NEOM was once touted as a regional "Silicon Valley", a biotech and digital hub spread over 26,500 square kilometers (10,000 square miles). Now it's a vehicle for reimagining urban life on a footprint of just 34 square kilometers, and addressing what Prince Mohammed describes as "liveability and environmental crises". "The concept has morphed so much from its early conception that it's sometimes hard to determine its direction: scaling down, scaling up, or making an aggressive turn sideways," said Robert Mogielnicki of the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington.

Population boom

Officials had earlier said NEOM's population would top one million, but Prince Mohammed said the number would actually hit 1.2 million by 2030 before climbing to nine million by 2045. The eye-popping total is part of a hoped-for nationwide



population boom that Prince Mohammed said would be necessary to make Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest crude exporter, an economic powerhouse. The goal for 2030 is to have 50 million people-half Saudis and half foreigners-living in the kingdom, up from roughly 34 million today.

By 2040 the target is 100 million people, he said. "That's the main purpose of building NEOM, to raise the capacity of Saudi Arabia, get more citizens and more people in Saudi Arabia. And since we are doing it from nothing, why should we copy normal cities?"

The site will be powered by 100 per cent renewable energy and feature "a year-round temperate micro-climate with natural ventilation", a promotional video released Monday said. Past environmen-

tal pledges by the kingdom, such as a vow to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2060, have sparked scepticism from environmentalists.

NEOM is well-positioned to harness solar and wind energy, and plans are also afoot for the city to host the world's largest green hydrogen plant, said Torbjorn Soltvedt of risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft. "But the feasibility of NEOM as a whole is still unclear given the unprecedented scale and cost of the project," he said.

Finding funds

At just 200 meters (yards) wide, The Line is intended to be Saudi Arabia's answer to unchecked and wasteful urban sprawl, layering homes, schools and parks on top of each other in what plan-



ners term "Zero Gravity Urbanism". Residents will have "all daily needs" reachable within a five-minute walk, while also having access to other perks like outdoor skiing facilities and "a high-speed rail with an end-to-end transit of 20 minutes", according to a statement.

Though NEOM will operate under its own founding law, which is still being prepared, Saudi officials say they have no plans to waive the kingdom's alcohol ban. An airport is already operational at NEOM, and authorities announced in May it would begin receiving regular flights from Dubai, but it is unclear whether major construction of the megacity itself has commenced.

NEOM said Tuesday it would create 380,000 jobs by the end of the decade "whilst providing the ultimate work-life



balance". The "first phase" of the project, lasting until 2030, will cost 1.2 trillion Saudi riyals (roughly \$319 billion), Prince Mohammed said.

Besides government subsidies, potential sources of funding include the private sector and an initial public offering for NEOM expected in 2024, he said. Securing the necessary financing remains a potential challenge, though the current climate is more favorable than during the coronavirus pandemic that lowered oil prices. "But funding is only part of the equation... demand is harder to buy, especially when you're asking people to be part of an experiment on living and working in the future," Mogielnicki said.—AFP



These pictures released by Lucapa Diamond Company Limited show a 170 carat pink diamond - dubbed The Lulo Rose - that was discovered at the Lulo mine in Angola's diamond-rich northeast region. — AFP photos

Miners unearth pink diamond believed to be largest seen in 300 years

Miners in Angola have unearthed a rare pure pink diamond that is believed to be the largest found in 300 years, the Australian site operator announced Wednesday. A 170 carat pink diamond - dubbed The Lulo Rose - was discovered at Lulo mine in the country's diamond-rich northeast and is among the largest pink diamonds ever found, the Lucapa Diamond Company said in a statement to investors.

The "historic" find of the Type IIa diamond, one of the rarest and purest forms of natural stones, was welcomed by the Angolan government, which is also a partner in the mine. "This record and spectacular pink diamond recovered from Lulo continues to showcase Angola as an important player on the world stage," Angola's Mineral Resources Minister Diamantino Azevedo said.

The diamond will be sold at international tender, likely at a dazzling price. Although The Lulo Rose would have to be cut and polished to realize its true value, in a process that can see a stone lose 50 per cent of its weight, similar pink diamonds have sold for record-breaking prices. The 59.6 carat Pink Star was sold at a Hong Kong auction in 2017 for 71.2 million US dollars. It remains the most expensive diamond ever sold. — AFP

Sports

Commonwealth Games defy doomsayers to remain afloat

22nd edition of the Games kicks off in Birmingham

News in brief

West Ham, Scamacca seal deal

LONDON: West Ham announced the signing of Italy striker Gianluca Scamacca on Tuesday from Sassuolo on a five-year deal. The 23-year-old will reportedly cost the Hammers an initial £30.5 million (\$37 million) with a further £5 million in add-ons. Scamacca had been linked with Juventus and Paris Saint-Germain after scoring 16 goals in 36 matches in Serie A last season. “I am really excited to join West Ham,” said Scamacca. “I’ve waited a long time for this moment - it’s been a dream to play in the Premier League. “I feel like West Ham is the perfect team for me. They showed they really wanted me and when I spoke to the manager there was an instant understanding.” West Ham had been in the market for attacking reinforcements to lighten the load on Michael Antonio up front. “We’ve been looking to add more strength to our attacking options for a while, so we’re delighted to have got Gianluca in,” said West Ham boss David Moyes.

Ramsey to end Juve contract

MILAN: Wales midfielder Aaron Ramsey has left Juventus a year before the end of his deal, the Italian club said on Tuesday. Ramsey, 31, joined Juve in 2019 as a free agent after spending almost eight years at Arsenal and won the Serie A title in his first campaign in Turin. Last season, he spent five months on loan at Rangers before helping his country to qualification for this year’s World Cup with a play-off win over Ukraine. “Aaron Ramsey’s contract with Juventus has been mutually terminated,” the club posted on Twitter. Last week he was left out of Juve’s squad for their pre-season tour in the United States. “I want to focus on the positives and overall I have enjoyed my time in Torino,” Ramsey said in English on Instagram. “I will never forget this experience together,” he added in Italian. Wales start their World Cup campaign against the United States on November 21 and will also face Iran and England in the group stage.

Fulham sign Swiss defender

LONDON: Fulham have signed Switzerland defender Kevin Mbabu from German club Wolfsburg for a fee reported to be 7.5 million euros (\$7.6 million) including add-ons. The 27-year-old right-back has agreed a three-year contract at the Premier League club, who hold an option for a further 12 months. Mbabu, who has 22 caps for his country and previously had stints with Newcastle and Rangers, is initially targeting Premier League survival following Fulham’s promotion as Championship winners. “I’m happy to be here as a Fulham Football Club player,” he told BBC. “It’s a relief and now I can focus on my goals and the club’s goals, and help the team to be successful. “The first step is to stay in the Premier League, stay stable in the league, and then why not aim for the top 10?” Mbabu is the fourth summer signing for Fulham boss Marco Silva following the arrivals of Joao Palhinha, Andreas Pereira and Manor Solomon.

British sprinter out of Games

LONDON: Sprint star Dina Asher-Smith announced on Wednesday she had withdrawn from the England team for the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham due to a hamstring injury. Asher-Smith pulled up midway through the women’s 4x100m relay at the world championships in Eugene, Oregon over the weekend. “Thankfully I’ve only got a light hamstring strain after pulling up in the 4x1 a few days ago,” she said on Instagram. “No major issue and nothing to worry about. “But due to the short turnaround between the end of the worlds and the start of the Commonwealth Games in a few days’ time I’m going to have to withdraw.” Asher-Smith, 26, finished fourth in the 100m final in Eugene and won a bronze medal in the 200m before suffering her relay setback. She pulled up sharply midway through the third leg but still managed to hand the baton to team-mate Daryll Neita, with the team finishing sixth.

Bayern: Ronaldo doesn’t fit

BERLIN: Bayern Munich chief executive Oliver Kahn said on Wednesday that making a move for Cristiano Ronaldo in the transfer market would not fit the club’s “philosophy”. Manchester United striker Ronaldo reportedly wants to leave the club he rejoined last year, although new Red Devils manager Erik ten Hag has insisted the five-time Ballon d’Or winner is not for sale. Ronaldo arrived back at Old Trafford on Tuesday ahead of talks with Ten Hag over his future. But Europe’s top clubs, including Bayern, have not been scrapping for the Portuguese star’s signature. “We discussed this topic—otherwise we wouldn’t be doing our job properly,” Kahn told German daily Bild. “Personally, I think Cristiano Ronaldo is one of the greatest-ever footballers. “But we came to the conclusion that, despite the esteem that we hold him in, he wouldn’t have fitted our philosophy at the moment.” The 37-year-old Ronaldo only has one year left on his contract with United, but is reportedly desperate to play in the Champions League. —From AFP

BIRMINGHAM: The Commonwealth Games are sometimes seen as a quirky relic in the modern sporting calendar but former International Olympic Committee (IOC) marketing chief Michael Payne says they have consistently defied the doomsayers. The 22nd edition of the Games opens in Birmingham on Thursday, bringing together around 5,000 athletes from 72 nations and territories—mostly former British colonies—to compete in 19 sports over 11 days.

Some track and field stars will be absent when the competition gets under way—just days after the end of the world championships in Eugene, Oregon. But there will still be plenty of big names on show at the event, which features sports as diverse as lawn bowls and marathon running. The Commonwealth Games are not on the scale of the Olympics that Birmingham once aspired to host—the city was beaten by Barcelona for the right to put on the 1992 Games—but officials hope they can provide a big economic boost for the area.

According to the Financial Times, the West Midlands Combined Authority estimates the event will be worth £1 billion (\$1.2 billion) to the regional economy. Payne, credited with transforming the IOC brand and finances through sponsorship, said the Commonwealth Games had shown remarkable resilience over the decades. “People have been talking of the demise of the Commonwealth Games for nearly half a century but they are still going, so I would not write them off just yet,” he told AFP.

Another former IOC marketing executive, Terrence Burns, who since leaving the organization has played a role in five successful Olympic bid campaigns, said it was important for the event to find its own niche and evolve accordingly. “These other Games are not the Olympic Games but tend to try to mirror them in look, feel, and impact,” he said. “That’s just not possible or credible. “So I think they need to redefine ‘success’ and build their product accordingly.”

Things ‘dented’ All Blacks must fix in S Africa

WELLINGTON: The All Blacks are in South Africa preparing to face the world champions, with New Zealand’s head coach Ian Foster under intense pressure to end their dire run of form after four defeats in their last five matches. AFP looks at five things the All Blacks must fix in their opening Rugby Championship fixture against the Springboks on August 7 in Mbombela.

Stop opposing drives

The All Blacks’ new forwards coach Jason Ryan saw how the home side was out-muscled by the Irish pack in this month’s home series defeat and admitted what he witnessed “dented” New Zealand’s pride. The Irish scored a key early try off a driving maul in winning the

decisive third test in Wellington, which Ryan says must not be repeated in South Africa. “We’ve got to stop mauls and also improve our contact area,” Ryan told reporters in Wellington before the All Blacks flew to South Africa. “The All Black pack has been dented and we talked about it in the forwards meeting, we didn’t hide anything and were really honest, which we have to be.”

Score first

Ireland were the first team to score in all three Test matches against New Zealand. The All Blacks can ill afford another slow start to let the Springboks take an early lead in Mbombela. Foster admitted it was a point the All Blacks had highlighted internally, yet the mistake was repeated on consecutive Saturdays against the Irish. “For some reason we’re not as calm, particularly defensively. It’s more the defense where we’re getting fidgety early, we’re letting a few holes through,” Foster said. Those holes must be closed in South Africa.

Japan eSports players with disabilities shoot down stereotypes

TOKYO: Street Fighter player Shunya Hatakeyama has muscular dystrophy, so he uses his chin to launch devastating combos. He is not the only Japanese gamer proving that disability is no barrier in eSports. Naoya Kitamura, who is blind and relies on sound to play beat ‘em up game Tekken 7, also hopes that his skills in a billion-dollar industry will help make society more open-minded. “I’ll block a move and the sound it makes will tell me what kind of move it was,” Kitamura said. “Then I’ll react and make my move,” he told AFP, demonstrating a dizzying attack with Tekken character Lucky Chloe.

Competitive gaming is booming worldwide, with global eSports revenues estimated at more than \$1 billion, and many think it could one day be at the Olympics. The sector is not as big in Japan as in eSports-crazy China and South Korea, but it is gradually starting to take root. Keen to offer Japanese gamers with disabilities a chance to be part of the action, social welfare worker Daiki Kato founded a company called ePara in 2016.

Kato’s firm employs players such as Hatakeyama

Titmus and McKeon lead power-packed Australia at Games

SYDNEY: Olympic champions Ariarne Titmus and Emma McKeon return to the pool at the Commonwealth Games with a gold rush and world records on their minds, heading an Australia swimming squad boasting “insane depth”. After a breakout Tokyo Olympics where she dethroned American great Katie Ledecky in the 200m and 400m freestyle, the dominant Titmus carried her form into the Australian championships in May. After narrowly missing the long-standing 200m world record set in 2009, she broke Ledecky’s world mark over 400m by 0.06 seconds, touching in 3min 56.40sec. Titmus, 21, then opted out of the world championships in Budapest, saving herself for the Commonwealth Games, where she will be a red-hot favorite.

“I am so excited and I think we’ve got a great team going in. It’s insane the depth we have,” said Titmus, the



BIRMINGHAM: A photograph shows a general view of the Alexander Stadium, in Birmingham, ahead of the 2022 Commonwealth Games. —AFP

‘Proud nation’

The Commonwealth Games have, like other global events in recent years, had trouble in attracting host cities. “Finding nations willing to host is a challenge for many sports bodies these days,” said Payne. “That is why you have seen a far more flexible process introduced to identify potential hosts. “But the Commonwealth Games do face a major hurdle, as their marketing and sponsorship revenue potential is limited and, as such, nations wanting to host must be willing to commit to \$1 billion of taxpayer support.” Burns said the nature of the Games, held every four years, throws up obstacles for organizers.

“I think an event that aspires to be global but by definition limits its participation base to a finite set of nations and territories, has a global fan interest challenge as well as a hosting city challenge,” he said. “That part is just

maths.” Steps have been taken to remodel the event, with the Commonwealth Games Federation last year publishing a roadmap for the future. One recommendation was for “approximately” 15 sports to feature at the Games, with athletics and swimming compulsory but some flexibility to allow hosts to choose from a wider list of core sports.

Payne says that makes sense but he takes issue with a bolder idea of awarding co-hosting admittedly “only in exceptional circumstances” to non-Commonwealth countries. “Like staging the Asian Games in Europe, it is a non-starter.” He says the Commonwealth Games are a vital showcase for smaller nations and territories that struggle to attract compete at the bigger events. “For many of the smaller nations this is their one moment on the world sports stage, with an opportunity to shine and win medals,” said the 64-year-old Irishman. —AFP

Create more ‘big moments’

Beauden Barrett is a world-class playmaker, but the All Blacks’ star can not carry his side alone and needs support from his teammates in attack. In Ardie Savea, Akira Ioane and Will Jordan, the All Blacks have players who can crack any defence and create chances, but the team must take them. “We’re not getting enough big moments right,” Foster said. “We’ve got a lot of belief in many of the solutions we’ve got but we’ve got to get better at executing them. “There were a couple of times post line breaks we couldn’t get our support quick enough on the man. Those moments hurt.”

Start winning again

Simply put, Foster’s record of 16 wins, a draw and seven defeats is poor for an All Blacks coach. His situation could become untenable if his team loses both of their opening Rugby Championship games in South Africa, but he says he has no thoughts of quitting. “It’s not something I think about. I think about just doing the

best I can in my role.” There is no bigger test in world rugby than facing the Springboks at altitude and Foster is relishing the challenge. “We’re going into the Rugby Championship to try to win. No All Blacks team wants to go over and (lose). I think up to 10 guys in the squad haven’t been to South Africa before. It’s a unique situation for this group but, wow, what a great opportunity.”

Learn their lessons

Too many dropped passes, missed tackles and a slow start cost the All Blacks dearly against the Irish. New Zealand’s captain Sam Cane - who pundits have said should be replaced - insists his team must take those lessons into the Tests against the Springboks. “The only good thing that can come out of this is we use it as fuel to get better. If we don’t learn, don’t use the experience of this series, then it’s wasted. “When we went back-to-back with the good stuff we look flash but too many times we’re not backing those up.” —AFP



IWATE PREFECTURE: In this picture, ‘Epara’ enthusiast Shunya Hatakeyama practices video game at his home in Shiwa, Iwate Prefecture. —AFP

ing market for gamers with disabilities and he thinks manufacturers will start to sit up and take notice. “If you have more people with hearing impairments or visual impairments playing games, game manufacturers will react by making more games that they can play,” he said. —AFP

McKeon has her sights set on beating the all-time record of 10 gold medals for an Australian, currently held jointly by fellow swimmers Ian Thorpe, Susie O’Neill and Leisel Jones. She is again set to contest the 50m and 100m freestyle, but has serious competition from teen sensation Mollie O’Callaghan, who stunned Swedish world record holder Sarah Sjöström in Budapest to win the 100m free among her six medals.

McKeon said she would need to be at her best given the rapidly improving next generation. “You never want to get too comfortable or complacent otherwise you’re not going to keep working hard and keep striving to be better,” she said. The Commonwealth Games hold a special place in McKeon’s heart, with her father Ron winning swimming golds in 1978 and 1982. Her mother, Susie Woodhouse, also competed in 1982.

Australia also boast Olympic and world backstroke champion Kaylee McKeown, while pop star Cody Simpson made the grade after returning from a decade away focusing on a music career during which he worked with Justin Bieber and Miley Cyrus. But teenage backstroke hope Isaac Cooper will be missing after he was sent home over “well-being challenges, including the use of medication”. —AFP



Australia's Ariarne Titmus

Sports

Juventus and Barcelona draw 2-2 in US friendly

Real Madrid held by America in US friendly

LOS ANGELES: Ousmane Dembele and Moise Kean scored two goals apiece as Barcelona and Juventus fought to an entertaining 2-2 draw in their US pre-season friendly in Dallas on Tuesday. French winger Dembele fired Barcelona ahead after 34 minutes at the Cotton Bowl, wriggling past Juventus players Juan Cuadrado and Sandro before beating Juve goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny to make it 1-0.

But Juventus hit back five minutes later with Colombian wing-back Cuadrado making amends with a pinpoint low cross that found Kean who tapped in past Barcelona goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen. Barcelona were soon back in front again, however, and once again the goal came as Dembele punished poor defending. Cuadrado was again at fault, with Dembele skipping past the South American's covering tackle and then cutting past Manuel Locatelli to shoot past Szczesny for a 2-1 lead.

Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez made a flurry of changes at half-time, with Dembele making way for new Brazilian signing Raphina. The former Leeds striker made an instant impact, blasting a long-range shot that Szczesny parried over the bar. Despite Barcelona's bright start to the half, it was Juventus who scored next with Kean tucking away a rebound after deft approach play by Denis Zakaria and Locatelli on 52 minutes.

Barcelona came closest to the breakthrough goal, and hit the woodwork twice in a matter of seconds on 68 minutes. Raphina rattled the crossbar with a curling free kick and from the rebound Ansu Fati's curling shot from the edge of the area cannoned back off the post. That was as close as either side came to break-

ing the deadlock, while Barcelona's new signing Robert Lewandowski struggled to make much of an impression before being substituted midway through the second half.

Real held in US

In another development, Karim Benzema and Eden Hazard were on target as Spanish giants Real Madrid were held to a 2-2 draw by Mexican side Club America in their pre-season friendly on Tuesday. Former Real Madrid player Alvaro Fidalgo's 82nd-minute penalty denied Real victory in a game played on a makeshift surface at Oracle Park, the home of the San Francisco Giants baseball team. America took the lead with a shock early goal after just five minutes, as Henry Martin latched onto a shot by Miguel Layun and helped it into the net.

But Real responded with an equalizer from Benzema after 22 minutes. The French international surged towards the penalty area and played a neat one-two with Marco Asensio before curling a low finish into the bottom right-hand corner past Guillermo Ochoa. Real coach Carlo Ancelotti made wholesale changes at half-time, with seven substitutions, which included Benzema making way for Rodrygo and Asensio coming off for Hazard.

Hazard did not take long to make an impact, converting a 55th-minute spot kick after America defender Salvador Reyes was adjudged to have fouled Lucas Vazquez in the box. Hazard's penalty looked like settling a drab encounter but America got back on level terms eight minutes from time when Vinicius made the slightest of contact with Fidalgo



DALLAS: Ousmane Dembele #7 of FC Barcelona scores a goal during the first half against Juventus in an 2022 International Friendly match at the Cotton Bowl on July 26, 2022. —AFP

just inside the area. Fidalgo, who started his professional career with Real Madrid's B team but did not graduate to the senior squad, stepped up to convert

the penalty. Real Madrid conclude their US tour on Saturday against Juventus at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California. —AFP

New Japan police raids over Tokyo Olympics claims

TOKYO: Japanese police carried out new raids on Wednesday over allegations a 2020 Tokyo Olympics board member received money from a sponsor he signed a consulting contract with, local media reported. Haruyuki Takahashi, 78, is suspected of receiving more than \$300,000 from high street business suit retailer Aoki Holdings Inc, an "official partner" of last year's pandemic-delayed mega-event. That could reportedly constitute bribery because Takahashi was considered a quasi-civil servant who was not permitted to accept money or gifts related to his position. Takahashi's Tokyo home was raided by investigators on Tuesday morning according to reports.

And local media said searches were conducted Wednesday at the home of former Aoki chairman Hironori Aoki, 83, and the disbanded Tokyo 2020 organizing committee office at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. The Tokyo Olympics organizing committee wound down operations last month but it maintains a presence to deal with assets and liabilities. The Tokyo prosecutors' office told AFP it could not comment on individual cases.

Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike told reporters the situation was "extremely regrettable" and she would "keep a close eye on developments." "I have told the organizing committee that they should co-operate fully with this investigation," she said. A sports con-

sulting firm run by Takahashi is suspected of receiving money from Aoki for a contract signed in 2017, according to local media. Aoki in October 2018 became a Tokyo Games sponsor, allowing it to use the event's logo and sell officially licensed products.

Takahashi told the Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper last week that the money his company received was for consultancy work. "There was no conflict of interest whatsoever with my position as an organizing committee board member," he was quoted as saying. Aoki issued a statement last week saying it had no comment on reports of the payments. Takahashi, a former executive at Japan's biggest advertising agency, Dentsu, served on the Tokyo 2020 board from June 2014.

Former Tokyo 2020 president Seiko Hashimoto told reporters Tuesday that she would "cooperate fully" with the investigation if instructed to do so. "Matters such as this coming to light after the fact is very disappointing," she said. "We have to act in a way that will not tarnish what was achieved even with the pandemic." The case is not the first time questions have been raised about alleged impropriety around the Games.

French prosecutors launched an investigation into allegations of corruption linked to Tokyo's bid for the Games in 2016. The former head of Japan's Olympic Committee, Tsunekazu Takeda, stepped down in 2019 as French authorities probed his involvement in payments made before Tokyo was awarded the event. The Tokyo Olympics opened on July 23 last year after an unprecedented one-year delay because of the coronavirus pandemic. The Games were held in largely empty stadiums after fans were banned over surging virus infections in Japan. —AFP

Neymar to be tried over irregularities in Barcelona transfer

MADRID: Neymar is due to face trial in October over alleged irregularities in his transfer to Barcelona, judicial sources said on Wednesday. The Brazilian international, his parents and former Barcelona presidents Sandro Rosell and Josep Maria Bartomeu will be tried for alleged corruption related to the forward's move from Santos to Barcelona in 2013.

Rosell and Bartomeu will also face fraud charges in the trial which is scheduled to take place from October 17 to 31. Neymar left Barcelona for Paris Saint-Germain in 2017 for a world-record 222 million euros, but it is his move from boyhood club Santos to Barca which has caused controversy. The case stems from a complaint by Brazilian group DIS, the former owner of a percentage of the player's rights.

Barcelona officially said the transfer cost 57.1 million euros (\$63.6 million), with 40 million euros going to Neymar's family and 17.1 million to Santos, but Spanish prosecutors later said it actually cost at least 83.3 million euros. DIS, which received 6.8 million of the 17.1 million euros paid to Santos, have alleged that Barca and Neymar joined forces to hide the real amount of the transfer.

On Wednesday, DIS said it was "satisfied" that there is now a date for the trial of the case, which has been in the Spanish courts since 2016. The prosecution has requested a two-year prison sentence for Neymar, but he has insisted he was only focused on football and that he blindly trusted his father, who is also his agent. Bartomeu took over the Barcelona presidency from his good friend Rosell, after the latter resigned in January 2014 as he faced charges of corruption over the transfer.

In 2020, Barcelona said they had been cleared by the Court of Arbitration for Sport over claims of fraud. A document in 2020 showed Neymar owed more unpaid tax than any other individual on a Spanish authorities' blacklist. The tax office refused to say whether Neymar's presence on that list was linked to his transfer from Santos. Barcelona agreed to pay a fine of 5.5 million euros to avoid a trial in 2016 over alleged tax fraud in the signing of Neymar. Then-president Bartomeu said at the time there had been a "tax planning error".

Neymar has also been in trouble with Brazilian tax authorities, being fined for tax evasion in Brazil. The 30-year-old has recently been playing on PSG's pre-season tour of Japan as they build up for the season-opening French Champions' Trophy against Nantes on Sunday in Tel-Aviv. Neymar, Brazil's second highest goalscorer of all time behind Pele, will be hoping to lead his country to a record-extending sixth World Cup title in Qatar later this year. —AFP

Ludwig wins stage 3 of women's Tour, Vos stays in yellow

EPERNAY: Dane Cecilie Uttrup Ludwig outmuscled Marianne Vos to win stage three of the women's Tour de France on Tuesday but the veteran Dutch rider held on to the yellow jersey. The day after a nightmare stage two for her FDJ-Suez team, marked by the abandonment of title contender Marta Cavalli, Ludwig, who also battled back from a fall on Monday, produced a vintage performance in the Champagne region.

After two relatively flat rides, the peloton had to face its first climbs as they took on the 133.6km course from Reims to Epemay. Eleven riders slugged it out over the final stages, with Vos working hard to rejoin the leaders

after being dropped. The 35-year-old, who took over the yellow jersey with victory in stage two on Monday, kicked hard but it was the younger legs of 26-year-old Ludwig who powered through the line first.

"I have to say that it feels like such a good comeback after yesterday," said a tearful Ludwig who was wearing the jersey of Danish champion. "I just love how the team kept the fighting spirit. We knew that today was a super good day and if I had the legs, I could try and go for the win. "To actually do it and become a Tour de France stage winner, and in this jersey, it doesn't get better."

Team Jumbo-Visma's Vos finished two seconds behind, closely shadowed by South African Ashleigh Moolman, Italians Silvia Persico and Elisa Lono Borghini and Pole Katarzyna Niewiadoma. "I didn't come into the last corner in the best position but I just kept fighting," added Ludwig, whose stage win came just two days after her compatriot Jonas Vingegaard won the men's Tour de France title. "What a year for Denmark." —AFP



Kuwaiti rider Faisal Burbayea victorious

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Rider Faisal Burbayea was victorious in this year's 2022 IJSBA NOVICE RUNABOUT STOCK World Championship. Burbayea from Ostrow-Warcki, Poland told KUNA on Tuesday that this was his first time of partaking in a world championship and he looks forward to more victories. The competition involved 300 racers from 33 different countries.

The next stage of the competition will take place on the Lakes of Arizona in the US and will be held in October, while the third Stages will be in Pattaya, Thailand in December. This WGP World Series will be launched on July 19 as part of the three part series of a three-year old competition, to encourage more participants. —KUNA

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401



EMBASSY OF INDIA KUWAIT

Embassy of India, Kuwait invites bids from interested companies for organizing and hosting Embassy's event in digital hybrid format in Embassy premises. Detailed scope of work involved in Event management is available on Embassy's website: www.indembkwat.gov.in.

Prospective/ interested Event Management companies are advised to bid and present their offers in a sealed cover marked "Offer for Embassy's Event Management- to be open by addressee only" and addressed to the "Head of Chancery", Embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Arabian Gulf Street, Safat 13015, Kuwait. The offer must be submitted at the Embassy on or before 10 August 2022.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Ranjit Khiva S/o Nachhatar Khiva R/o Mohalla. That now I have changed my name from Ranjit Khiva to Ranjit Singh. All concern may be noted. That Nachhatar Khiva and Nacchattar Singh both name's are belong to one. (C#2024)

I, SAHUL MOHAMED JABAR SHADIQ, holder of Passport No. L3464129, do hereby change my name to MOHAMED HANIF (as given name) JABAR SHADIQ (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name MOHAMED HANIF JABAR SHADIQ and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C# 2026)



SHEFFIELD: England's defender Lucy Bronze shoots and scores the second goal of her team past Sweden's goalkeeper Hedvig Lindahl during the UEFA Women's Euro 2022 semi-final football match between England and Sweden on July 26, 2022. —AFP

England thrash Sweden 4-0

England's women book Euro 2022 final

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّوَحَّدُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ فَارْجِعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرًا

Patrons of Bader Nasser

Al-Kharafi's Diwan

convey their heartfelt condolences

to the Al-Mousa family

on the sad demise of

**Haj/Husseain Ali
Ibrahim Al-Mousa**

May Almighty Allah bestow

His mercy on the deceased

and accept him in

His heavenly abode.

SHEFFIELD: England's women will be talked about "all over the world" said coach Sarina Wiegman after thrashing Sweden 4-0 in Sheffield on Tuesday to reach the Euro 2022 final. After semi-final heartache in the last three major tournaments, it was fourth time lucky for the Lionesses to the delight of the home crowd of 29,000 at Bramall Lane to set up a clash against Germany or France. England have never won a major tournament in the women's game, but on this form will take some stopping in front of a sold out Wembley on Sunday.

Goals either side of half-time from Beth Mead and Lucy Bronze put the hosts well on course to inflict Sweden's first defeat from open play since 2019. But it was substitute Alessia Russo's stunning backheel through the legs of Sweden goalkeeper Hedvig Lindahl that will live long in the memory. Fran Kirby then added a fourth 14 minutes from time. "Second half, it was such a performance tomorrow they will talk about it all over Europe, all over the world," said Wiegman.

A record crowd for a women's Euro of 87,000 is expected at Wembley for the final, hoping England

will end a 56-year wait for a major title in either the men's or women's game. "I am going in my own bunker," added Wiegman on the hype that will follow in the upcoming days. "We noticed that a little bit. We want to inspire the nation, I think that's what we are doing and we hope we make a difference. That the whole country is proud of us and even more girls and boys start playing football."

Sweden's unbeaten run smashed

Sweden's only defeat in the last 34 matches came in a penalty shootout in the gold medal match at last year's Olympics. The number two ranked side in the world showed why early on as England struggled to contain the Swedish threat on the counter-attack. Mary Earps was forced into a fine save by Sofia Jakobsson inside 20 seconds before Arsenal striker Stina Blackstenius crashed a header off the bar. "The first 25 mins I felt we had enough chances," said Sweden boss Peter Gerhardsson.

"When you play this type of opponent you need to be effective with the chances that you get." In keeping with their tournament, England were far more clinical when their chances

game. Blackstenius' club teammate Mead extended her lead in the race for the Golden Boot to two with a perfect control and volleyed finish from Bronze's cross on 34 minutes.

Mead has also now matched the record of six goals in a single women's European Championship held by Germany's Inka Grings at Euro 2009. That was also the last time England reached the final of a major women's tournament and Bronze's header from Mead's corner three minutes after half-time put England well on the way to Wembley. Any Swedish hopes of a fightback were truly extinguished on 68 minutes with a goal that will be replayed the world over.

A brilliant England move involving Keira Walsh and Kirby teed up Russo, whose initial finish was straight at Lindahl. Yet, despite the presence of two Swedish defenders, with her back to goal and the angle narrowing, Russo produced a moment of magic to backheel the ball with enough power to catch Lindahl napping. The veteran Swedish goalkeeper is closing in on 200 caps, but will want to forget this one as she then failed to keep out her former Chelsea teammate Kirby's effort that trickled over the line. —AFP

Stenson ready for LIV debut as Trump course hosts event

NEW YORK: Sacked European Ryder Cup captain Henrik Stenson makes his LIV Golf debut on Friday as Donald Trump's Bedminster course hosts the second US event of the rebel Saudi-backed circuit against a backdrop of protests. Stenson was stripped of his Ryder Cup captaincy last week after confirmation he had opted to sign with LIV in a deal reportedly worth close to \$50 million. It was just the latest bombshell to detonate across the golfing world, which has been plunged into a virtual civil war this year with the emergence of the LIV circuit.

The upstart series, fronted by Greg Norman, is bankrolled by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, and has sought to lure top golfers with contracts which in some cases run into the hundreds of millions of dollars. Human Rights groups have criticised the venture, saying it is a "sportswashing" exercise being used to boost Saudi Arabia's international reputation. Stenson's decision to join LIV follows defections by several stars from the United States and Europe, including major winners such as Dustin Johnson, Brooks Koepka, Patrick Reed and Bryson DeChambeau.

Those players have all been hit with indefinite bans from the PGA Tour. Several of Stenson's former European Ryder Cup team-mates, including Ian Poulter, Sergio Garcia and Lee Westwood have also signed with LIV Golf. This week's tournament has an extra dimension given that it is taking place at former US President Trump's Trump National course at Bedminster, New Jersey. Bedminster was due to have hosted this year's PGA Championship major, but was stripped of that right last year in the wake of the January 6 riot by the former president's supporters at the US Capitol.



Sweden's Henrik Stenson

Trump: 'Take the money'

Trump has subsequently emerged as a vocal advocate for LIV, last week urging golfers to "take the money" and sign with the circuit. In an interview with the Wall Street Journal published on Tuesday, avid golfer Trump again spoke admiringly of LIV, describing it as "one of the hottest things to have happened in sports." "I think LIV has been a great thing for Saudi Arabia, for the image of Saudi Arabia," Trump told the paper. "I think it's going to be an incredible investment from that standpoint, and that's more valuable than lots of other things because you can't buy that—even with billions of dollars."

Trump has faced protests for hosting the tournament by relatives of people killed and injured in the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington. Fifteen of the 19 hijackers involved in the atrocity were Saudi nationals. In an open letter to Trump released last week, the 9/11 Justice group urged him to cut ties to LIV Golf. Another Trump golf property, Trump National at Doral in Florida, will stage the October 27-30 finale to the series. "It is difficult for us to fully express the extreme pain, frustration and anger this upcoming tournament at Bedminster causes our community," the group wrote. —AFP