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Lawmaker urges govt to face unprecedented rise in prices

MP asks about reported plan to increase vehicle insurance charges

Kuwait co-op pulls Indian products as BJP faces furor

KUWAIT: Anger in the Middle East spread Monday over comments made by an official of India's ruling party about Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), with various countries summoning New Delhi's envoy and a Kuwaiti supermarket removing Indian products. The United Arab Emirates became

the latest country to voice its condemnation of the remarks, saying they were "contrary to moral and humanitarian values and principles".

The UAE's foreign ministry underlined the "need for respecting religious symbols... and countering hate speech", state news agency WAM reported. Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other countries in the region, as well as the influential Al-Azhar University in Cairo, have condemned the comments by a spokeswoman for Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party, who has since been suspended.

In Kuwait, supermarket workers piled Indian tea and other products into trolleys in a protest against

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By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Khalil Al-Saleh called on the government on Monday to take speedy actions to face an unprecedented wave of price rises that began with the coronavirus pandemic and accelerated with the Russia-Ukraine war. The lawmaker called on the government to adopt a "comprehensive strategic plan" on the short and medium terms aimed at reducing the cost of living and producing commodities, in addition to providing services and storage.

He said the government plan must provide financial aid to families by raising the cost-of-living allowance, in addition to other measures. Saleh said the price rise wave comes amid real concerns about Kuwait's food security, especially following

the Russian war on Ukraine and decisions by several countries to stop exporting essential commodities, which is likely to trigger higher inflation and rises in prices.

The lawmaker stressed that the crisis threatens the living conditions of citizens amid government failure to act despite a huge rise in oil revenues. He also warned that continued increases in prices presents a national challenge, which requires the government to face it immediately.

Meanwhile, MP Khaled Al-Otaibi asked the minister of commerce and industry about reports saying the ministry plans to allow a massive increase in third-party vehicle insurance charges. The lawmaker said reports have indicated that third-party

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MoH sets health conditions for hajj pilgrims

KUWAIT: The ministry of health announced health guidelines for hajj and the conditions required for this year's pilgrimage, the first of which is that the age of a pilgrim should be less than 65, with at least two shots of a COVID-19 vaccine approved by the Saudi health ministry taken. The ministry said in a statement Monday that among the conditions is submitting a negative test result for COVID-19 taken within 72 hours before departure to Saudi Arabia.

According to the authorities in Saudi Arabia, there are instructions for hajj and umrah pilgrims before leaving the country, including being vaccinated at least 10 days before the date of travel, it pointed out. The ministry advised pilgrims from the groups most at risk of complications from flu or coronavirus, including pregnant women, children under 5 and people with chronic diseases, to postpone hajj and umrah rituals this year. — KUNA

Saudi begins compensation for Jeddah project

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia has begun compensating residents who lost property to a massive redevelopment project in the coastal city of Jeddah, state media said. "The delivery of the first batch of compensation for the removed properties has begun," the official Saudi Press Agency said in a report late Sunday, though it did not specify how many people had been compensated so far.

It said one billion Saudi riyals (\$267 million) would be distributed as part of the "first batch of compensation", without providing a timeline or indicating when future payouts might occur. Authorities have pitched the clearance and construction work in Jeddah, the kingdom's second-largest city, as the latest ambitious project of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, one that will replace "slums" with amenities like a stadium, an oceanarium and an opera house.

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JEDDAH: Bulldozers demolish buildings in this March 14, 2022 file photo as part of a \$20 billion clearance and construction government project. — AFP

Global tourist arrivals tripled in first quarter

MADRID: International tourist arrivals tripled in the first quarter compared with the same period in 2021, with Europe leading the rebound as Covid restrictions were eased, the UN's tourism agency said Monday. In the first three months of 2022, there were 117 million global tourist arrivals, up from 41 million in the same period a year earlier, with the figures showing an increase of 182 percent, the Madrid-based UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) said.

Although the figure remained 61 percent lower than the first quarter of 2019, a year before the pandemic, it showed tourism was continuing to recover "at a strong pace" as "restrictions ease and confidence returns", it said. "Of the extra 76 million international arrivals for the first three months, about 47 million were recorded in March, showing that the recovery is gathering pace."

The increase was particularly notable in Europe, which welcomed almost four times as many arrivals as in 2021, an increase of 280 percent. Strong growth was also seen in the Americas, where arrivals more than doubled (up 117 percent) and in the Middle East, up 132 percent.

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Scorched Syria wheat fields feed animals

UMM HAJRAH, Syria: Moussa Fatimi's wheat field was once part of a thriving Syrian breadbasket. Now, he can't even grow enough to feed his family, and the land has been turned over to animals. Fatimi's crop has withered from a climate crisis, adding to fears of supply shortages sparked by the war in Ukraine as Syria grapples with record-high rates of food insecurity.

"For the second year in a row, we face drought," Fatimi, 85, told AFP at his parched plot. "We haven't even

harvested enough this year to secure our own supply of bread. Our losses are in the millions," he said. Syria is among the countries most vulnerable and poorly prepared for climate change, which is forecast to worsen, posing a further threat to the wheat harvests that are an essential income source for a war-battered population.

The trend is most evident in Syria's once-fertile northeast where wheat fields are drying to a crisp because of severe drought and low rainfall, challenges also faced by Iraq and other neighboring countries. In Umm Hajrah, a village northeast of Hasakeh city, Fatimi meandered through a wheat field dotted with sheep munching on the crops. "It's just straw. There's no seeds," he said after pulling up a stunted stalk. — AFP (See Page 12)



HASAKEH, Syria: A young boy stands near his sheep during a sandstorm in the countryside of Tabqa on June 2, 2022. — AFP

Mexico leader to skip Biden's Americas meet

MEXICO CITY: Mexico President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador announced Monday he would skip the regional Summit of the Americas in the United States due to Washington's failure to invite coun-

tries it views as undemocratic. The White House confirmed that President Joe Biden would not be inviting Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua to this week's summit in Los Angeles.

"I'm not going to the summit because they are not inviting all the countries of America and I think it is necessary to change the policy that has been imposed on us for centuries: Exclusion," said Lopez Obrador in his daily press conference. Lopez Obrador said Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard would be representing Mexico in his place.

The leftist populist had threatened last month to

stay away from the summit unless all countries were invited. Cuba's President Miguel Diaz-Canel announced he would not attend even if invited, while Guatemala's conservative leader Alejandro Giammattei pulled out after Washington sanctioned his top prosecutor.

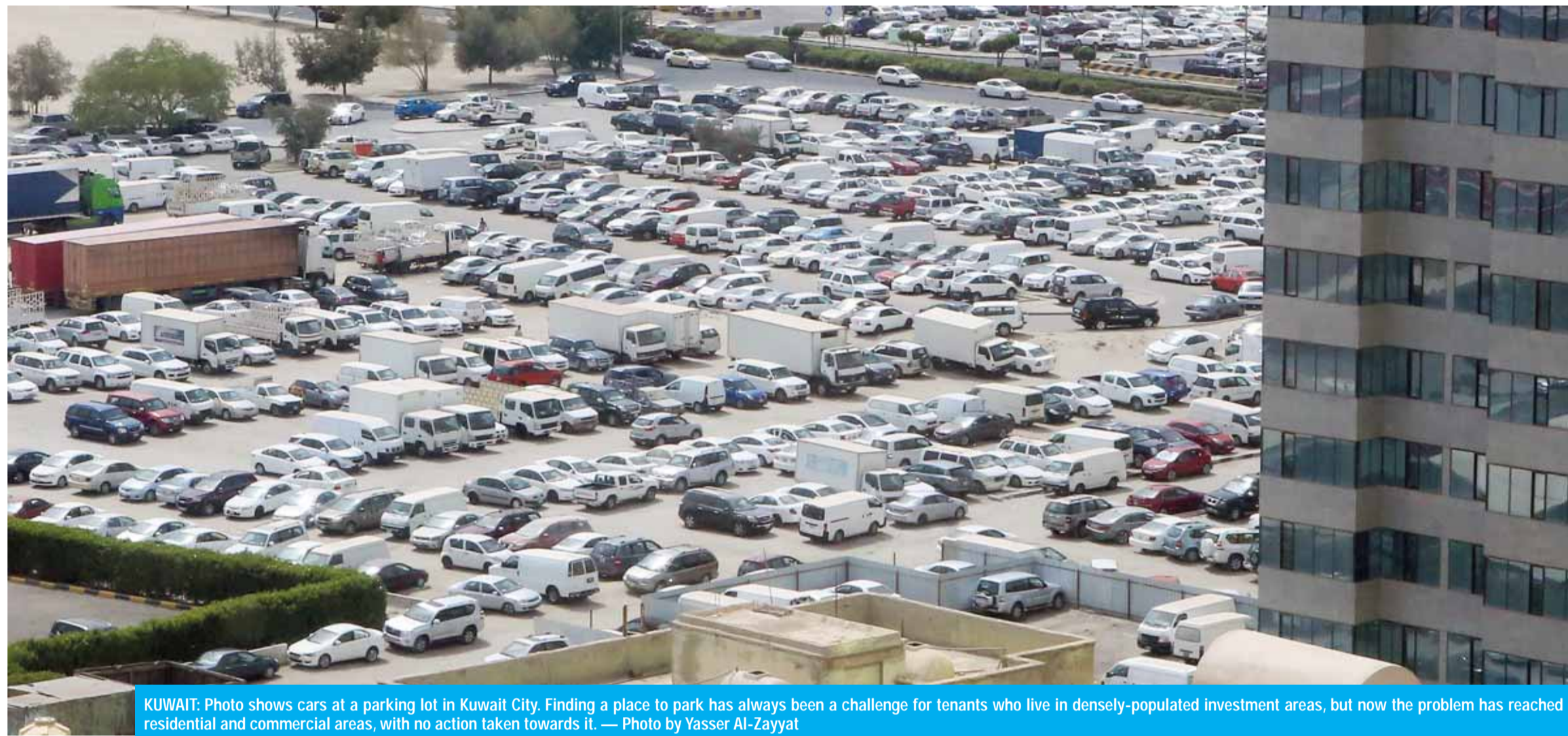
The White House had said last week that Biden was eager for Lopez Obrador to attend. "You cannot have a Summit of the Americas if you do not have all the countries of the Americas attending," said Lopez Obrador, who has also urged the US

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Local

Parking space a big challenge in commercial and residential areas

'I offered my neighbor KD 15 per month to rent his parking spot'



KUWAIT: Photo shows cars at a parking lot in Kuwait City. Finding a place to park has always been a challenge for tenants who live in densely-populated investment areas, but now the problem has reached residential and commercial areas, with no action taken towards it. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Finding a place to park has always been a challenge for tenants who live in densely-populated investment areas, but now the problem has reached residential and commercial areas, with no action taken towards it. Mariam Saeed, who lives in Hawally, told Kuwait Times her building doesn't provide parking spaces for tenants, which causes her daily suffering searching for a nearby place to park.

"Because we park in any available place, our cars get damaged by the sun, especially during the summer. This costs us yearly to repair our cars, not to mention the random scratches," she added. Most tenants have more than one car, and due to the lack of parking spaces in investment areas, some of them use their neighbors' parking spaces, which increases conflicts between them. Ahmad Sameer, who lives in Farwaniya, said "in order to find a solution, our building haris held a draw to distribute the parking spaces among tenants, which gave us a temporary solution to the problem of parking vio-

lations by other tenants".

Asmaa Hassan said she makes sure before renting an apartment that it has at least two parking spaces. "It is almost impossible to find two parking spaces in investment areas," she said. "Even tenants who rent in residential areas face the same problem, which has affected our choices of apartments," said Maha Haikal, who lives in Salwa. "We make sure there is an open yard nearby to park our cars, otherwise, we don't rent the apartment," she added.

"I offered my next-door neighbor KD 15 per month to rent his parking spot, because I am worried about my daughters parking far away and taking a long walk to the house," said Zaher Al-Jamous, a father of two working daughters. "Before this, our building owner asked me to pay KD20 per month for one extra parking space despite the presence of extra parking spaces in the building."

Rashed Ali, another tenant who lives in Salwa, told Kuwait Times that his residential building owner closed the car parking basement and turned it into a warehouse so he can benefit from renting it. "This happens all the time in residential and invest-

ment areas. We hope the Municipality takes action on this issue, especially since some owners store flammable materials in the basements, which could threaten the lives of tenants," he added.

Fadi Al-Qeshawi, who works in the private sector, said his company is located in the capital area in a commercial tower, but they don't have a parking space or a multilevel car parking nearby. "Employees who work in these towers have two options - either pay KD2.5 daily for valet parking, which means burdening themselves with KD65 per month, or park their cars in a faraway open area and ride a bus to take them to the tower," he told Kuwait Times. He added they also face the threat of a parking ticket or license suspension if they park in an unauthorized area.

Anood Al-Mulla told Kuwait Times that commercial areas suffer from a parking crisis, especially in the capital area, wondering about the absence of the Municipality to force investment buildings to provide free car parking spaces for employees. "If the Municipality is struggling to provide spaces for cars to park, smart car parking

is a perfect solution to save space and solve a real problem," she suggested.

Traffic law

According to the General Traffic Department, article 42 of the traffic law states that it is permitted to suspend a driver's license or vehicle registration with its plate number, or both, for a maximum period of four months in case of parking in places that are not designated for parking and disrupting the traffic flow. Kuwait Times tried to contact the Kuwait Municipality to ask about the reasons and solutions for the parking issue, but received no response.

A source in the interior ministry said their role is to apply the law on parking violators, mentioning the only body responsible for this issue is the Municipality. According to a study published in 2019 by the Real Estate Association in cooperation with Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, Kuwait needs 40 million sq m of space to resolve the parking issue, while the value of investment required is about KD 7 billion (\$23 billion) to cover the current gap in parking.



Kuwait Defense Minister, UK top official hold talks

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and UK Defense Senior Advisor to the Middle East Air Marshal, Martin Sampson on

Monday explored mutual military concerns. The Minister of Defense received Air Marshal Sampson, accompanied by UK Ambassador to Kuwait, Belinda Lewis. During the meeting, both sides dealt with common aspects especially on the military level, regionally and globally. Kuwaiti Army Chief of General Staff Lieutenant General Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah, besides UK Defense Attache, Captain Paul Mulvaney, attended the meeting. — KUNA

Gov underscores role of educational institutes

KUWAIT: Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah appreciated the role of educational and training institutes in Kuwait both in the public and private sectors, pointing to the important role of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training with its colleges and training institutions that cover most technical, administrative and financial specialties.

The governor spoke during the reception of Director of the Construction Training Institute of PAAET Abdelaziz Al-Ruwayeh, accompanied by Head of the Mechanical Engineering Department Dr Mushari Al-Mukaimi, Specialist Engineer Tareq Al-Nukhailan, Engineer Anfal Al-Saffar from the technical office and Asmaa Al-Ruwaily from the public relations and information department at the institute,



Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah is pictured with the construction institute delegation.

which took place at the governorate diwan. Both sides discussed the possibility of cooperation with regards to the monument

the governorate is preparing to build to immortalize the sacrifices of frontline heroes in fighting the coronavirus.

Kuwait's delegation participates in international labor conference

GENEVA: Kuwait's Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Nazaha (Integrity) Enhancement Justice Jamal Al-Jalawai said on Monday that Kuwait's delegation contributes positively to enriching all discussions taking place in the work of the International Labor Conference since its inception. In a statement to KUNA, the minister added that Kuwait is active in the International Labor Organization (ILO) and enjoys a well-established role in the international and Arab labor market, which was evident in the delegation's participation in the activities of the Arab Group, on the sidelines of the ongoing conference since May 30 until June 11.

Kuwait's delegation prepared its integrated vision in a preparatory framework to enrich the

decisions and recommendations that would be reached during the conference, along with the positive effects it would have on the labor market during the coming period, he explained.

The delegation of Kuwait participated in sessions connected to discussing the report of the Director General of ILO Guy Ryder, entitled, "The least developed countries: Crisis, structural transformation and the future of work," as well as a report on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories, he pointed out. The agenda of the conference this year included many vital topics, specifically the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, as well as with regard to safe working conditions with basic principles and rights, the minister said. — KUNA



Minister of Justice Jamal Al-Jalawai heads Kuwait's delegation at the International Labor Conference. — KUNA

Local

Crown Prince receives Finance Minister and CEO of Qatar Investment Authority



His Highness the Crown Prince receives the Chief Executive Officer of Qatar Investment Authority. — KUNA photos



HH the Kuwait Crown Prince receives Finance Minister, CEO of Qatar Investment Authority.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Monday received Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs Abdulwahab Al-Reshaid at Bayan Palace. His Highness the Crown Prince also received the Chief Executive Officer of

Qatar Investment Authority Mansoor Bin Ebrahim Al-Mahmoud and the accompanying delegation on the occasion of his official visit to the country.

The meeting was attended by Director-General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Dr Mishal Jaber Al-

Ahmad Al-Sabah, Director General of Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) Ghanem Suleiman Al-Ghunaiman, Foreign Affairs Undersecretary in the Office of His Highness the Crown Prince Mazen Al-Issa and the Qatari Ambassador to Kuwait Ali Bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud. — KUNA

Solar energy in Kuwait: Benefits and challenges

Ministry looking at ways to promote use of clean energy

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Kuwait enjoys sunny days almost the whole year long, but this source of energy is not exploited like in many other countries. Solar energy is used in Kuwait in a few places, including private houses. Kuwait Times interviewed Dr Abrar Al-Ali, Astronomy Specialist at Al-Ojairi Scientific Center and a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society (UK), for more information on the uses of solar energy in Kuwait, its benefits, the challenges facing its use and other issues.

Kuwait Times: In which sectors is solar energy used in Kuwait?

Dr Abrar Al-Ali: The Ministry of Electricity and Water and Renewable Energy is continuously looking at ways to promote the use of clean energy. For instance, the Shaqaya project, in collaboration with Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), comprises of solar thermal, solar photovoltaic and wind power systems. It produces 70 megawatts in its first phase - enough to supply a residential area such as Nuzha, as well as encouraging consumers to change their patterns of energy dependence by installing solar cells, using photovoltaic glass on the facades of commercial complexes to generate clean energy, and collaborating with government agencies to build environmentally-friendly schools.

In addition, the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) has been successful in launching and sponsoring several pilot programs to supply, install and operate photovoltaic cells at cooperative societies and private residences. The PV system at Zahra Cooperative Society has a capacity of 780 kWp, which can produce roughly 1,270 MWh of electrical energy per year. This can power more than 16 houses for a year, saving at least 780 barrels of oil annually and reducing CO2 emissions by at least 1,150 tons per year.

KT: Is the government interested in expanding the use of solar energy?

Ali: The late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah announced at the 2012 United Nations Conference on Climate Change that Kuwait will strive to produce 15 percent of its power from solar and wind by 2030, a goal that has since been reaffirmed in the New Kuwait 2035 vision. Thus, the government is keen on increasing the usage of solar energy. KISR has been researching the potential of capturing energy through alternative means since the 1980s, pioneering research in concentrated solar thermal technologies as well as photovoltaic panels, and it continues to implement a number of management programs to help address Kuwait's emerging energy challenge.

KT: What is the impact of replac-



ing electricity with solar energy on the environment?

Ali: Solar power plants mitigate the environmental implications of combustion utilized in fossil fuel power generation, such as greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollution emissions. In addition to these advantages, solar development generates both direct and indirect jobs and additional funds in the locations where it is implemented. However, like with everything, there are certain negative effects linked with solar power facilities that must be addressed, such as cost and efficacy.

KT: How much would the government save by replacing traditional energy with solar energy?

Ali: With the aim to develop 2 GW of power capacity from renewable sources by 2030, Kuwait will meet the electricity demand of 100,000 homes while saving 12.5 million barrels of oil equivalent per year.

KT: Are people in Kuwait aware of the benefits of solar energy? And would they be ready to use it to supply their houses with energy?

Ali: KFAS has previously installed PV panels in approximately 150 homes in collaboration with the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, the Ministry of Electricity and Water, Kuwait Municipality and the Public Authority for Housing Welfare. The PV system installed capacity for 150 households is around 1.5 MWp, which

may save at least 1,500 barrels of oil and reduce CO2 emissions by at least 2,200 tons annually. Based on the success of this pilot project, KFAS has begun spreading and encouraging renewable energy applications in the Kuwaiti society more generally and has proposed a similar project in an effort to supply, install and operate solar cells in 1,500 households.

KT: What are the biggest challenges or obstacles facing the use of solar energy?

Ali: Due to Kuwait's unique climate, panels are exposed to intense heat and dust, and traditional solar panels require periodic cleaning to ensure that their efficiency is not significantly harmed by wind-blown desert sands. Fortunately, new technologies have arisen to address these challenges. This includes the use of robotic cleaners to remove dirt and dust off solar panels, allowing them to absorb the maximum amount of energy possible.

In addition, many photovoltaic solar projects do not attain optimal energy and power outputs due to inadequate technical sizing and system design approaches. Today, Al-Ojairi Scientific Center is investigating the establishment of design methodologies that would result in increased outputs from solar arrays to address concerns related to low-conversion rates, high intermitencies, and high capital expenditures of PV projects.

KT: Is it true that the cost of the solar panels and their maintenance is expensive?

Ali: While costs have come down over the past years, installation and maintenance of solar panels can be quite expensive due to various factors, which includes the cost of the equipment. Solar boards demand complex manufacturing techniques as well as the usage of costly raw materials such as high-grade silicon for solar panels and lithium for solar batteries. Another consideration is the soft expenses, which include a professional solar installation that is both safe and consistent with local rules and warranties.

KT: Why is Kuwait so late in benefiting from solar energy although it's sunny most of the year?

Ali: Interestingly, Kuwait was one of the first supporters of renewable energy in the Middle East, with involvement reaching back to the mid-1970s; yet, the industry is still in its early phases. However, renewable energy is now making its way into Kuwait's development strategy and political debate.

The Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) and the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP) are key players in the movement toward a low-carbon economy. The government has assigned KISR in particular with developing large-scale alternative energy systems in partnership with international bodies and technological companies.

IN MY VIEW

Era of documentation and loss of imagination



By Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

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If you park your vehicle in a no-parking zone, a photo of the vehicle and license plate will be taken and sent to the nearest police station by passersby, whose phones are attached to their hands. Soon, a traffic patrol will arrive and your vehicle will be towed away, and you will have to run after it. Photography has become part of people's lives all over the world. We are living in the era of documentation!

Most ordinary people carry phones that are linked to the Internet, so they are all possible documenters who document with photo and video all that takes place on streets, in offices, and everywhere. When you visit a country, go to a restaurant or are invited for an event, you document every landmark, scene or movement.

When you see a beautiful scene, instead of enjoying it and pondering into its creativity, you get preoccupied with its documentation, taking pictures from all angles. When a poem or narration is recited, all you worry about is recording it instead of hearing it. Even your facial expressions become exposed to recording. Imagination is now restricted as well as the freedom of the human being.

Your words are recorded, your opinions documented, your stands saved, so people's freedom of expression has become limited. People are deprived of seclusion, as there is always a stalker who follows your movements and you do not know where they come from!

This documentation era will be the major cause of changing principles and philosophical theories the human intellect has adopted. There will not be any separation between sense and reason. There will be a total overlap of truth and imagination. Every human being will be moving around with a documentation tool. There will not be a lack of awareness, as the camera will pick all details that are not seen by the human eye, and we will be closer to link awareness with social existence.

Ibn Khaldun was the first to speak about this link in the Muqaddimah (Introduction), and he was later contradicted by Karl Marx, who put the subject ahead of awareness. Ibn Khaldun also disagreed with German philosopher Georg Hegel, who followed the path of the philosophers who preceded him and made awareness ahead of subject, and today while we live the documentation era, we find that Ibn Khaldun's theory is correct, with his accurate linkage between reality and awareness.

If documentation becomes more common, imagination will stop and the picture will restrict creativity that we knew as a free bird in limitless skies. We will be closer to the unity of existence and intellect, a unity no philosopher imagined other than Ibn Khaldun, as the subject does not precede awareness, nor awareness precedes the subject, and tomorrow every human being will carry the documentation tool that blocks their imagination and constricts their imagination to the limits of the subject.

Where will we end? Will the human brain stop at the boundaries of images? And what will be the role of nonawareness, which is responsible for gathering hidden clips and translating them into cultural and artistic creativities? That responsibility that gave our life a meaning of beauty through literature and art. We are still at the beginning of the road and it is difficult to reach critical conclusions in this case, but what seems to be something simple for us such as a traffic violation today may turn us into a different type of human being who does not have imagination and does not benefit from nonawareness, as every human being now owns an eye and ear with which they see and hear all details, and they keep the creativity in nonawareness away from them. They have them in their mobile phones, as it is translated in seconds into stands, opinions and theories in front of the rest of humanity.

Tomorrow or the day after will be strange world, but all of us who are living today will not see it. Praise be to Allah!



KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Fahad Mutlaq Nassar Al-Shore'aaan received Indian Ambassador Sibi George in his office on June 5 and discussed bilateral relations, ways of further enhancing bilateral trade and investments, India-Kuwait Joint Working Group on trade and investment and food security. They also reviewed ongoing discussions on India-GCC FTA and other matters of mutual interest.

Yemen appreciates Kuwait's generosity

ADEN: The Yemeni presidency on Monday praised Kuwait's generous support within the coalition to support legitimacy led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and its steadfast support for the Yemeni people and their political leadership at various stages. This came in a statement by the Yemeni presidency to the Yemen News Agency (SABA), in conjunction with the head of the Presidential Leadership Council in Yemen, Dr Rashad Al-Alimi official three-day visit to Kuwait at the beginning of a foreign tour, which also includes Bahrain, Egypt and Qatar.

He praised the distinguished role of Kuwait in supporting and providing relief to the Yemeni people during the years of war ignited by the Houthi militias. The source added that the new presidential tour came within the framework of consultations with the GCC countries on common security challenges and developments in the Gulf, UN and international efforts to bring peace and stability to Yemen.

It pointed out that the tour of President Al-Alimi and his accompanying delegation will focus on meeting with the Political Affairs leaders of the countries to discuss priorities for the required support for the Yemeni economy and efforts to restore the state and establish peace and stability in Yemen. —KUNA



AL HAJJAH, Yemen: Displaced Yemenis receive humanitarian aid provided by the World Food Programme (WFP) in Yemen's northern province of Hajjah, on June 6, 2022. —AFP



KUWAIT: Commerce and Industry Ministry officials raided a store in Fahaheel area where large quantity of counterfeit sunglasses were found. The glasses were kept in the warehouse to keep them away from inspectors. The store was shut down.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Boats are moored at the Souq Sharq marina. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Kuwait Airways launches flights to Izmir, Mykonos



Ambassador of Greece poses for a group photo with KAC's officials.



Khalid Al-Bustan with Turkish Embassy's officials.

KUWAIT: As part of the continuous efforts to expand its network of destinations and develop its services to the highest levels of quality, Kuwait Airways announced the launch of its first scheduled commercial flight to Izmir, in the Republic of Turkey, with two flights a week on Mondays and Wednesdays. This coincided with the launch of the first scheduled commercial flight to the city of Mykonos, in the Republic of Greece, with two flights per week on Mondays and Wednesdays, both commencing from 6th June, 2022.

In this regard, the Director of Corporate Communication and Public Relations at Kuwait Airways, Khalid Al-Bustan, expressed his happiness on this important launch, which is in response to the significant and growing requirements of customers in Kuwait and the Arabian Gulf region. He pointed out that Kuwait Airways had recently launched operations to Casablanca, Manchester, Sohag, Alexandria, Sharm El-Sheikh, Trabzon and Bodrum, which will be followed shortly by operations to destinations such as Nice in France, Madrid and Malaga in Spain, Salalah in the Sultanate of Oman, Sarajevo in Bosnia, and Vienna in Austria.

This is also in addition to commencing operations to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and Kathmandu, Nepal in

the coming months. Al-Bustan added that the Airbus A320neo, which was recently included to Kuwait Airways' fleet of aircraft, was selected to facilitate the travel of passengers to the cities of Izmir and Mykonos, due to its unique technological features and characteristics, and in accordance with its latest features present in the air transport sector.

Al-Bustan explained that Kuwait Airways was steadily progressing towards digital transformation, and to attain the best levels of excellence. Moreover, he pointed out that customers could make their reservations through different channels, starting with the Kuwait Airways website and KAC application. In addition, customers can receive assistance or make enquiries through KAC's WhatsApp, on 22200171, or by contacting the Call Center on 171.

Customers can also visit the Company's offices at the Avenues Mall, the Ministries Complex, the Farwaniya Office and Terminal 4, which provide numerous services, including reservations, amending, upgrading and ticket cancellations, as well as assistance with all enquiries, complaints, and comments from customers.

Al-Bustan indicated that Kuwait Airways is relentlessly striving to provide its passengers with diverse

options for meeting their travel requirements with better services by including new destinations, as well as offering them with all means of comfort during their travel on board, starting from providing reservations for customers through all available channels and providing them appropriate services, from the check-in at Terminal 4, completing their travel procedures with ease and enjoying the Company's services on board.

It is worth noting that Kuwait Airways is dedicated to the comfort and convenience of its passengers as those traveling on Royal and First Class are allowed to carry three pieces of baggage weighing 32 kilograms per piece. Business Class passengers can carry two pieces of baggage weighing 32 kilograms per piece and passengers on Economy Class carry two pieces of baggage of 23 kilograms each. Moreover, passengers travelling on board Kuwait Airways, in all classes, can carry hand baggage, that does not exceed 7 kilograms.

The inaugural ceremony for the commencement of operations to Mykonos was attended by the Ambassador of Greece to Kuwait Konstantinos Piperigos, and the inauguration of operations to Izmir was attended by the Commercial Counselor of the Turkish Embassy in Kuwait Atilla UgurBasbug.

AAW discusses collaboration with Penn Medicine Hospital

KUWAIT: Chairman and CEO of Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co (AAW), Faisal Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa, met with senior representatives of University of Pennsylvania's Penn Medicine Hospital, the world-renowned academic medical center, to discuss potential collaboration and opportunities within the healthcare sector.

Held at AAW offices, the meeting was attended by the President of Global Zone Omar Al-Mutawa, Professor of Otorhinolaryngology, head and neck surgery, at Penn Medicine David Kennedy, Regional Manager of Penn Medicine Moulay Larbi Alaoui, and the Executive Medical Director of Penn Medicine Professor Jack Ende.

Chairman and CEO of AAW, Faisal Al Mutawa, said: "AAW has a leading role in the growth and development of Kuwait's healthcare sector. We work with our global healthcare partners on bringing the best of the world to offer to Kuwait. We are pleased to welcome representatives from the prestigious Pennsylvania Medical Hospital today to

discuss the prospects of collaborating and benefiting from their rich history and extensive experience."

Founded in 1751, Penn Medicine is a private, nonprofit, 534-bed teaching hospital located in the center of Philadelphia and is part of the Pennsylvania University of Pennsylvania. It is one of the earliest established public hospitals in the United States and home to America's first surgical amphitheater and medical library.

AAW is one of Kuwait's largest trading and commercial companies and operates in multiple FMCG, pharmaceutical, and retail sectors. The company's pharmaceutical division is one of the oldest in the country, with operations spanning over 50 years and a portfolio of world-renowned products from global pharmaceutical companies, such as Roche, Biotronik, Bioderma, Nuxe, and Takeda. The company is trusted by doctors, patients, and consumers across Kuwait and provides high-quality pharmaceutical products to combat infection, prevention, reduce risks, and ensure a healthier lifestyle.





Australia PM, Indonesia president ride bikes

Climate action must not be delayed by global crises, UN talks told

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ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine: Handout picture released by the Ukrainian presidential press service, shows Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky signing a woman's arm as he visits a sanatorium where Ukrainians who had been forced to leave their homes after the Russian invasion were housed during a working trip to the Zaporizhzhia region. —AFP

Ukraine suffers setback for strategic city

Russian forces 'are destroying everything with their usual scorched earth tactics'

KYIV: Ukrainian troops suffered setbacks after retaking parts of flashpoint eastern city Severodonetsk from Russian forces, local officials said on Monday, as the see-saw battle raged on for the strategically important city.

With Russia bringing the weight of its artillery to bear around Severodonetsk—the largest city in the Lugansk region not under Russian control—more help was promised from abroad. The United Kingdom said it would follow the United States and send long-range missile systems to Ukraine, defying warnings from Russian President Vladimir Putin against supplying Kyiv with the advanced weapons.

Thousands of civilians have been killed and millions forced to flee their homes since Putin ordered Russian troops into Ukraine on February 24. Fighting since April has been concentrated in the east of the country, where Russian forces have made slow but steady advances after being beaten back from other parts of Ukraine, including the capital Kyiv.

"Fighting is very fierce in Severodonetsk," regional governor Sergiy Gaiday told Ukraine's I+1 television. "Our defenders managed to counter-attack and liberate half of the city, but the situation has worsened for us."

Russian forces "are destroying everything with their usual scorched earth tactics" so that "there's nothing left to defend", he said. Gaiday said on Sunday that Kyiv's troops had "cleared half of Severodonetsk and are moving forward", after Ukrainian forces earlier appeared on the verge of being driven out of the city.

'It's a horror show'

Artillery strikes have intensified on Severodonetsk and neighbouring city Lysychansk, where pensioner Oleksandr Lyakhovets said he had just enough time to save his cat before the flames engulfed his flat after it was hit by a Russian missile.

"They shoot here endlessly... It's a horror show," the 67-year-old told AFP. Lysychansk was among areas visited on Sunday by President Volodymyr Zelensky, who "got himself acquainted with the operational situation on the front line of defence", the presidency said.

In Moscow, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Monday blasted European countries for blocking his plane from travelling to Serbia, saying: "The unthinkable has happened." "This was a deprivation of a sovereign state of the right to carry out foreign policy," Lavrov told an online press conference in Moscow after several of Serbia's neighbours prevented his plane from passing through their airspace.

Lavrov had been due to hold talks with top officials in Belgrade, one of Moscow's few remaining allies in Europe since the launch of its military offensive in Ukraine. Serbian daily Vecernje Novosti reported that Bulgaria, Macedonia and Montenegro had refused access to their airspace.

While Serbia has condemned Russia's military action in Ukraine, it has not joined the European Union in imposing sanctions in Moscow, despite its bid to join the bloc.

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'They shoot here endlessly'

UK pledges missiles

Ukraine has asked supporting countries for ever more powerful arms to fend off the Russian attack, and its deputy defence minister stressed on Sunday this support was needed until Moscow was defeated.

The United States last week said it would supply Ukraine with advanced missile systems, the latest in a long list of weaponry sent or pledged to the pro-Western country. But Putin said long-range missile supplies to Ukraine meant "we will draw the appropriate conclusions and use our arms... to strike targets we haven't hit before".

Unveiling the latest UK contribution, Defence Secretary Ben Wallace insisted Ukraine's Western allies must maintain their weapons deliveries to enable it to win. The UK defence ministry said London had coordinated closely with Washington over its gift of the multiple-launch rocket systems, known as MLRS.

The M270 launchers, which can strike targets up to 80 kilometres (50 miles) away with precision-guided rockets, will "offer a significant boost in capability for the Ukrainian forces", the ministry added. Western powers have imposed increasingly stringent sanctions on Russia but divisions have emerged on how to act, particularly on whether to engage in dialogue with Russia.

Grain talks

Russian troops now occupy a fifth of Ukraine's territory, according to Kyiv, and Moscow has imposed a blockade on its Black Sea ports, sparking fears of a global food crisis. Ukraine and Russia are among the top wheat exporters in the world. Some 30 percent of the world's grain exports originate from the warring countries. The United Nations said it was leading intense negotiations with Russia to allow Ukraine's grain harvest to leave the country. —AFP



ALMATY, Kazakhstan: A man casts his vote at a polling station as part of the vote for a referendum to overhaul the constitution in Almaty. —AFP

Kazakhs back post-Nazarbayev reforms, democracy

NUR-SULTAN, Kazakhstan: Kazakhs overwhelmingly voted for constitutional changes in a referendum that marks the end of founding leader Nursultan Nazarbayev's three-decade grip on Central Asia's richest country, authorities announced Monday.

The amendments will finally bury "super-presidential" rule, according to President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev—a claim that has been greeted with scepticism from local political observers. The incoming constitution removes special privileges for 81-year-old Nazarbayev and prevents Tokayev and future leaders from having relatives in government posts.

The central electoral commission said 77 percent of voters had backed the move and claimed a turnout of 68 percent. Widespread violence in January—which grew out of peaceful protests over a spike in car fuel prices—left more than 230 people dead and prompted authorities to call in troops from a Russia-led security bloc.

'New Kazakhstan'

The drive for a "New Kazakhstan" in the wake of the violence has come from the man that Nazarbayev hand-picked to replace him as president in 2019, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. Tokayev, 69, on Sunday said that the referendum was only the beginning of his reform bid and that "the paradigm of relations between the state and society is changing".

Prior to January's crisis, Tokayev was widely seen as ruling in the shadow of Nazarbayev and his super-rich relatives. Even after stepping down as president, Nazarbayev retained the constitutional title of "Elbasy", or "Leader of the Nation"—a role that afforded him influence over policymaking regardless of his formal position.

Another amendment prevents relatives of the president from holding government positions—a clear nod to the influence of Nazarbayev's family and in-laws, who lost powerful positions in the aftermath of the violence. Sergey Duvanov, a rights defender living in the largest city Almaty, called the changes cosmetic and said reports of students being forced to vote showed little has changed. "There is nothing to stop him going beyond a second term as president and becoming a second Elbasy," Duvanov told AFP by telephone. Although Tokayev promised that would not happen, Duvanov warned that "a person's appetite grows while he is eating". —AFP

Gun attack on church in Nigeria leaves 21 dead

LAGOS: Gunmen killed at least 21 people, including children, in an attack on a Catholic church in southwest Nigeria on Sunday, local officials said, in violence that drew widespread international condemnation.

The bloodshed at St Francis Catholic Church in Owo town during a service was a rare assault in Nigeria's usually safer southwest and shocked a country grown used to jihadist assaults and mass kidnappings in the north.

Richard Olatunde, spokesman for the Ondo State governor's office, told AFP that dynamite exploded inside the church before gunmen opened fire on worshippers attending the service. "They did not even enter the church, they were shooting through the windows," he said, confirming a death toll of 21 people.

National Emergency Management Agency local representative Olanrewaju Kadiri said 22 people were killed, including several children, with another 40 people wounded. Vice President Yemi Osinbajo arrived on Monday to visit some of the wounded, an AFP reporter in Owo said.

The state government declared a seven-day mourning period for the victims, and ordered the national flag to be flown at half-mast in Ondo. The Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) on Monday also appealed to residents to donate blood for the wounded.

Jihadists, gangs

No group has so far claimed responsibility for the attack and the motives were not clear. One witness told AFP he saw at least five gunmen on the church premises. "I was passing through the area when I heard a loud explosion and gunshots inside the church," the witness, who gave his name as Abayomi, told AFP.



OWO: Ondo State governor Rotimi Akeredolu (3rd L) points to blood - stained floor after an attack by gunmen at St. Francis Catholic Church in Owo town, southwest Nigeria. —AFP

Nigeria's military is fighting a 12-year-long jihadist insurgency in the northeast and heavily armed criminal gangs often carry out looting raids and mass kidnappings in the northwest and north-central parts of the country.

But large-scale attacks in Nigeria's southwest are relatively rare although kidnappings for ransom have become increasingly common. Boko Haram jihadists in the northeast have targeted churches in the past. Nigeria's jihadist conflict has killed 40,000 and displaced two million more in the northeast.

President Muhammadu Buhari condemned Sunday's "heinous killing of worshippers" while Pope Francis offered prayers for the victims. The UN Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel, Mahamat Saleh Annadif, condemned what he called a "barbaric terrorist attack".

Sunday's attack comes a day before the ruling APC party starts primaries for its candidate in the 2023 election to replace Buhari, a former army commander who steps down after two terms in office.

Security will be a major challenge for whoever wins the race to govern Africa's most populous country and the continent's largest economy. As well as jihadists and criminal gangs known locally as bandits, Nigeria's security forces are also dealing with separatist agitation in the southeast. —AFP

Lebanon asks for US mediation after Zionist gas ship move

BEIRUT: Lebanon on Monday called for US mediation after Zionist entity moved a gas production vessel into an offshore field, a part of which is claimed by Beirut. The ship operated by London-listed Energean Plc arrived in the Karish gas field on Sunday and will immediately commence operations, Energean said in a statement.

The move immediately drew condemnation from Lebanon's president and prime minister who held talks on Monday to discuss next steps. The two agreed to "invite US envoy Amos Hochstein to Beirut to look into restarting negotiations to demarcate Lebanon's southern maritime border" which stalled last May, said a statement by Prime Minister Najib Mikati.

"Any exploration, drilling or extraction carried out by Zionist entity in the disputed areas constitutes a provocation and an act of aggression," the statement said. Lebanon and Zionist entity last fought a war in 2006, have no diplomatic relations and are separated by a UN-patrolled border.

They had resumed negotiations over their maritime border in 2020 but the process was stalled by Beirut's claim that the map used by the United Nations in the talks needed modifying. Lebanon initially demanded 860 square kilometres (330 square miles) of territory in the disputed maritime area but then asked for an additional 1,430 square kilometres (552 square miles), including part of Karish.

Lebanese officials said Sunday that any Zionist activity in disputed waters would constitute a "hostile act" and an "attack" on Lebanon's natural resources. But for Zionist entity, Karish lies "within Zionist's UN-recognised exclusive economic zone," and not in disputed territory, a senior Zionist official told AFP on condition of anonymity. —AFP

International

Climate action must not be delayed by global crises, UN talks told

Negotiators from almost 200 countries in Germany

PARIS: Negotiators from almost 200 countries met in Germany Monday for climate talks tasked with reigniting momentum on tackling global warming, as Russia's invasion of Ukraine overshadows the threat from rising emissions.

The conference will set the stage for a fresh round of major United Nations talks later this year in Egypt. It will also be a chance to test the resolve of nations facing a catalogue of crises, including escalating climate impacts, geopolitical tensions, bloodshed in Ukraine and the threat of a devastating global food crisis.

Issuing a call for international unity to hold firm, outgoing UN climate change chief Patricia Espinosa told delegates it was "not acceptable to say that we are in challenging times". "We must understand that climate change is moving exponentially. We can no longer afford to make just incremental progress," she said at the opening of the June 6 to 16 meeting.

"We must move these negotiations along more quickly. The world expects it." Governments have already accepted that climate change is a grave threat to humanity and the planet, and have advocated immediate action to cut fossil fuel emissions and prepare for the accelerating impacts of warming.

The summary to this year's landmark climate report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded that any further delay in action "will miss a brief and rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all".

But as things are going, the world is unlikely to be able to meet the Paris climate deal's commitment to limit warming "well below" 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. "There is this disconnect between the scientific evidence of global crisis in the making, of potentially rushing towards unmanageable climate impact, versus the lack of action," Johan Rockstrom, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, told AFP. "This is a deep worry". The world has warmed nearly 1.2C so far-enough to

usher in a crescendo of deadly heatwaves, floods and storm surges made worse by rising seas.

Funding focus

While the conference in the German city of Bonn is largely aimed at preparing for the UN COP27 meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh in November, there are a number of key issues up for debate. That includes a push for countries to speed up their timetable for updating their carbon-cutting plans, to more quickly align actions on reducing emissions with the agreed goals for limiting global warming.

A particular focus will also be funding from rich polluters to help vulnerable developing nations least responsible for global heating. A promise of \$100 billion a year from 2020 to help them adapt to a warming world has still not been met.

Meanwhile, there are growing calls for "loss and damage" funding for countries already struck by devastating climate impacts, with a specific dialogue on the subject slated for this week. The Alliance of Small Island States has warned that the Bonn conference must not be "just another talk shop", calling for a "clear view" on when and how this financing will be put in place.

'Fragile' world

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres last week warned that Russia's invasion of Ukraine risked slowing action to combat the climate crisis. "But I think this war has demonstrated one thing: how fragile the world is in its dependence to fossil fuels," he added.

The invasion has prompted countries, particularly in Europe, to scramble to shore up energy supplies. It has also caused wheat and fertiliser prices to soar. Fears of a food crisis have intensified in recent weeks, with India moving to ban wheat exports after the hottest March and April on record-blamed largely on climate change-hit harvests.

One opportunity for exhibiting political will comes on



STOCKHOLM, Sweden: (L-R) Sweden's Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson, Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden and Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden attend the UN climate summit Stockholm +50 at Alvsjammassan in Stockholm, Sweden. —AFP

Wednesday when the European Parliament votes several hotly debated planks of the bloc's sprawling "Fit for 55" climate plan. EU member states have set themselves the target of reducing their greenhouse gas emissions by 55 percent by 2030 compared to 1990, and achieving carbon neutrality for the continent by 2050.

In May, an analysis from non-profit groups found that

countries in the G20 group of major economies have yet to strengthen greenhouse gas reduction goals, despite agreeing to revisit their plans. Last year in Glasgow, countries made new pledges to slash methane emissions, stop deforestation and other measures that-in addition to existing national carbon-cutting pledges-could theoretically cap warming under 2C, said Rockstrom. —AFP

Briton jailed 15 years, German freed in Iraq antiquities case

BAGHDAD: An Iraqi court on Monday sentenced a British retiree to 15 years' prison for trying to smuggle antiquities out of the country, but acquitted his German co-accused. The maximum penalty for the offence is death by hanging but the court decided on a lesser sentence for James Fitton, 66, "because of the advanced age of the accused," the judge said.

Fitton's lawyer said that he would appeal. The court found "insufficient evidence" to convict co-accused Volker Waldmann, 60, who was visiting Iraq with Fitton on an organised tour when they were arrested in March at Baghdad airport.

War-ravaged Iraq's tourism infrastructure is almost non-existent but the country is timidly opening to visitors. Iraq has also been trying to recover antiquities that were looted over a period of decades from the country whose civilisation dates back thousands of years.

When the judge asked the men whether they were guilty or not guilty "of trafficking antiquities," each replied: "Not guilty." They appeared in court dressed in yellow prisoners' clothing, but not handcuffed, said an AFP journalist at the hearing.

They were charged under a 2002 law against "intentionally taking or trying to take out of Iraq an antiquity". According to statements from customs



BAGHDAD, Iraq: Two handcuffed Iraqi detainees walk into Baghdad's Karkh Appeal Court in their orange prisoners' clothing during their trial on June 6, 2022. —AFP

officers and witnesses, Fitton's baggage contained about a dozen stone fragments, pieces of pottery or ceramics. Waldmann, a Berlin psychologist, allegedly had two pieces but at the trial's opening on May 15 denied they were his. When the judge asked Fitton why he tried to take the artefacts out of Iraq, he cited his "hobby" and said he did not mean to do anything illegal.

"I didn't realise that taking them was against the law," Fitton said, adding that some of the ancient sites were open and unguarded. In his verdict the judge found that Fitton was "aware" that the location from where he collected the fragments was "an archaeological site" and that it was illegal to take them. —AFP

Turkey aid lifeline to war-torn Syria hangs by a thread

CILVEGOZU, Turkey: Trucks loaded with humanitarian aid queue bumper-to-bumper amid the olive groves at the Turkish-Syrian border, waiting to be allowed across into war-torn Syria.

Inside are baby nappies and blankets, but also 15-kilo (33-pound) bags of flour, bulghur wheat, sugar, chickpeas and peanut-based pastes for children suffering from malnutrition.

Each month the United Nations sends some 800 lorries through the Cilvegozu crossing to deliver aid to millions in need in Syria's last major rebel bastion.

The frontier post, called Bab al-Hawa on the Syrian side, is the only point of passage allowed for UN relief supplies to reach the Idlib stronghold.

But many fear the crossing will close to UN trucks from July 10, cutting off large swathes of the Idlib population from desperately needed assistance.

Russia, an ally of the Damascus regime, has threatened to use its veto power at a UN Security Council vote and block efforts to renew permission for the cross-border deliveries.

Observers say Russia is using it as a bargaining chip in the face of punishing sanctions over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

"I think it's going to be a catastrophe if the resolution is not renewed," senior UN humanitarian official Mark Cutts said last week as he visited a UN transshipment hub near the border.

Eleven years into Syria's civil war, three million people live under the rule of jihadists and allied rebels in the Idlib bastion on the Turkish border. Half of them have been uprooted from their homes in other parts of the country and rely heavily on international aid.

'No alternative'

Also visiting on Thursday, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, US envoy to the United Nations, said she feared what would happen if supplies could no longer transit through Bab al-Hawa.

"It's going to increase the suffering," she said. Russia has argued aid can instead transit via Damascus-controlled parts of the country across conflict lines. But critics have argued this would mean far less aid to rebel-held areas. In the Turkish province of Hatay, Syrian rescue worker Ammar al-Selmo described conditions inside Idlib to the visiting US envoy, and said the cross-border authorisation not being renewed would be disastrous.

"There is no alternative for this mandate. Cross-line aid is not an alternative," said the member of the White Helmets, a group most known for rescuing civilians after Russian air strikes on opposition-held areas.

Rebel backer Turkey is especially keen to maintain the flow of aid into Syria as it does not want to add to the 3.7 million refugees already on its soil.

Already Ankara has said it plans to return one million Syrians to a strip of land it seized from Syrian Kurds further east along the border, a project that has angered Damascus.

As trucks were scanned one by one in Cilvegozu, Turkish official Orhan Akturk sought to be reassuring. "Our local non-governmental organisations will continue to bring in aid whatever happens," said the vice-governor of the surrounding Hatay province. —AFP

Global tourist arrivals tripled...

Continued from Page 1

"The gradual recovery is expected to continue throughout 2022, as more destinations ease or lift travel restrictions and pent-up demand is unleashed," the agency said, pointing to "a significant increase in flight reservations".

By June 2, 45 destinations (two thirds of which

were in Europe) no longer had COVID-related restrictions in place, while in Asia, an increasing number of destinations had begun easing restrictions. However, the UNWTO retained a prudent outlook for the coming months, given the risks linked to the "challenging economic environment" and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"The Russian offensive on Ukraine seems to have had a limited direct impact on overall results so far," it said. But it was having "major economic repercussions globally" by exacerbating fuel and energy costs "which results in higher transport and accommodation costs for the tourism sector" that could weigh on the sector's recovery, it warned. — AFP

SPA said Sunday. Jeddah - often referred to as the "Gateway to Makkah", Islam's holiest city - is a lively tourist hub of beachfront restaurants and galleries that has in past months hosted a major film festival and a Formula One Grand Prix.

The demolitions risk fueling anti-government sentiment in the 32 neighborhoods affected, many of which housed a mix of Saudis and foreigners from other Arab countries and Asia. So far, 20 neighborhoods have been cleared, SPA said, and the process of clearing the remaining 12 will be completed by mid-November.

The Saudi government has promised to provide compensation and announced in February it would complete 5,000 replacement housing units by the end of the year. Officials defend the project, saying it will modernize the city and add 17,000 new residential units, while retaining its character. — AFP

the past few years, which increased competition between insurance companies in favor of clients. He said this has left only a handful of insurance firms that control the market who covertly set the prices they want, amounting to a monopoly.

Otaibi asked the minister about the number of insurance companies operating in the country that offer vehicle insurance, and the number of companies shut by the ministry in the past three years. He also asked the ministry about why the ministry has set the third-party insurance charges at KD 19 and prevented companies from lowering the premium.

Mexico leader to skip Biden's...

Continued from Page 1

to end sanctions against Cuba. "Or you can have it, but we see that as the old policy of interventionism, lack of respect for nations and their people."

A senior US official told AFP that "the US continues to maintain reservations regarding the lack of democratic space and the human rights situations"

in the three barred countries. "As a result, Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela will not be invited to participate in this summit."

Lopez Obrador said his snub would not affect his "very good relations" with Biden, whom he said was under "pressure from the Republicans" to keep out the three countries. "I'm really disappointed about this situation, but I do not accept that anyone puts themselves above the countries. I don't accept hegemony, not from China, not from Russia, not from any country," he said.

The Mexican president said that he would still visit the White House in July where he would look to discuss pan-American "integration". — AFP

Saudi begins compensation for...

Continued from Page 1

Yet some who have lost homes have bristled at official descriptions of their old neighborhoods as undesirable hotbeds of drugs and crime. They have also voiced concern about how compensation will work, telling AFP earlier this year that there was no clear way to assess the value of property that is already destroyed.

The demolitions began last October and stand to displace up to half a million people. Appraisals are being carried out by "independent committees" representing four government agencies,

Lawmaker urges govt to face...

Continued from Page 1

insurance premiums will be allowed to increase to between KD 45 and KD 100, which means an increase of between 200 percent and 700 percent.

He said the reports come after the ministry closed down a number of insurance companies in

Kuwait co-op pulls Indian products...

Continued from Page 1

comments denounced as "Islamophobic". At Ardiya Co-Operative Society, sacks of rice and shelves of spices and chilies were covered with plastic sheets. "We have removed Indian products", signs in Arabic read. "We, as Kuwaiti Muslim people, do not accept insulting the Prophet (PBUH)," Nasser Al-Mutairi, CEO of the store, told AFP. An official at the store said a co-op-wide boycott was being considered.

Comments by Bharatiya Janata Party spokeswoman Nupur Sharma have sparked a furor among Muslims. Sharma's remarks during a televised debate last week were blamed for clashes in an Indian state and prompted demands for her arrest. Anger spread overseas to Muslim countries about the remarks.

Modi's party, which has frequently been accused of acting against the country's Muslim minority, on Sunday suspended Sharma for expressing "views contrary to the party's position" and said it "respects all religions". Sharma said on Twitter that her comments had been in response to "insults" made against the Hindu god Shiva. "If my words have caused discomfort or hurt religious feelings of anyone whatsoever, I hereby unconditionally withdraw my statement," she said.

On Sunday, Qatar demanded that India apologize

for the "Islamophobic" comments, as India's Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu visited the gas-rich Gulf state in a bid to bolster trade. Iran followed Qatar and Kuwait by summoning the Indian ambassador to protest in the name of "the government and the people", state news agency IRNA said late on Sunday.

Al-Azhar University, one of Islam's most important institutions, said the comments were "the real terrorism" and "could plunge the entire world into deadly crisis and wars". The Saudi-based Muslim World League said the remarks could "incite hatred", while Saudi Arabia's General Presidency of the Affairs of the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque called them a "heinous act".

The row follows anger across the Muslim world in 2020 after French President Emmanuel Macron defended the right of a satirical magazine to publish caricatures of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). French teacher Samuel Paty was beheaded in Oct 2020 by a Chechen refugee after showing the cartoons to his class in a lesson on free speech. Images of the Prophet (PBUH) are strictly forbidden in Islam.

In further criticism of the Indian official, the Gulf Cooperation Council, an umbrella group for the six Gulf countries, "condemned, rejected and denounced" her comments. Bahrain also welcomed the BJP's decision to suspend Sharma over "provocation to Muslims' feelings and incitement to religious hatred". Gulf countries are a major destination for India's overseas workers, accounting for 8.7 million out of a worldwide total of 13.5 million, Indian foreign ministry figures show. — AFP

International

New Australia PM, Indonesia president ride bikes as diplomatic wheels turn

‘We are linked not just by geography, we are linked by choice’

JAKARTA: Australia's new prime minister and Indonesia's president rode bamboo bicycles together on Monday as they held talks to boost ties, as Canberra embarks on a diplomatic charm offensive aimed at countering China's growing assertiveness in the region. Anthony Albanese hailed relations with Indonesia and vowed to strengthen them on his first bilateral trip since being elected last month, heading to Southeast Asia's biggest economy in what has become a traditional tour for new Australian premiers.

After a guard of honour, Indonesian President Joko Widodo presented Albanese with a bicycle at the presidential palace in Bogor—a city south of capital Jakarta—where the pair removed their jackets, donned helmets and rode around the grounds. “Australia's relationship with Indonesia is one of our most important. We are linked not just by geography, we are linked by choice,” Albanese said in a joint press conference held after talks.

“Our relationship is ever-deepened by the strategic and economic interests we share,” he added, saying Indonesia was on course to become one of the five biggest economies in the world. Widodo said good relations between the two would contribute to “the peace and prosperity of the region”.

About the bike ride, Albanese later tweeted, “it was a privilege to have such a personal and enjoyable tour of the magnificent grounds”. Widodo tweeted the bikes were “designed for use on the highway” and made from bamboo by Singgih Susilo Kartono, an East Javan designer known for his woodcraft.

Albanese confirmed he would attend the G20 summit, which Indonesia will host in November, despite reservations from predecessor Scott

Morrison about sitting around the table with Russian President Vladimir Putin after his invasion of Ukraine.

“I said before I travelled to Indonesia... that Vladimir Putin attended previous meetings in Australia hosted by (former PM) Tony Abbott,” he told reporters. “That didn't mean we agree with his stance, indeed we find President Putin's behaviour to be abhorrent, to be illegal,” he added.

The Labor Party leader discussed advancing opportunities on trade, climate change and regional security with Widodo, who last visited Australia in early 2020. He also offered Australian technical expertise to Indonesia for its capital move from Jakarta to a new site, Borneo's Nusantara—scheduled for 2024 — and said he hoped to advance a Aus\$200 million (\$144 million) climate and infrastructure fund for the country.

Southeast Asia focus

Indonesia favours a non-aligned position on the Pacific rivalry between Beijing and Western powers. It is one of several Asian countries to have expressed concerns about the AUKUS security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States—widely seen as an effort to counter China.

On Albanese's three-day trip, he was accompanied by a business delegation and several cabinet ministers including Foreign Minister Penny Wong, who met Indonesian counterpart Retno Marsudi on Sunday.

Malaysian-born Wong has previously called for Canberra to place greater emphasis on Australia's billion-dollar trade relationship with Jakarta—as well as its trade with Southeast Asia as a whole.



BOGOR, Indonesia: Handout photo released by the Presidential Palace on June 6, 2022 shows Indonesia's President Joko Widodo (R) and Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese (L) riding bamboo bicycles at the Presidential Palace in Bogor, West Java. —AFP

“Deepening engagement with Southeast Asia is a priority for my government,” Albanese said, announcing a new envoy and office for the region.

After meeting Widodo, Albanese will travel to South Sulawesi's Makassar, where Australia has a diplomatic presence. He was also set to meet Lim Jock Hoi, the secretary-general of the 10-member

Association of Southeast Asian Nations—as Canberra pivots to focus on strengthening its alliances in the region.

His first stop after entering office was Japan where he travelled for talks with members of the Quad, an alliance created in the face of China's push for dominance across the region. —AFP

China warns Australia risks ‘consequences’

BEIJING: Beijing on Monday warned Australia to “act prudently” or face “serious consequences” after Canberra accused a Chinese fighter jet of dangerously intercepting one of its spy planes over the South China Sea.

Australia has argued it is not unusual for it to undertake surveillance flights in the South China Sea—a region Beijing insists comes under its domain despite a 2016 Hague ruling that dismissed its claims.

China's stance has heightened tensions with the United States and its allies, which insist on freedom of navigation in the area.

Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles said Sunday that a Chinese J-16 fighter intercepted a P-

8 surveillance aircraft late last month, in a “dangerous” manoeuvre that put the safety of the Australian Defence Force crew at risk.

But Beijing hit back Monday, saying it would “never allow any country to infringe upon China's sovereignty and security... under the pretext of freedom of navigation”. “China once again urges Australia to earnestly respect China's national security interests and core interests, act and speak prudently to avoid a miscalculation occurring that results in serious consequences,” foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told reporters.

The incident comes three months after Australia accused the Chinese military of shining a military-grade laser at one of Canberra's defence planes over waters north of Australia, which the previous government labelled an “act of intimidation”.

Zhao said Monday that China's military has always conducted operations in a “safe, standard and professional manner” in line with international law. Last week, Canada also accused Chinese pilots of nearly causing a mid-air collision during recent encounters in international airspace as the



China dismisses US complaints about jet fighter interception.

Canadians took part in efforts to enforce United Nations sanctions on North Korea.

China's defence ministry retorted Monday that its pilots took “reasonable, forceful, safe and professional measures” in response to “provocative behaviour” by the Canadian military. —AFP

S Korea, US fire missiles in response to N Korea tests

SEOUL: South Korea and the United States fired eight ballistic missiles on Monday in response to North Korean weapons tests the previous day, Seoul's military said. The Joint Chiefs of Staff said the allies launched the ground-to-ground Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) at targets in the East Sea, also known as the Sea of Japan, in the early morning.

The 10-minute volley comes a day after North Korea launched eight short-range ballistic missiles following a South Korea-US joint military exercise involving a US aircraft carrier. “Our military strongly condemns the North's series of ballistic missile provocations and sternly urges it to immediately stop acts that raise military tensions on the peninsula,” the Joint Chiefs of Staff added.

The US Indo-Pacific Command said one US army missile and seven South Korean missiles were fired from the northeast of South Korea during Monday's live-fire exercise, which was aimed at demonstrating their ability to “respond quickly to crisis events”.

Monday's launches are the second such joint show of force by the allies under South Korea's hawkish new President Yoon Suk-yeol, who has vowed a tougher stance against Pyongyang. “Our government will respond decisively and sternly to any provocations from North Korea,” Yoon said Monday during a speech on Memorial Day. Last month, Seoul and Washington carried out combined launches after Pyongyang fired three ballistic missiles—including a suspected intercontinental ballistic missile—in their first such joint move since 2017. —AFP

Shanghai residents chafe under fresh COVID lockdowns

SHANGHAI, China: Residents stuck inside a compound nearly a week after Shanghai's much vaunted reopening following a virus outbreak shouted at hazmat-clad officials on Monday, as fears grew that some city neighbourhoods were being locked down again. Authorities in the financial hub eased many harsh restrictions last Wednesday, after confining most of the city's 25 million inhabitants to their homes since late March, as China battled its worst COVID outbreak in two years.

But hundreds of thousands have not yet been allowed out of their homes, while others have immediately been placed back under local lockdowns after a brief liberation that triggered shopping sprees and booze-fuelled street parties.

In downtown Xuhui district on Monday, an AFP reporter witnessed about a dozen people in one fenced-off housing compound shouting angrily at hazmat-clad officials. From behind rows of fences, crowds chanted “Serve the people!” at officials standing on the other side.

One resident, who gave the surname Li, said tempers had flared after the community was suddenly put back into lockdown on Saturday. “I'm very indignant,” he told AFP. “It's been two months and we can't cope anymore. We're all negative (on COVID tests), why lock us in a cage?”

A local media outlet said in a swiftly deleted social media post that residents of the compound



SHENYANG, China: Medical workers take swab samples to be tested for the COVID-19 coronavirus from high school students as they prepare to take the annual “Gaokao” or college entrance examinations in China, in Shenyang in China's northeastern Liaoning province on June 6, 2022. —AFP

were angry at the threat of being sent to state-run quarantine facilities despite being designated “low-risk”. Li said virus-negative people were being transferred to quarantine hotels every day, sometimes in the middle of the night. “It's had a huge impact on everyone's lives,” he said. “Our mood is very bleak.”

Some restrictions lifted

Shanghai has creaked back to life in recent days, as commuters have begun to return to their offices

and residents have gathered in parks and along the city's historic waterfront. But authorities have said over half a million people remain under movement curbs in the city.

Under China's stringent zero-COVID approach, all positive cases are isolated and close contacts—often including the entire building or community where they live—are made to quarantine. People from the financial hub still face lengthy quarantines or outright bans on entering other parts of the country. —AFP

There was no immediate comment from the 55-year-old politician, who at the time was the chief minister of the Western Province, which covers the capital Colombo.

Ranatunga is a major ally of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and serves as his chief government whip in parliament.

Since Rajapaksa came to power in November 2019, a string of politicians, including his younger brother Basil, have been discharged from corruption cases after the state withdrew charges on “technical issues”.

Thousands of people have been protesting outside Rajapaksa's office in Colombo since April 9, demanding his resignation over the country's catastrophic economic crisis.

Sri Lanka is facing a serious shortage of foreign exchange to finance even the most essential imports such as food, fuel and medicines. —AFP

S Lanka minister convicted of extortion

COLOMBO: A cabinet minister in crisis-hit Sri Lanka was convicted on Monday of extorting money from a businessman over a land deal, a rare guilty verdict in a graft case in the South Asian country.

Prasanna Ranatunga—whose elder brother Arjuna captained the country's cricket World Cup winning team—was given a two-year suspended prison sentence and fined 25 million Sri Lankan rupees (\$68,500).

He is currently the urban development minister and was previously responsible for tourism, before a brief

Indonesia ferry sinking death toll rises to 19

JAKARTA: The death toll of a ferry sinking in Indonesian waters rose to 19 on Monday, after a 10-day search and rescue operation was called off, authorities said. The KM Ladang Pertiwi ran out of fuel and sank in bad weather while sailing through Indonesia's Makassar Strait in South Sulawesi province on May 26.

News of the accident only reached officials two days later, prompting a search and rescue operation that involved local fishermen and tugboats passing through the strait. Authorities rescued 31 passengers and crew, found four bodies and declared 15 missing before the search effort concluded. Those who were missing are now presumed dead.

“We are calling off the search because there are no signs that more victims could be found,” local search and rescue chief Djunaidi, who like many Indonesians goes by one name, told AFP. The ship's captain, who survived the sinking, was named last week as a suspect for transporting passengers without the necessary permit and the ship's owner was named as a suspect for hiring crew without the proper qualifications, local media reported.

Djunaidi said local fishermen who regularly sail the area were told to alert the authorities if they found more bodies. He said the search operation could be reopened if there were any signs of survivors. Djunaidi told a press conference Monday that the incident served as a reminder to “prioritise our safety”. Marine accidents are common in Indonesia, a Southeast Asian country of around 17,000 islands where safety regulations are often laxly enforced. —AFP

Business

TUESDAY, JUNE 7, 2022

A consortium of investment banks successfully completes IPO of Ali Alghanim Sons Automotive

With an initial coverage of nearly 11 times of the offering value

KUWAIT: National Investments Company (NIC), in its capacity as the Global Coordinator in addition to acting as a Joint Bookrunner with EFG-Hermes UAE Ltd (EFGHermes), Kamco Investment Company (Kamco Invest) and KFH Capital Investment Company (KFH Capital), has announced the successful completion of the private placement process of Ali Alghanim Sons Automotive Company (Ali Alghanim Sons).

increase the shareholders base, one of the basic requirements for listing on Boursa Kuwait's Premier Market. The Company received initial demand with a value of KD 1.08 billion, covering nearly 11 times of the offering value.

Fahad Abdulrahman Al-Mukhaizim, CEO of NIC said: "I would like to highlight the added economic value of listing of large family businesses on regional stock markets.

the main phases of preparing the Company to meet the requirements to be listed on Boursa Kuwait's Premier Market' added Al-Mukhaizim.

The IPO of Ali Alghanim Sons has witnessed a large turnout by investors, the number of shares subscribed has exceeded the offering size, which reflects great confidence in the performance of the Company.

"We would like to express our apprecia-

first of its kind in the field of automotive in Kuwait and the region. The high demand we have seen is an indication of the Company's positive position and perception in the local market as well as the experience and knowl-

encourage other family businesses in Kuwait to follow the example of Ali Alghanim Sons. Family businesses can become a new attraction for investors as leaders of the private sector, and having them listed in the stock



Fahad Abdulrahman Al-Mukhaizim



Faisal Mansour Sarkhou



Mohamed Abou Samra



Abdulaziz Nasser Al-Marzouq



This step precedes the listing of Ali Alghanim Sons, a leading Kuwaiti shareholding company comprising of a group of businesses that supply the finest international automotive brands and services.

In a press statement, representatives of the consortium have stated that the private placement was highly successful as it attracted a large number of local and international investors. It is important to note that the number of investors and the amount raised exceeded the target by several times.

The IPO aimed to offer 124,875,000 million shares of Ali Alghanim Sons at a price of 793 fils per share (with a total value of KD 99 million) to eligible investors and to

The successful listing of Ali Alghanim Sons is a highly important milestone and this will encourage other local and regional family businesses to go public and, therefore, will create unique investment opportunities for investors, help increase liquidity, and diversify the available investment opportunities".

"NIC has played a major role as a Global Coordinator and a Joint Bookrunner in managing subscriptions from inside and outside Kuwait, coordinating between major local and regional investment banks to execute this transaction successfully, and manage all related logistics and technical operations, in addition to our role as a listing consultant. We assisted the shareholders in executing

tion to Ali Alghanim Sons for their trust in our ability to lead the entire process, and to members of the consortium of investment banks, who participated in managing the IPO process. We would also like to extend a special thanks to the Capital Markets Authority for supervising the subscription process and its support during the entire process; we also highly value the contribution of both Boursa Kuwait and Kuwait Clearing Company," concluded Al-Mukhaizim.

Faisal Mansour Sarkhou, CEO of Kamco Invest, said: "We would like to congratulate our friends and partners at Ali Alghanim Sons for the success of this IPO, which is the

edge of its management and key shareholders. It also reflects the investors' belief in holding shares of successful family businesses, which have promising investment opportunities. We wish them further success, progress and more achievements as a listed company".

Mohamed Abou Samra, MD at EFGHermes, said: "We are proud to be a part of the successful private placement for Ali Alghanim Sons, one of the leading automotive companies in Kuwait and the region. The deal confirms the unique position of EFGHermes in the Gulf market in general and the Kuwaiti market in particular, which came after organizing a very successful investment conference in collaboration with our strategic partner Boursa Kuwait, to highlight the attractive investment opportunities within the promising Kuwaiti market".

Abdulaziz Nasser Al-Marzouq, CEO of KFH Capital, said: "The high demand witnessed reflects the desire of investors to invest in successful family businesses. Ali Alghanim Sons will be a distinct investment opportunity that will bring good returns to shareholders and add new quality to Boursa Kuwait. We are hoping that this listing will

market will help further develop their activities and expand their businesses for the benefit of the national economy".

"The IPO process has witnessed great cooperation and coordination by all relevant parties, which contributed to the success and completion of the offering and subscription in the best way," added Al-Marzouq. Ali Alghanim Sons is one of Kuwait's leading listed automotive companies and an official distributor of number of international brands, with extensive experience in this field and a track record of providing different vehicle models to the Kuwaiti market. The Company has taken over a large number of products and services in the past 35 years, including heavy transport vehicles and equipment, distribution channels, maintenance and spare parts centers, car rental and inspection services, to name a few. In 2009, the Company launched its first business outside Kuwait as distributor of BMW and MINI brands in the Iraqi market and has invested in the Egyptian market in partnership with other affiliates, and operations will begin in the second half of 2022, where the partnership will be the new official distributor of BMW and MINI cars.



WASHINGTON: ECB chief Christine Lagarde during a meeting at IMF headquarters. — AFP

ECB to end stimulus in prelude to rate hikes

FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank is set to draw a line under its massive bond-buying stimulus program at a meeting in Amsterdam on Thursday, as inflation in the eurozone soars to all-time highs. The decision, already extensively flagged in advance by senior policymakers, is then expected to pave the way for the ECB to raise its interest rates for the first time in over a decade in the weeks that follow. Eurozone consumer prices rose by 8.1 percent year-on-year in May, a record since the single currency was launched and well above the ECB's own target of two percent.

The surge, driven by the war in Ukraine and the consequent rise in energy prices, has boosted calls for the ECB to move more quickly to end its expansionary monetary policy. The ECB is lagging behind the central banks in Britain and the United States, which have moved aggressively to try to stamp out inflation.

But the ECB first plans to discontinue asset purchases under its crisis-era stimulus program before proceeding to actual rate hikes. The so-called asset purchase program, or APP, is the last in a series of debt-purchasing measures worth a total of around five trillion euros (\$5.4 trillion) deployed by the ECB since 2014. ECB chief Christine Lagarde suggested recently that the APP would "end very early in the third quarter".

'Lift off'

For ING's head of macro, Carsten Brzeski, the comments by Lagarde, a former French finance minister, were "remarkable" in that she has taken the unusual step of mapping out a timetable for ECB policy into the second half of the year.

Lagarde said that rates were set to "lift off" at the ECB's meeting in July—the first upward move in borrowing costs in over a decade—and the euro's guardian would then close the era of negative interest rates by the end of September. Of the ECB's three main interest rates, the so-called deposit rate—which is normally the interest commercial banks would receive for parking

their cash with the ECB overnight—has been negative since 2014.

A negative rate effectively means that commercial banks have to pay the ECB to park their cash, a move introduced by the then president Mario Draghi to keep cash circulating in the eurozone financial system at a time of looming deflation. For Brzeski, the ECB "has clearly passed the stage of discussing whether and even when policy rates should be increased" and the "only discussion" for the coming weeks was how big the first step would be.

A number of governing council members have openly discussed the possibility of a 50-basis-point, or half-point, hike to lift ECB interest rates out of negative territory in one go. Before the most recent eurozone inflation data was released, the head of the Dutch central bank, Klaas Knot, said that such a move was "clearly not off the table". On the other side of the Atlantic, the US Federal Reserve already raised rates by half-a-percentage point last month, and some of its policymakers are arguing for more big increases. But observers have urged the ECB to proceed more cautiously. Smaller steps of 25 basis points, or a quarter of a percentage point, were the "benchmark pace" for the move out of negative interest rates, the ECB's chief economist Philip Lane said at the end of May.

'Neutral' rates

The idea is to "normalize" eurozone borrowing costs and bring them to a more "neutral" level—which neither stimulates nor stifles the economy—even if opinions differ as to what that level might be.

Ultimately, the appropriate level of borrowing costs will depend on the eurozone's economic outlook.

A worrying further acceleration in inflation could prompt the ECB to step on the brakes harder.

The ECB is also scheduled to publish its new economic forecasts on Thursday. Its previous estimates—published in the immediate aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine—cut projected growth in 2022 to 3.7 percent and saw inflation rising to 5.1 percent. But for the chief executive of US bank Citi, Jane Fraser, Europe faced a "very high likelihood" of going to recession on the back of the war, she told journalists in Frankfurt last week. — AFP

US fund sues London Metal Exchange over nickel trade halt

WASHINGTON: A US investment firm has filed a \$456-million lawsuit against the London Metal Exchange for suspending nickel trading during a huge surge in prices in March, the two sides said Monday. The prices for the metal, used in stainless steel and electric vehicle batteries, jumped on March 8 to a then-record high of \$101,365 per tonne on a bad bet from a Chinese billionaire after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The LME subsequently decided to cancel all trades made that day and temporarily halted trading. That left nickel's record high at \$48,002 per ton, set

on March 7. The turmoil prompted fierce investor criticism of LME management, and UK financial regulators launched a review into the matter. The US investment firm, Elliott Management, considers that by cancelling nickel trades, the LME either "acted unlawfully" by exceeding its powers or exercised them "unreasonably and irrationally" by "taking into account irrelevant factors", a spokesman for the fund said.

LME's owner, Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited, said in a statement that Elliott Management's claim is "without merit and the LME will contest it vigorously". The LME said in a separate statement that it had cancelled trades to "take the market back to the last point in time at which the LME could be confident that the market was operating in an orderly way". "At all times the LME, and LME Clear, sought to act in the interests of the market as a whole," it added. Moscow's invasion sparked nickel market chaos because of concerns about supplies from Russia, the world's third-biggest producer of the industrial metal. — AFP

Deflation to war: How ECB responded and what is next

FRANKFURT: The global surge in inflation has brought to an end a long period of low interest rates and forced central banks around the world to try to bring prices under control by raising borrowing costs.

Inflation in the eurozone soared to an all-time peak of 8.1 percent in May, precipitating a response from the European Central Bank. But as ECB policymakers prepare to draw a line under debt-purchasing measures worth a total of around five trillion euros (\$5.4 trillion) deployed since 2014, here is a look at what they achieved and what could come next.

What did the stimulus do?

Back in 2014, with deflation looming, the ECB launched its bond-buying stimulus program to try to stoke prices and economic growth. The tool works by buying up bonds on the market, which pushes down or holds down interest rates for states, corporate investors and consumers alike. With interest rates already at historic lows, the program has been the ECB's way of trying to provide stimulus for the economy. The bank launched a new plan in 2020 to keep borrowing costs under control and cradle the economy through the coronavirus pandemic.

Between them, both programs have hoovered up trillions of euros in assets. Putting the pandemic aside, growth rates improved, as did employment figures across the eurozone, but inflation struggled to climb towards the ECB's target of two percent.

How has inflation changed?

The surge in inflation first began following the start of the coronavirus pandemic, as lockdowns scrambled supply chains and pushed up prices, and demand patterns were warped. Hopes for a slowdown in inflation were jettisoned by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The war has

caused sharp increases in the cost of energy, raw materials and food, with the eurozone feeling the brunt of the price pressures. From a situation in which inflation was obstinately low, refusing to respond to ECB measures, outside forces are now keeping it persistently high.

With the ECB's aim to bring inflation to two percent over the medium term, the alarming figures have prompted a change of course.

What can the ECB do?

The ECB's bond-buying stimulus program should come to a close at the beginning of July and in theory take some heat out of inflation. Otherwise, central banks' main lever to control inflation is interest rates. Currently, the ECB has negative rates of interest, a historically unusual set of circumstances.

Policymakers now seem set to end negative rates in short order and bring them towards a "neutral rate"—a level which neither stimulates or stifles the economy, variously assessed to be somewhere around zero and two percent. But fragile growth and the war will continue to weigh on the economy, limiting the ECB's room for manoeuvre. By raising rates too quickly, the ECB could end up pulling the rug from under economic growth, with acute consequences for some eurozone members.

What are the risks in the periphery?

Hanging over the decision are memories of the eurozone debt crisis, when primarily southern states came under intense pressure as their borrowing costs soared, making their debts harder to finance. Raising rates could see the pressure on more heavily indebted eurozone countries tick up again.

The spread between government bond yields for those countries and those of Germany—whose debt is seen by markets as a benchmark of certainty—are a key barometer of strain. ECB policymakers will be keeping a close eye out to see whether the spreads between German and Italian or Greek bonds begin to widen excessively.

If they do, the central bank may ease off rate hikes. Likewise, ECB President Christine Lagarde has said the ECB is prepared to design a new policy tool which could ease borrowing costs for debt-burdened members, though without going into specifics. — AFP

Business

US suspends solar tariffs, boosts production in clean energy push

Administration looking to permit more clean energy projects on public lands



WASHINGTON: In this photo taken on June 5, 2022, US President Joe Biden walks on the South Lawn of the White House as he returns from a weekend in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. — AFP

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden on Monday will suspend tariffs for two years on solar panel imports from four countries and invoke a key power to compel domestic manufacture of clean energy technology, the White House said. The moves are aimed at boosting renewable capacity and combating climate change, a priority for the president whose green ambitions have met with mixed success.

"Today's clean energy technologies are a critical part of the arsenal we must harness to lower energy costs for families, reduce risks to our power grid, and tackle the urgent crisis of a changing climate," the White House said in a fact sheet.

It added that, compared to when Biden took office, the United States was on track to triple domestic solar manufacturing capacity by 2024, from 7.5 gigawatts to 22.5 gigawatts, enough to enable 3.3 million homes to switch to solar each year.

Duties will be lifted on certain solar parts from Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam - but not China - as a "bridge" to ensure the United States has access to sufficient parts to meet electricity needs while domestic capacity scales up. China is excluded as the Commerce Department investigates whether some Chinese companies are circumventing US customs duties by assembling parts in the four countries.

At the same time, Biden's administration will invoke the Defense Production Act (DPA) to accelerate production, and use the federal government's purchasing power to increase demand. Solar panel parts, building insulation and efficient heat pumps are all targeted under the DPA.

Former president Donald Trump used the same powers during the COVID pandemic to increase production of medicines and equipment, and it was also

invoked during World War II. Most recently, Biden used the act to help baby formula makers to overcome a production shortfall.

The administration will also look to permit more clean energy projects on public lands, including both solar and wind. "The fact is with a stronger clean energy arsenal, the United States can also be a stronger power partner to our allies all around the world, especially in the face of Putin's war in Ukraine," a senior administration official told reporters. "The stakes are high and the president is taking action."

Biden has succeeded in getting Congress to pass a bipartisan infrastructure law, a pillar in his climate policy, but has failed to pass a second proposed law, the Build Back Better act. At the same time he has been criticized by environmental groups for plans to resume oil and gas drilling on public lands, reneging on a campaign promise. — AFP

Ooredoo awarded raft of accolades

DOHA: Ooredoo, the international communications company, has won 17 accolades at recent international award ceremonies, recognizing its commitment to market-leading product offerings and innovation across its commercial practices and its broader dedication to being a leading socially responsible business in the telecommunications industry. Aziz Aluthman Fakhroo, Managing Director and CEO of Ooredoo Group, said: "These eminent awards are demonstrative of Ooredoo's continued strategy of market disruption and product innovation, coupled with our focus on enabling social and economic progress through supporting local communities. We continue to deliver on our promise to customers - both consumer and business - across the Middle East, North Africa and Southeast Asia: that we will develop, provide and sustain best-in-class mobile services."

2022 Asia Pacific Stevie awards

Ooredoo won eight separate awards in the 2022 Stevie Awards for the Asia Pacific (APAC) region, scooping three gold, two silver and three bronze awards in recognition of the company's quality of service across its markets in Asia.

Ooredoo Myanmar won Gold for 'Innovative Achievement in Human Resources', while Ooredoo Maldives won 'Innovative Achievement in Organization Recovery'. Indosat Ooredoo Hutchison also picked up the gold award for 'Excellence in Innovation in Technology Industries'.

The silver award for 'Excellence in Innovation in Consumer Product & Service Industries' was given to Ooredoo Maldives, while Ooredoo Myanmar won silver in 'Most Valuable Corporate Response', in recognition of its action during the COVID-19 pandemic. Bronze awards were picked up by Ooredoo Myanmar for 'Award for the Innovative Use of Technology in Customer Service - Telecommunications Industries', by Ooredoo Maldives for 'Excellence in Innovation in Technology Industries', and by Indosat Ooredoo Hutchison for 'Innovation in Technology Management, Planning & Implementation - Telecommunications Industries'.

2022 Middle East and North Africa Stevie Awards

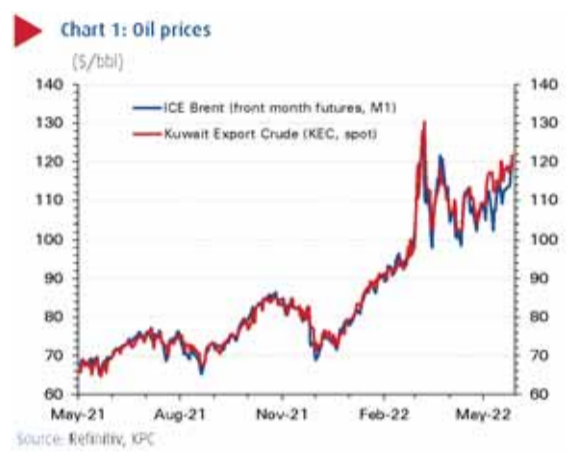
Ooredoo collected seven separate accolades at the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Stevie Awards - recognizing commitment to best business practice across the region - including one gold, two silver, and four bronze awards.

Ooredoo Qatar 5G received the gold award for 'Innovation in Technology Management, Planning and Implementation in the Telecommunications Industry'. Ooredoo Group won silver for 'Most Valuable Corporate Response', while Ooredoo Algeria took home the silver award for 'Innovation in Consumer Products and Services'. Ooredoo Group, Ooredoo Qatar and Ooredoo Algeria were awarded bronze in the 'Most Exemplary Employer' category, testament to the company's continuous efforts to adopt progressive and outstanding employment practices across its markets. Ooredoo Oman received the bronze award for 'Excellence in Innovation in Technology Industries'.

2022 international business magazine awards

Ooredoo Qatar was recognized as the 'Best Telecommunications Company Qatar 2022', and the 'Most Innovative Digital Communication Service Provider Qatar 2022', by the International Business Magazine Awards. The awards recognize the accomplishments of international business entities in their ongoing commitment toward the highest standards of commercial practice.

NBK Economic Report



Kuwait's economic outlook boosted as oil prices surge

KUWAIT: Despite fresh shocks to the global economy from the Ukraine war and COVID-linked lockdowns in China, Kuwait's economic performance and outlook has looked on a stronger footing in recent months. Oil prices have surged, crude oil production is rising, bank lending growth is at a more than decade high and consumer demand remains strong, helping to underpin the non-oil sector's post-pandemic recovery. Importantly too, domestic COVID restrictions have essentially been lifted, with reporting of COVID-19 cases all but ceasing amid a precipitous decline in the confirmed infection rate to below a hundred a day.

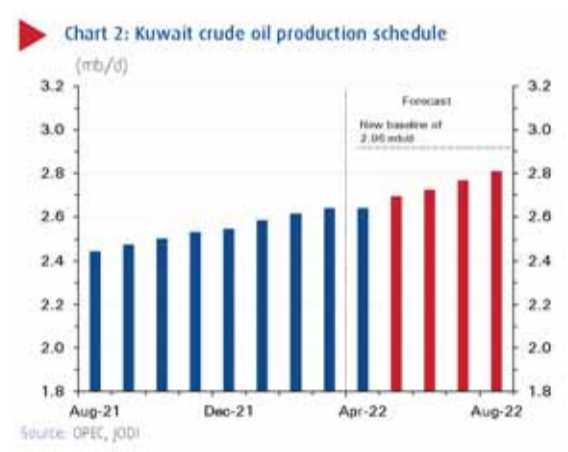


Meanwhile, Kuwait's public finances have benefitted immensely from the climb in oil prices. This year, the government can look forward to its first fiscal surplus since 2014, of 8.8 percent of GDP. The turnaround will enable the authorities to start recapitalizing the General Reserve Fund, which had been close to depletion. The improvement in fundamentals - especially across the oil sector - has also resulted in an upgrade to our GDP growth forecasts. Headline growth is now expected at 8.5 percent in 2022, up from our previous forecast of 7.0 percent and an estimated 1.1 percent in 2021.

At the same time however, downside risks are also more prominent. The global economic backdrop is extremely uncertain and volatile. Elevated inflation and

Monthly economic data (KD billion, unless otherwise indicated)	Dec-19	Dec-20	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22
Credit	38.4	39.8	42.1	42.3	42.7	43.2	43.7	...
Growth (% y/y)	4.3	3.5	5.2	6.3	7.0	7.9	8.7	...
Money supply (M2)	38.1	39.1	39.2	39.0	39.7	40.1	40.6	...
Growth (% y/y)	-1.2	2.7	-1.2	-0.5	1.9	3.9	5.7	...
Inflation (% y/y)	1.5	3.0	3.9	4.3	4.3	4.4	4.4	...
ex food and housing	3.0	2.7	4.8	4.6	4.6	4.7	4.7	...
Consumer spending (Knet, % y/y)	5.0	25.9	28.0	30.0	20.4	33.9	41.2	34.8
Consumer confidence (Ara, index)	105	99	105	102	...	114	106	...
Kuwait export crude price (\$/bbl, avg)	66	49	81	75	86	94	113	107
Stock market - All Share index (end-mth)	6,282	5,546	6,790	7,043	7,350	7,638	8,147	8,358
Growth (% m/m)	4.5	1.6	-4.5	3.7	4.4	3.9	6.7	2.6

Source: Central Statistical Bureau, Ministry of Finance, Central Bank of Kuwait, AKA, NBK estimates



monetary tightening have eroded purchasing power and raised borrowing costs. Businesses also face ongoing supply chain pressures, disrupting output. Moreover, the domestic political situation remains in a state of flux. The new government, once it is formed, will have a long list of issues to address, not least speeding up the pace of reforms to boost the economy's long-term growth rate and address declining private sector employment of nationals.

Oil prices surge

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in late February propelled crude oil benchmark Brent to \$128/bbl, its highest level in twelve years. Prices had already been firming prior to the conflict amid tight oil supplies and robust demand, but the severity of sanctions, mostly self-imposed, that the US and its allies began imposing on Russian oil and natural gas exports, threatened a global energy crisis. Despite easing back on concerns over Chinese demand and slowing global economic growth, Brent remained on an upward trend, trading at around \$122/bbl by end-May (+57 percent YTD), amid fears about substantial Russian oil supply losses and lagging OPEC+ production contributing to an already tight market. Local marker, Kuwait Export Crude topped \$121/bbl at end-May (+54 percent YTD). The OPEC+ group-keen to avoid antagonizing Russia and preserve the group's hard-won unity-persevered with its schedule of incremental monthly output gains, seemingly unmoved by calls from the Biden administration and others to lift supply more quickly to bring crude prices down.

The group ratified at its April meeting an aggregate monthly production increase of 432 kb/d and higher reference baselines for regional oil exporters effective from May. Just recently, at their 2 June meeting, the group agreed to accelerate resupplying the market, by bringing forward September's monthly output increase quota and spreading it evenly across July and August, bringing the aggregate monthly increase in those two months to 648 kb/d. For Kuwait, the rate of monthly output increases will go up from May and June's 29 kb/d to around 43 kb/d in both July and August. By September, all Kuwait and OPEC+ production should have recovered to the pre-pandemic level of 2.81 mb/d. It remains to be seen if, or when, and even how, the reference baseline increase of 150 kb/d to 2.96 mb/d for Kuwait that was agreed to in 2021 will operate, but it will almost certainly involve higher output from the Neutral Zone shared with Saudi Arabia. Crude production was 2.64 mb/d at end-April, up from 2.55mb/d at the end of 2021.

Singapore finance minister made deputy PM in succession sign

SINGAPORE: Singapore's finance minister will be promoted to deputy prime minister, the government announced on Monday, in the clearest sign yet that he could become the city-state's next leader. Lawrence Wong will take up his new post with effect from June 13, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said in a statement. The 49-year-old was earlier handed a key role in the country's ruling party in April, in an initial signal of how the succession process would take shape.

Lee, 70, is the son of Singapore's late founding premier Lee Kuan Yew, and the upcoming leadership change is seen as sensitive because it marks the founding family handing power to a new generation of ruling party leaders. The financial hub of 5.5 million has been ruled by the People's Action Party (PAP) since 1959, and leadership succession is usually a carefully choreographed affair.

The process was thrown into disarray last year, when the leader-in-waiting and then-finance minister, Heng Swee Keat, gave up his claim to the job after the party saw its support slip in national elections.

That cleared the way for Wong's emergence. "Mr Lawrence Wong will be promoted to deputy prime minister. He will be the acting prime minister in the absence of the prime minister," Lee said in a statement. Wong will continue as finance minister, added Lee, who also announced cabinet changes and other political appointments. "The next generation leadership is taking shape," Lee said in a separate Facebook post.

"I ask everyone to give your full support to this important transition, to steer Singapore safely out of the pandemic and into a brighter future." Several ministers had been touted as potential replacements for Lee but Wong-who took over as finance minister in May last year, and also played a prominent role in coordinating Singapore's fight against COVID-19 - came out on top. Health Minister Ong Ye Kung and Education Minister Chan Chun Sing had earlier been seen as other contenders to succeed Lee. — AFP

Musk accuses Twitter of withholding data

NEW YORK: Elon Musk threatened Monday to withdraw his bid to buy Twitter, accusing it of failing to provide data on fake accounts, in the latest twist in the Tesla billionaire's push to acquire the social network. Twitter has committed "a clear material breach" of its "obligations under the merger agreement and Mr. Musk reserves ... his right not to consummate the transaction," according to a document filed with securities regulators. The filing marks an escalation of Musk's prior statements that have highlighted fake accounts as a threat to his proposed \$44 billion deal to take over Twitter.

Musk has said that the real number of bots may be four times higher than Twitter estimates. Bots can be used on social media to spread false news or create a distorted impression of how widely information is being consumed and shared. Twitter chief executive Parag Agrawal has said that fewer than five percent of accounts active

on any given day at Twitter are bots, but that analysis cannot be replicated externally due to the need to keep user data private. Musk has been dismissive of Twitter's responses and reiterated that stance in Monday's filing. To execute the deal, Musk "must have a complete and accurate understanding of the very core of Twitter's business model - its active user base," said the filing. "Mr. Musk believes Twitter is transparently refusing to comply with its obligations under the merger agreement, which is causing further suspicion that the company is withholding the requested data due to concern for what Mr. Musk's own analysis of that data will uncover." — AFP

Stocks, oil prices rise on China boost

LONDON: Global stock markets and oil prices advanced Monday, helped by an easing of Covid lockdowns in the world's second-biggest economy China. London's stock market, reopening after a British public holiday to mark Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee, shrugged off news that embattled British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was Monday to face a confidence vote from MPs in his own conservative party.

Elsewhere, eurozone stocks climbed ahead of a European Central Bank meeting Thursday when the ECB is set to draw a line under its massive bond-buying stimulus program.

On the other side of the Atlantic, Wall Street also opened higher. Stocks "have started the week on a positive note buoyed by a strong US jobs report on Friday", said Victoria Scholar, head of investment at Interactive Investor. Traders took heart also from a wind-down of COVID containment measures in China that have crippled its economy for months.

With infections trending down in major cities, including Shanghai and Beijing, authorities have allowed some sense of normality to return, raising

hopes for a pick-up in consumer activity.

"Positive news around Chinese economic activity and cheaper equity valuations could offer value from a long-term investment perspective, but volatility will remain high in the short-term," said Diana Mousina, of AMP Capital. Oil prices extended recent gains as a pledge by OPEC and other major producers to boost output fell short of what markets hoped for.

"Despite OPEC+'s increased output, prices could remain elevated driven by the EU partial ban on Russian imports, the easing of COVID restrictions in China and peak driving season in the United States," said Scholar. With supplies tight, Saudi Arabia has raised the price of the oil it sells to Asia.—AFP



Elon Musk

Business

New car sales in Russia tumbled 83.5% in May

Russia braces for economic upheaval as sanctions start to bite

MOSCOW: New car sales in Russia sank by 83.5 percent year-on-year in May, industry data showed on Monday, as the effects of unprecedented Western sanctions hit the country's economy and consumers. Only 24,268 cars and light commercial vehicles were sold in Russia in May, said the Association of European Businesses in Moscow. The collapse in sales in May came after a 78.5 percent drop in April. Sales of the country's most popular and affordable brand, Lada, whose AvtoVAZ manufacturer was majority-owned by the Nissan-Renault group, fell 84 percent to 6,000 units year-on-year.

The West slapped Russia with debilitating sanctions after the start of Moscow's military campaign in Ukraine in February. In May, Renault handed over its local assets to the Russian government, marking the first major nationalization since the onset of sanctions. Renault controlled 68 percent of AvtoVAZ but was under pressure to pull out of the country. Numerous carmakers have stopped sales of their cars or parts to Russia including Audi, Honda, Jaguar and Porsche. Makes that have halted Russian production include BMW, Ford, Hyundai, Mercedes, Volkswagen and Volvo.

Last week the statistics service said the country's industrial output shrank for the first time since the start of the military campaign, falling by 1.6 percent in April compared to the same period last year. Car production was hit particularly hard, falling by 85.4 percent year-on-year.

Faced with a shortage of imported parts in factories, authorities eased safety and emission standards for locally produced cars in May-including dropping the requirement for airbags.

With billions of dollars in financial reserves and money still coming in from oil and gas

exports, Russia has yet to feel the full impact of the barrage of Western sanctions imposed over its offensive in Ukraine. At his garage in the south of Moscow, 35-year-old mechanic Ivan is starting to worry. But Ivan sees storm clouds on the horizon. The foreign parts he needs to fix his clients' cars are getting harder to find, and prices have jumped by at least 30 percent after many brands halted exports to Russia.

"We're running out of stock. At some point, there won't be anything left," said Ivan, who declined to give his last name when speaking to international media. "People who have foreign cars are worried, they are wondering what to do in the future," he said.

Faced with a shortage of imported parts in factories, authorities eased safety and emission standards for locally produced cars in May-including dropping the requirement for airbags.

President Vladimir Putin has been defiant in the face of Western sanctions, insisting that the Russian economy will emerge stronger, and pointing to "chaotic measures" in Europe that have boosted global energy prices.

Officials say the damage from sanctions will be temporary, with the economy expected to shrink by eight percent this year and then bounce back to growth in 2024.

But Russia is heavily reliant on imports of everything from manufacturing equipment to consumer goods, and economists believe the worst effects of the sanctions are still to come. Now almost 100 days into the conflict, officials and ordinary Russians are reporting a litany of problems, including shortages of everything from paper to medicine.

Authorities have stopped releasing key data,



making it difficult to assess the impact of sanctions. But the few available economic indicators point to significant problems. Strict capital controls, high energy prices and a collapse in imports have led to a surge in the ruble, prompting Russia's central bank to slash its key rate last week in a bid to rein in the currency.

Inflation meanwhile hit 17.8 percent year-on-year in April, the highest for 20 years. And revenues from domestic value-added or sales tax collapsed by more than a half in April, VAT fees on imported goods dropping by a third compared to the same month in 2021.

"In April, the revenues of the overwhelming majority of companies in Russia took a hit," Andrei Grachev, head of tax practice at Birch Legal, told The Bell, an independent Russian business website.

"This didn't merely affect those who ceased operations in Russia, but also those who continued to work but lost clients and profits." That hit is evident on the streets of Moscow, which are now lined with shuttered shops: from McDonald's and Starbucks to clothing retailers H&M and Zara. Central bank chief Elvira Nabiullina warned in April that problems were emerging "in all sectors, both in large and small companies." —AFP

Gulf Bank announces 10 winners of Al-Danah draw

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing commitment to rewarding its customers and account holders, Gulf Bank announced the 10 monthly winners of its Al-Danah account draw for the month of May. The winners, who will be taking home prizes of

KD 1,000 each, include:

1. Wafaa Yousef Ali Husein Jamal
 2. Abdulaziz Sulaiman Hasan Al-Awadhi
 3. Basheer Alyas Al-Alam
 4. Mohammed Ibrahim Mohammed Al-Mailam
 5. Maysoun Mahmoud Abed Odeh
 6. Saminah Akil Bhajat
 7. Fahad Naser Fahad Al-Mutawa
 8. Hasan Mohammad Hasan Al-Ansari
 9. Dalal Bader Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah
 10. Mohamed Rabie Mostafa Mohamed Eissa
- The Al-Danah account is one of the most

rewarding savings accounts in Kuwait, with its periodic draws that award valuable prizes and multiple benefits for account holders. Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account offers monthly opportunities to win KD 1,000 to ten lucky winners, in addition to two quarterly draws with KD 100,000 prizes each, a semi-annual draw prize of KD 1,000,000 and a grand draw prize of KD 1,500,000.

Gulf Bank is the only bank in Kuwait that proudly creates two millionaires a year. Al-Danah customers stand to win the semi-annual draw prize of KD 1 million on July 21, 2022 and the grand prize of KD 1.5 million on January 19,

2023. Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is the only account that rewards customers for their loyalty by providing loyalty chances and transfers your chances of winning from the previous year to the next year, as part of a program that rewards customers for their loyalty to Gulf Bank.

In order to increase one's chances of winning, customers must maintain a minimum of KD 200 in their accounts, or deposit continuously to increase their chances of winning. Al-Danah account holders are eligible to win Gulf Bank's upcoming monthly, quarterly and annual Al-Danah draws.

KFH offers draw worth KD 100,000 for Hesabi customers

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House "KFH" launched a campaign dedicated for "Hesabi" youth customers. The campaign comprises prizes totaling KD 100 thousand and shall extend during the period from mid-May till the end of this year. This campaign comes as part of KFH's endeavor to provide the best privileges on deposited funds, strengthen relations with various categories in a comprehensive manner that would enable customers to benefit from all services and products provided by KFH and the best offers and privileges at the market level.

The "Your Student Allowance with Us" campaign provides the largest exclusive draw for "Hesabi" youth customers totaling KD 100 thousand. The draw includes 4 winners of grand prize amounting to KD 5 thousand throughout the campaign, 20 winners of KD 500 monthly prize, in addition to several other advantages and offers including: free prepaid card for the first year, subscription in Baitak Rewards Points and earning 1K points upon activation, distinguished offers, weekend offers, and banking services round the clock.

Customers who obtain their student allowance via their KFH account receive one chance to win in the draw on monthly prizes or at the end of the campaign as soon as they transfer their student allowance through their KFH account. They will have the chance to win and enter the draw one month after allowance transfer to account. Upon winning, the prize value will be credited in the winner's account directly.

The campaign depicts the appreciation and care KFH extends to "Hesabi" youth customers, reiterates its efforts to achieve financial inclusivity and encourages customers to perform more financial and banking transactions.

This process aims to achieve distinction in service and affirm KFH's understanding of customers' needs and requirements as well its keenness to enhance positive values in all different categories including the saving value and provide all motivating advantages and offers.

stc launches 'IBDAA Academy' with McKinsey

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced the launch of its talent academy called 'IBDAA Academy', in collaboration with the global management consulting firm, McKinsey & Company. In line with the strategic vision behind the academy, stc collaborated with SHL to provide real-time people insights to objectively identify high potential employees. The academy aims to upskill and reskill high-potential employees by fostering a highly encouraged learning environment that focuses on self-development.

The programs offered at the academy are designed to mold HIPOs to take on more senior and strategic roles within the organization, and serve as mentors to other aspiring employees. Each program is carefully curated to focus on key subjects and skills that fall in line with stc's corporate, providing development opportunities for HIPOs. Aside from educating employees, the academy will play a key role in increasing employee engagement and contributions, improving employee retention, and indirectly reducing the turnover of high-performing employees.

Chief Executive Officer at stc, Eng Maziad Al-Harbi stated, "At stc, we continue to invest in our people, the cornerstone of our operational excel-



lence and solid financial performance. We ensure taking the necessary steps to develop the capabilities of our employees, empower them and support their determination to do their best at diverse working environments and under different circumstances."

Al-Harbi added: "At stc, we believe that our growth as a Company is linked to the growth and development of our current and future leaders. In fact, organizations themselves do not grow, it is the people within these organizations who implement and facilitate the growth strategies that allow organi-

zations to expand their operations and business. We continuously seek to identify top talent within our organization to fuel their drive and provide them with the necessary tools to excel within the fast-paced telecom industry."

Commenting on IBDAA Academy, Chief Human Resources Officer of stc, engineer Ahmad Al-Hammad, said, "We are proud to officially launch IBDAA Academy, a talent academy that focuses on empowering our high-potential employees and top talents to become leaders within the organization."

ABK celebrates graduation of RBD Academy batch 33

KUWAIT: As part of its long-term commitment to the learning and development of its workforce, Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) celebrated the graduation of the 33rd class from ABK's Retail Banking Division (RBD) Academy. The graduation ceremony was held at the Hawalli - Training Academy, in the presence of the Bank's top management, including Omar Al-Abduljader, Assistant General Manager-Human Resources Department.

The RBD Academy is part of ABK's ongoing commitment to empower youth with vital banking sector knowledge that will help them in their career path in the financial industry. By engaging with these participants, the Bank is able to build on existing and potential talent, and better identify the areas in the bank, in which they could put this positive energy to work. Speaking about the graduation of the new group of trainees, Al-Abduljader, said, "It gives me pleasure to see promising talent enhancing their skills in the financial industry. The Retail Banking Division Academy is designed to not only attract youth to Kuwait's banking industry, but also to equip them with the necessary skills to reach their full potential and contribute to the development of



their capabilities. We will work continuously to ensure that such programs fill certain skills gaps that need to be bridged."

The RBD Academy is a four-week intensive training program that covered a series of banking topics. The training program includes a classroom setting, and a combination of theoretical and practical learning. The program is designed to give trainees the opportunity to be fully immersed in the working environment of various departments within the Bank and familiarize them with day-to-day operations, providing them with a more hands-on experience. "The graduates demonstrate ABK's deep-rooted values of integrity and excellence that propel our

corporate culture, while the confidence they have placed in us strengthens our commitment to ensuring they are provided with the right opportunities for an upward career trajectory," added Al-Abduljader.

ABK Academy has graduated a total of 600+ trainees to date. The program is specifically designed to create an appropriate enabling environment allowing employees to get a taste of real life banking and practical experience. The program adds tremendous value not only to national youth, who gain in-depth insight into banking as a profession, but also to the Bank who has the opportunity to train and employ local talent.



An undated handout photograph released by Buckingham Palace shows Queen Elizabeth II and Paddington Bear having cream tea at Buckingham Palace, taken from a film that was shown at the BBC Platinum Party at the Palace. — AFP photos



Britain's Queen Elizabeth II (third left) stands on Buckingham Palace balcony with (from left) Britain's Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, Britain's Prince Charles, Prince of Wales, Britain's Prince George of Cambridge, Britain's Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, Britain's Princess Charlotte of Cambridge, Britain's Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, and Britain's Prince Louis of Cambridge at the end of the Platinum Pageant in London as part of Queen Elizabeth II's platinum jubilee celebrations.

QUEEN ELIZABETH II ENDS HISTORIC JUBILEE WITH VOW TO CARRY ON

Queen Elizabeth II on Sunday brought the curtain down on her historic Platinum Jubilee celebrations, making another public appearance on the last of four days of festivities and vowing to maintain her record-breaking reign. The 96-year-old monarch, who has been troubled by mobility problems, appeared for the first time in person since Thursday on the Buckingham Palace balcony after the Trooping the Color military parade.

Her exertions at the start of the celebrations had forced her to pull out of a thanksgiving church service on Friday, plus the Epsom Derby horse race and a star-studded concert on Saturday. Huge crowds stretching hundreds of meters down The Mall outside the palace cheered as she re-emerged onto the balcony briefly on Sunday afternoon.

It followed a public parade reflecting changes in music, dance, fashion, culture and society since she came to the throne in 1952. Dressed in green with a matching



Britain's Queen Elizabeth II waves to the crowd from Buckingham Palace balcony at the end of the Platinum Pageant in London as part of Queen Elizabeth II's platinum jubilee celebrations.

you all; and I remain committed to serving you to the best of my ability, supported by my family."

Highlights included an aerial artist suspended under a vast helium balloon, bearing the sovereign's image. A carnival included a giant oak tree flanked with maypole dancers, a huge moving wedding cake, bangra drummers, steel bands, African-Caribbean carnival animals and a towering dancing dragon. In the royal box, Charles kept his four-year-old grandson Prince Louis entertained, bouncing him on his knees to the rhythm of the music.

Singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran wrapped up the pageant with a rendition of his 2017 hit "Perfect", and the national anthem "God Save the Queen". Elsewhere across the country, more than 10 million people are estimated to have braved overcast skies to share food with friends, family and neighbours to mark the occasion.

End of era

Two public holidays on Thursday and Friday, longer pub opening hours, street parties and other events have temporarily



Britain's Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, (right) is hugged by her son Britain's Prince Louis of Cambridge (left).

Bear, in a pre-recorded sequence that had been kept a carefully guarded secret. She previously made a cameo with James Bond actor Daniel Craig for the opening of the London 2012 Olympics.

A running theme has been the dramatic social, political and technological changes in Britain and the world since the queen



British singer Ed Sheeran performs at the Platinum Pageant in London.

'Long goodbye'

A spectacular light show illuminated the palace and the night sky above it on Saturday, including images of a corgi, a handbag and a teapot. One message said simply: "Thank you, Ma'am." "Inevitably, this celebration had a valedictory feel," the Sunday Telegraph said of Saturday's concert.

"But there is also the keen awareness that we will never see the likes of this monarch again." "It won't be the same without our queen," Julie Blewitt, 56, from Manchester, told AFP outside St Paul's Cathedral on Friday. The Observer weekly called it "part of a long goodbye that began with her solitary attendance at Prince Philip's funeral last year".

The queen has gradually been preparing the public for the familiar figure of Charles to take over as king. Yet the institution that Charles and, after him, William will lead will be different from the one Elizabeth inherited in the aftermath of World War II. Then, Britain was still a major colonial power but republican movements are gathering pace in the 14 Commonwealth countries where the queen is also head of state, including Australia and in the Caribbean.

In her statement of thanks, Sunday, the queen said she hoped that the "renewed sense of togetherness" generated by the weekend's celebrations "will be felt for many years to come". That hope seems unlikely to be realized. Prime Minister Boris Johnson, struggling with the fall-out from "Partygate", the damaging revelations over lockdown breaches in Downing Street, was booed by the crowd at one of the Jubilee ceremonies this weekend. He could face a no-confidence motion to topple him as soon as this week, according to some parliamentary observers. — AFP



A hologram of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II is projected on the Gold State Coach during the Platinum Pageant in London.

hat, her white gloved hand clutching a walking stick, she was flanked by the three future kings: princes Charles, William and George.

In a statement issued shortly after, the monarch said she had been "humbled and deeply touched" by the turnout for her Platinum Jubilee celebrations and "inspired by the kindness, joy and kinship that has been so evident in recent days". Britain's longest-serving sovereign added: "While I may not have attended every event in person, my heart has been with

Pageant

Sunday's £15-million (\$18.7-million, 17.5-million-euro) "Platinum Jubilee Pageant", featuring some 10,000 people, began with a parade of armed forces from the UK and the Commonwealth she heads. The queen's hologram was projected onto the sovereign's 260-year-old Gold State Coach that led the celebration of her reign. Some 6,000 disabled and non-disabled performers joined in to celebrate the queen's life and reign.



Model Naomi Campbell takes part in the Platinum Pageant in London.

lifted the gloom of soaring inflation, political turmoil and two years of enforced COVID closures. Many saw it as a once-in-a-generation event to mark the closing of an extraordinary chapter in British life and to recognize its most famous national symbol.

A peak of 13.4 million viewers watched Saturday night's concert on television, the BBC said. During the celebrations, the queen put in a surprise on-screen appearance, taking tea with the beloved children's book and film character Paddington

came to the throne-and her constant presence through it all. With Charles now 73, the next jubilee-probably for his eldest son William's 25th year on the throne-could be at least 50 years away. "She's been the queen my whole life," said visiting American John Barli, 66.

"She's the world's grandmother as far I'm concerned," he told the Sunday Times. But there was also acknowledgement the second Elizabethan era-five centuries after the first-is nearly over.



The Gold State Coach is taken down The Mall during the Platinum Pageant in London.



Performers parade during the Platinum Pageant in London.

Dancing 'old heart-throbs' become TikTok sensation in Japan



This undated handout shows members of the group dancing while wearing neckties and colored belly warmers in Wake town, western Okayama prefecture. — AFP

Showing off their awkward moves in shirts, ties and brightly colored belly warmers, four men in their 50s and 60s have become Japan's latest TikTok sensation. The group's mission? To promote their small countryside town, whose population is in decline, through dance routines to pop tunes that fans call "adorable". Since their first post in February, the videos, filmed in choice locations from playgrounds and shrines to municipal buildings, have been viewed more than 16 million times.

The four call themselves "ojiquin"—a slang word used by young people that mixes "ojisan", which means "old men" in Japanese, and "kyun", meaning "heart-throb". They wear suit trousers, smart shoes and belly-warmer bands in different colors—blue, green, yellow and red—and keep a straight face even when they struggle to stay in time.

One of the members, 52-year-old

Takumi Shirase, runs an IT firm and a gardening company when not on TikTok. He told AFP he had created ojiquin with three friends to try and put the rural town of Wake, in western Japan's Okayama region, back on the map. "We wanted to come up with something that would revitalize our ageing countryside community, which is suffering from population decline with fewer and fewer children," he said.

Wake currently has around 14,000 residents, and Shirase said his old primary school has closed due to lack of demand. A local shopping mall has also disappeared, while some annual festivals are no longer held in the town. But with more than 34,000 TikTok followers, "we hope to encourage people to come to Wake, either as tourists or as new residents," Shirase said. —AFP



Bassist Alec John Such

Former Bon Jovi bassist dies at 70

Bassist Alec John Such, a founding member of Bon Jovi who played with the group in their 1980s heyday, has died aged 70, the rock band's frontman announced Sunday. With a string of quickly memorable hits such as "Livin' on a Prayer," "You Give Love a Bad Name" and "Wanted Dead or Alive," Bon Jovi packed arenas in the 1980s on their marathon, pyrotechnic-fueled tours. The hard rockers from New Jersey were led by namesake Jon Bon Jovi, who said Sunday that the band had "found our way to each other thru him."

"As a founding member of Bon Jovi, Alec was integral to the formation of the band," the singer said in a statement on Twitter. Bon Jovi said Such was a childhood friend of drummer Tico Torres and had brought Richie Sambora to see the band perform before he later joined as lead guitarist. No cause of death was announced. Unlike many hair metal bands that were their contemporaries, Bon Jovi preserved a more family friendly image, helping the band win a following in diverse corners of the world.

The anthem rockers are one of the top-selling bands of all time, and won a spot in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2017. Such, who played with the group from 1983 to 1994, and Sambora, who quit in 2013, reunited with the band for the Hall of Fame induction ceremony in 2018. "When Jon Bon Jovi called me up and asked me to be in his band many years ago, I soon realized how serious he was and he had a vision that he wanted to bring us to," Such said at the induction ceremony.

"I am only too happy to have been a part of that vision." Bon Jovi was notably one of the first Western rock group approved to tour the then Soviet Union when the communist system opened up under Mikhail Gorbachev's glasnost reforms. —AFP



In this file photo US actress Jennifer Connelly (left) and US actor Tom Cruise talk as they leave the Festival Palace following the screening of the film "Top Gun: Maverick" during the 75th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP

'Top Gun' again soars to top of N America box office

Action drama "Top Gun: Maverick" has soared to a second huge weekend showing in North American theaters, taking in an estimated \$86 million, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported Sunday. That "sensational" number for Paramount's long-awaited Tom Cruise sequel placed it among the top 10 highest-grossing second weekends in domestic box office history, Variety reported. It took in \$151 million last weekend.

Boosted by its gripping visuals and unusually positive reviews—especially for a sequel—the Paramount/Skydance film has earned \$257 million abroad, the latest sign of Hollywood's recovery from a bleak pandemic period. "Maverick" picks up the story of now-graying US Navy test pilot Pete "Maverick" Mitchell (Cruise) as he trains young aviators for a mission to attack a nuclear facility in a rogue state. Holding in second place was Disney's "Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness," at \$9.3 million for the Friday-through-Sunday period. The global take for the Benedict Cumberbatch film has surpassed \$750 million in its five weeks out. 20th Century's animated "Bob's Burgers Movie," based on a popular television show, held tight in third place, taking in \$4.5 million.

In fourth, up one spot from last weekend, was Universal's family-friendly animation "The Bad Guys," at \$3.3 million. Focus Features' "Downton Abbey: A New Era," based on the wildly popular British series, slipped a spot to fifth place, earning \$3 million. Rounding out the top 10 were:

"Everything Everywhere All at Once" (\$2 million)

"Sonic the Hedgehog 2" (\$1.7 million)

"The Lost City" (\$1.4 million)

"Crimes of the Future" (\$1.1 million)

"Watcher" (\$815,000). — AFP

Syria's climate-scorched wheat fields feed animals, not people

Moussa Fatimi's wheat field was once part of a thriving Syrian breadbasket. Now, he can't even grow enough to feed his family, and the land has been turned over to animals. Fatimi's crop has withered from a climate crisis, adding to fears of supply shortages sparked by the war in Ukraine as Syria grapples with record-high rates of food insecurity. "For the second year in a row, we face drought," Fatimi, 85, told AFP at his parched plot. "We haven't even harvested enough this year to secure our own supply of bread. Our losses are in the millions," he said.

Syria is among the countries most vulnerable and poorly prepared for climate change, which is forecast to worsen, posing a further threat to the wheat harvests

stalk. Trucks used to queue to ferry bags of Fatimi's wheat to granaries, but now he largely relies on income from other farmers who use his field to graze their animals. "I feel sorry when I see the sheep eating from the field," he said.

February invasion of Ukraine but the war in Kyiv has sparked fears of a supply crisis as wheat fields shrivel.

Hotter and hotter

Northeast Syria is about 0.8 degrees Celsius hotter today than it was 100 years ago with a decreased mean rainfall of about 18 millimeters (0.7 inch) per month over the same period, according to a report released in April by iMMAP, a data-focused non-profit organization based in Washington. By 2050, temperatures are expected to be at least two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) higher while precipitation falls by 11 percent, iMMAP said. The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization said that the 210,000 tons of wheat grain produced in Hasakeh province during the 2020-2021 winter cropping season were only 26 percent of the previous year.

The low harvest came with an estimated 60 percent of Syria's population food-insecure, according to the UN, and prompted Salman Mohammed Barko to turn his wheat plot into a grazing ground as Fatimi did. But the money he makes doesn't even cover what he paid to plant the area. "Climate change has affected us as farmers, with water scarcity, poor production, less rainfall and weather changes" posing a great challenge, said Barko, 55. Local authorities are trying to support farmers, despite a lack of resources to confront an agricultural crisis compounded by inflation and shortages of fuel and water.

The semi-autonomous Kurdish administration helped irrigate 300,000 hectares of land (741,000 acres) and offered farmers subsidized seeds and fuel in response to this year's drought, agriculture official Laila Mohammed said. "Climate conditions have affected the production and quality" of wheat crops, she said, explaining that a decline in output is also due to an exodus of farmers during Syria's war.

Adding to water shortages, Turkish-backed groups on the border with Turkey have been building dams on the Khabour river that serves as a lifeline for communities downstream in Kurdish-dominated areas, according to Dutch peace-building organization PAX. For Syrian farmer Musa Mohammed, the Kurdish administration isn't doing enough to help.

It buys a kilogram (2.2 pounds) of wheat from farmers for 2,200 Syrian pounds (about 56 cents), which according to him is insufficient. "This price doesn't compensate us for our expenses. It should have been set at 3,000 at least," said Mohammed, who because of low rainfall-and soaring fuel costs-has had to pay more than usual for irrigation. The 55 year-old planted 10 hectares of wheat this season. "Farmers are completely dependent on seasonal harvests, but the season is weak this year due to weather conditions, lack of rain, high prices and climate change," Mohammed said. — AFP



A shepherd guides his sheep along a dry wheat field in the countryside of Syria's northeastern Hasakeh province.

that are an essential income source for a war-battered population. The trend is most evident in Syria's once-fertile northeast where wheat fields are drying to a crisp because of severe drought and low rainfall, challenges also faced by Iraq and other neighboring countries.

In Umm Hajrah, a village northeast of Hasakeh city, Fatimi meandered through a wheat field dotted with sheep munching on the crops. "It's just straw. There's no seeds," he said after pulling up a stunted

Syria's wheat production averaged 4.1 million tons in years prior to its war, which erupted in 2011 after the repression of anti-government protests. Years of subsequent fighting have left around half a million people dead and displaced millions. Before the war, Syria's wheat production was enough to meet local demand. Harvests then plunged to record lows, leading to increased dependence on imports especially from regime-ally Russia. Those shipments have continued since Russia's



This aerial view shows a young shepherd guiding his sheep in a dry field in the countryside of the city of Tabqa in Syria's Raqqa governorate.



This picture shows wheat that has dried ahead of the start of the harvesting season.



This aerial view shows sheep grazing in a dry wheat field during a sandstorm in the countryside of the city of Tabqa in Syria's Raqqa governorate. — AFP photos



Zendaya and Tom Holland



Zendaya's 'Euphoria' and 'Spider-Man' win at MTV awards



Sophia Di Martino accepts the Best Fight award for 'Loki' onstage.



Jack Black accepts the Comedic Genius Award onstage.

Zendaya dominated the MTV Movie and TV Awards on Sunday as her teen drama "Euphoria" and big-screen superhero blockbuster "Spider-Man: No Way Home" were voted best show and best movie respectively. The light-hearted awards, taking place at the start of the summer blockbuster season, are voted for online by the public, and underscored the huge popularity of the 25-year-old former Disney child star.

Zendaya won best performance in a show for "Euphoria," HBO's often bleak and hard-hitting look at modern teen life, which also won offbeat awards for "best fight" and a new award for the best on-screen "hookup." The MTV awards have long bestowed tongue-in-cheek "golden popcorn" statuettes for categories ranging from "best kiss" to "most frightened performance."

With obsessive fans encouraged to vote multiple times for their favorites, the awards tend to recognize mainstream and commercial hits with large and devoted social media followings. It was little surprise therefore that "Spider-Man: No Way Home"-by far the biggest box office hit since the pandemic-won best movie. The film has earned almost \$1.9 billion worldwide, and is the third-biggest hit for domestic theaters ever.

It also won best performance in a movie for Zendaya's on-screen and real-life boyfriend Tom Holland, who plays the latest incarnation of the web slinging superhero-although neither attended the ceremony in Santa Monica, near Los Angeles, in person. Lending some A-list



(From left) Dixie D'Amelio, Marc D'Amelio, Charli D'Amelio and Heidi D'Amelio accept award for Best New Unscripted Series for 'The D'Amelio Show' onstage.

stardust to the room, Jennifer Lopez was presented a non-competitive "Generation Award."

She thanked "true love" before telling her fiance Ben Affleck "and everybody at home" that she was on her way back for dinner. Lopez also won best song, for "On My Way (Marry Me)," while 19-year-old multiple Grammy winner Olivia Rodrigo won best music documentary "Olivia Rodrigo: driving home 2 u."

Jack Black was also honored by MTV for his career on Sunday. The 52-year-old attempted an energetic entrance, somersaulting on stage to youthful cheers from the audience, before breathlessly calling

for "a little blast of oxygen." Daniel Radcliffe, who won best villain for adventure comedy "The Lost City," joked that his British accent had made his evil turn a breeze. "This is a universally recognized accent of pure evil," he said. "This is a voice that would kick a puppy or not give Oliver Twist more food." "I really should thank my parents most for just having the foresight, all those years ago, to have me be British, so that I could grow up sounding naturally evil enough to one day win this award." — AFP

Winners

- Best Movie**
"Spider-Man: No Way Home"
- Best Show**
"Euphoria"
- Best Performance in a Movie**
Tom Holland - "Spider-Man: No Way Home"
- Best Performance in a Show**
Zendaya - "Euphoria"
- Best Hero**
Scarlett Johansson - "Black Widow"
- Best Villain**
Daniel Radcliffe - "The Lost City"
- Best Kiss**
Poopies & the snake - "Jackass Forever"
- Best Comedic Performance**
Ryan Reynolds - "Free Guy"
- Breakthrough Performance**
Sophia Di Martino - "Loki"
- Best Fight**
Cassie vs. Maddy - "Euphoria"
- Most Frightened Performance**
Jenna Ortega - "Scream"
- Best Team**
"Loki" - Tom Hiddleston, Sophia Di Martino, Owen Wilson
- Here For The Hookup**
"Euphoria"
- BEST SONG**
"On My Way (Marry Me)" - Jennifer Lopez, "Marry Me"
- Best Music Documentary**
"Olivia Rodrigo: driving home 2 u (a SOUR film)"
- BEST MUSICAL MOMENT**
"Dance With Me" ("Heartstopper")
- Generation Award**
Jennifer Lopez



US actress-singer Jennifer Lopez receives the MTV Generation Award on stage.



US actress Sydney Sweeney accepts the MTV award for Best Show "Euphoria" on stage.



Jenna Ortega accepts the Most Frightened Performance Award onstage.



Paris Hilton accepts the Best Reality Return award onstage.



Adam DiVello and the cast of 'Selling Sunset' accept the Best Docu-reality Show award on stage.

Sports

Quartararo wins Catalonia MotoGP as Espargaro pays dearly for error

Bagnaia slips to fourth in the standings

MONTMELO: France's world champion Fabio Quartararo extended his lead in this season's title race after winning the Catalonia MotoGP on Sunday helped by an astonishing error by his closest pursuer Aleix Espargaro. The Frenchman's joy contrasted starkly to Aprilia rider Espargaro, who had a nightmare of a race from start to finish.

Having started on pole he was passed by Quartararo on the first bend—a lead the 23-year-old Frenchman would never relinquish—and then as the race reached its climax he raised his arms thinking he had finished second only to realize there was a still a lap to go. "The only thing I can say is 'sorry' to my team," said a contrite Espargaro. "It is an inadmissible error at this level of competition. It is totally my fault. I completely forgot that here the last lap is listed as zero not one hence I took my foot off the gas in the finishing straight. If I am to beat Fabio in the title race I cannot make such errors."

His misfortune allowed compatriot Jorge Martin to take second with his Ducati Primac team-mate Frenchman Johann Zarco taking third. Quartararo increased his lead from eight points to 22 after nine rounds of the championship. Little wonder he bore a broad grin on his face as he climbed off his Yamaha—whom he committed to for an extra two years on Thursday. "I am so pleased, this was an incredible race," said Quartararo. "I pushed hard from the start and kept it up to the finish."

"With this win and my second place in Mugello last Sunday these are two great results as I feared the worst beforehand. Life is good, we have worked hard." Martin was delighted with his second spot after a largely disappointing season. "It has been a tough season so I am delighted with this podium finish," said Martin. "I thought I would find it hard to finish with one of my tyre's giving me trouble so I just conserved my energy. Then I saw Aleix slowing and I thought he had a mechanical problem but then realized he had made a mistake. That was an unexpected bonus."

Horschel's eagle magic seals Memorial victory

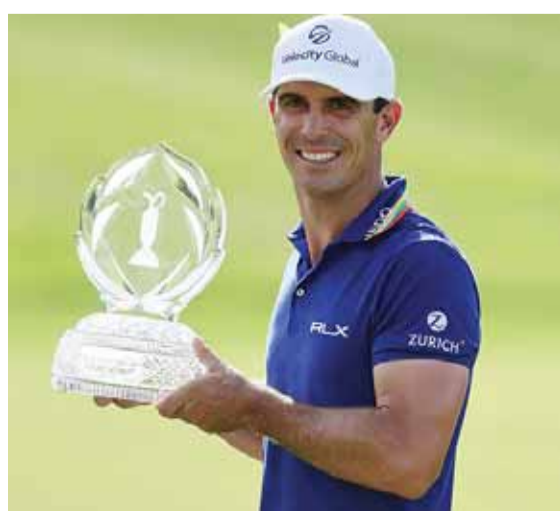
WASHINGTON: Billy Horschel conjured a moment of magic to close out victory at the PGA Tour's Memorial Tournament on Sunday. The 35-year-old world number 17, who had led by five shots after a dazzling seven-under-par 65 in the third round, endured a nervy final round before battling to a level par 72 to secure victory by four strokes at a sun-baked Muirfield Village in Dublin, Ohio. Horschel looked set for a nerve-jangling final three holes after a birdie from playing partner Aaron Wise on the 15th green saw him move to within two shots of the lead.

But Horschel, who had already made crucial putts to save par on the 13th and 14th holes, rolled in a monster 53-foot eagle putt to leap into a four-shot lead with three to play. That effectively killed off the challenge of Wise and the chasing pack, and although Horschel dropped a shot with a bogey on the 17th, he finished four shots clear with a 72-hole aggregate of 13-under 275, strolling off the 18th green to be congratulated by tournament host and golf icon Jack Nicklaus.

Horschel said afterwards he had taken inspiration from the course management of Nicklaus and Tiger Woods as he attempted to close out the seventh PGA Tour victory of his career. "Learn from those two and understand that when you have a lead you don't have to do anything special, just have to make sure you don't give any shots back," Horschel said.

"I did give some shots back, which I was upset about. And if I did have to do something special, be ready for it. That eagle on 15 was huge. Aaron had just made birdie so if I didn't at least birdie it was down to two shots—so to make an eagle to go four up with three to play, that's one you shouldn't cough up, and I didn't." Wise, meanwhile, closed with a 71 to take sole possession of second place on nine under. Patrick Cantlay and Chile's Joaquin Niemann tied for third on seven under, six off the lead, after closing 71s.

A cluster of five players—Max Homa, Will Zalatoris, Denny McCarthy, Sahith Theegala and Daniel Berger—shared fifth place on six under. Spain's Jon Rahm, South Korea's Im Sung-Jae and Brendan Steele finished 10th on four under. Australia's Cameron Smith, meanwhile, who had faded from contention on Saturday, blew up in his final round with a five-over 77 to finish tied for 13th on three under. Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy also struggled on Sunday with a closing 74 to finish tied for 18th.—AFP



DUBLIN: Billy Horschel of the United States poses with the trophy after winning the Memorial Tournament presented by Workday at Muirfield Village Golf Club on June 05, 2022.—AFP



MONTMELO: Yamaha French rider Fabio Quartararo competes during the Moto Grand Prix de Catalunya at the Circuit de Catalunya on June 5, 2022.—AFP

'Put my foot down'

Zarco too reflected on his good fortune, though, timely as it is expected he is set to extend his contract with Ducati-Primac. "That was a bit lucky with what happened at the end of the race," said Zarco. "I did not expect that! I was very tired as the race came to a close. I saw him (Espargaro) raise his arms and there was little doubt in my mind maybe the race is over. However, I saw Martin was still racing at full speed so I put my foot down." Even better for Quartararo was neither of his Italian rivals who loom large in the championship standings finished.

Francesco Bagnaia—who won the Italian MotoGP last weekend—slipped to fourth in the standings behind Zarco following his first bend exit. Bagnaia's Ducati came crashing to the ground after Japanese rider Takaaki Nakagami fell and his helmet connected with the Italian's bike. Bagnaia slid across the track and took out Alex Rins on his Suzuki—fortunately all three were reported to be ok. Bagnaia's compatriot Enea Bastianini also finished his day early coming off with 17 laps to go on his Ducati-Gresini, the Italian hitting his knees in frustration. He remains third in the standings on 94 points.—AFP

West Asia Futsal tournament

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Two important matches will be played on Tuesday in the West Asia Futsal tournament being held in Kuwait at Martyr Qushaia Al-Mutairi Hall in Al-Nasr Club. Lebanon will face off with UAE at 4:30 pm while Oman will play Bahrain

(7:30 pm). Oman top the standings of the second group with 3 points - two points ahead of Bahrain and Lebanon, that have one point each. UAE remain pointless. The first round of the second group was held on Sunday. Lebanon were held by Bahrain in a 1-1 draw. In the second match, Oman defeated UAE 4-2.



Lee wins US Women's Open with 72-hole scoring record

WASHINGTON: Australia's Minjee Lee won the 77th US Women's Open on Sunday, rolling to a four-stroke victory to capture her second career major golf title in record-smashing fashion. The 26-year-old from Perth fired a level par 71 in the final round at Pine Needles in Southern Pines, North Carolina, to finish on a 72-hole event record 13-under 271. "I'm speechless. I can't believe it right now," Lee said. "It's super special. It has been my dream since I was a little girl."

World number four Lee, who took her first major title at last year's Evian Championship, followed in the footsteps of Aussie mentor Karrie Webb, who won a US Women's Open title at Pine Needles in 2001. "This was the one I've always wanted to win so it feels extra special and I feel amazing right now," Lee said. The old US Women's Open low 72-hole mark was 272 set by Sweden's Annika Sorenstam at Pine Needles in 1996 and matched by American Juli Inkster in 1999 and South

Korean Chun In-gee in 2015.

Lee captured her eighth LPGA title by holding off American Mina Harigae, second on 275 after a closing 72, and claimed a record \$1.8 million top prize from a \$10-million purse, the richest in women's golf history. "We're only moving in the right direction," Lee said of the prize money. "It's only going to get better from here. It's such a large sum. I'm honored to be the first winner of the sum but it's only going to get better and better."

South Korean Choi Hye-jin was third on 277, one stroke ahead of world number one Ko Jin-young of South Korea with New Zealand's Lydia Ko fifth on 279. Lee, who also set a 54-hole Open record of 200, began with a three-stroke lead over Harigae and a six-shot edge on the rest of the field, but felt nervous throughout the round. "I felt a little 'jelly' all day but I'm here and I'm happy now," Lee said. "With a little bit of nerves, overall, I felt like I did pretty good.—AFP

News in brief

Samooja claims maiden title

HAMBURG: Finland's Kalle Samooja hit a course-record 64 in the final round of the European Open on Sunday to overturn a seven-shot deficit and claim his maiden DP World Tour title. Samooja, 34, carded eight birdies, including three in the last four holes, to win by two shots on Dutch golfer Wil Besseling, with a six-under-par total. Overnight leader Victor Perez, seeking back-to-back victories after the Dutch Open last week, birdied the 10th and 11th to move into a share of the lead, only to bogey three of the next four holes. France's Perez carded a two-over-par final round 74 to finish joint third along with England's Richard Mansell, who hit 70. "It is truly special. It's been a long journey. I've been close a few times," said an emotional Samooja who also claimed a spot at the US Open at Brookline later this month. "We had a number in mind today and we reached that. We thought it might be enough and it was a long two-hour wait at the clubhouse, seeing the guys battle it out.—AFP

Warholm injured on Rabat return

RABAT: Karsten Warholm, the Olympic champion and world-record holder in the 400m hurdles, pulled up injured on his return to competition at the Diamond League meet in Rabat on Sunday, just weeks before the Norwegian star defends his world title. After a blistering start out of the blocks, Warholm abruptly stopped after clipping the first hurdle, clutching the back of his right thigh. By the time the rest of the field had finished the 26-year-old had placed ice on his right leg as coach Leif Olav Alnes looked on. "I am very disappointed for this injury. I think it's a hamstring tear. I will focus on treating it and come back stronger. I also feel sorry for the crowd," said Warholm. There are less than six weeks left for the two-time defending world champion to recover before the world championships in Eugene, Oregon from July 14-25. American Khalifah Rosser went on to win the 400m hurdles in 48.25 seconds. Earlier, Olympic champion Elaine Thompson-Herah eased to victory in the women's 100m.—AFP

Snyder resigns as Jazz coach

LOS ANGELES: Quin Snyder resigned as coach of the NBA's Utah Jazz after eight seasons on Sunday, reaching the playoffs in each of the past six years without advancing to the conference finals. Snyder went 372-264 with the Jazz in the regular season and departs as the second-winningest head coach in club history, but Utah was a post-season disappointment despite playmaker Donovan Mitchell and three-time NBA Defensive Player of the Year Rudy Gobert. "What drives me every day is our players and their passion for the game, their desire to constantly work to improve and their dedication to the team and the Jazz," Snyder said in a statement announcing his departure. "I strongly feel they need a new voice to continue to evolve. That's it. No philosophical differences, no other reason. After eight years, I just feel it is time to move onward. I needed to take time to detach after the season and make sure this was the right decision.—AFP

Kerr salutes 'breathtaking' Curry

SAN FRANCISCO: Golden State coach Steve Kerr saluted the "breathtaking" contribution of Stephen Curry after the Warriors star inspired a series-leveling victory over Boston in the NBA Finals on Sunday. Curry led the scoring for the Warriors with 29 points in a 107-88 blowout that tied the best-of-seven series at 1-1. The 34-year-old two-time NBA MVP was at his majestic best in a third quarter that effectively decided the game as the Warriors outscored Boston 35-14. Curry contributed 14 points to that third-quarter onslaught, and was also a key contributor to a steely Warriors defensive display that shut down Boston's scoring. "Steph was breathtaking in that quarter," Warriors coach Kerr said afterwards. "Not just the shot-making but the defensive effort. He just doesn't get enough credit for his level of conditioning, physicality and defense.—AFP

Power wins IndyCar Detroit GP

WASHINGTON: Australia's Will Power held off American Alexander Rossi by one second to win the IndyCar Detroit Grand Prix on Sunday and seize the series season points lead. Power, who started 16th, passed US pole-sitter Josef Newgarden on lap 15 and stayed in front from there, denying the fast-closing Rossi his first triumph since 2019. "Chopped through the field then had to fight hard," Power said. "Just drove it as straight as I could, really nice on the brakes and throttle. I knew if we could keep a decent gap we'd be all right." New Zealand's Scott Dixon was third with Newgarden fourth and Mexico's Pato O'Ward fifth after 70 laps over a 2.35-mile, 14-turn temporary street course at Belle Isle Park. Power took his first victory since last year at the Indianapolis road course and moved atop the driver standings with 255 points, three ahead of Indianapolis 500 winner Marcus Ericsson.—AFP

Sports

Canada cancel Panama match after players embark on strike

Players reject contract offer presented to the squad

LOS ANGELES: Canada cancelled a friendly international with Panama just hours before kick-off on Sunday after their players went on strike over a proposed new labor deal. Canada Soccer confirmed the World Cup warm-up game in Vancouver had been scrapped in a brief statement on Twitter.

No reason was given but a statement released by the men's national team said the move came after players rejected a contract offer presented to the squad last Thursday. The statement said talks had been ongoing since March between Canada Soccer and the national team, who this year qualified for the World Cup for the first time in 36 years. The squad said Canada Soccer had "unnecessarily prolonged" negotiations before making an unsatisfactory initial offer on Thursday.

"Canada Soccer waited until the evening of June 2nd to present an archaic offer and the general secretary and president of the association only made themselves available for the first time to connect with the players on June 4 at 4pm," the players' statement said. "For these reasons, we have reluctantly decided not to play our match today against Panama. It's time we take a stand for the future of soccer in Canada." The players also criticized a deal signed by Canada Soccer and commercial partner Canadian Soccer Business in 2018, demanding the terms of the contract be made public.

The statement called for an "equitable structure with our women's national team" that shares the same player match fees, percentage of prize money at FIFA World Cups and the development of a

women's domestic league. The statement concluded with an apology to fans over the sudden cancellation. "We want to apologize to our fans. Playing at home with your support is everything to us," the statement read. The statement said players hoped to have resolved the dispute by the time Canada is scheduled to play Curacao in the CONCACAF Nations League on Thursday.

Canada Soccer president Nick Bontis later hit back at the players decision to withdraw from Sunday's friendly, insisting that the offer put to players was fair and calling for a "facts-based" discussion about a new labor deal. "Canada Soccer is very disappointed the men's national team players' decision to refuse to play today," Bontis said. "Canada Soccer is committed to the principles of

fairness and equity and we believe we presented a fair offer to the players." The dispute is the latest turbulent episode to rock Canadian soccer in recent weeks.

Panama were only drafted in as last minute opponents for Sunday's friendly after an initial fixture with fellow World Cup qualifiers Iran was cancelled after a backlash against the fixture led by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau who called it a "bad idea". The fixture was also criticized by families of passengers killed when Iranian armed forces shot down a Ukrainian passenger jet after take-off from Tehran in January 2020. Eighty-five Canadian citizens and permanent residents were among the 176 people who died in the incident, which the Iranian armed forces later described as a mistake. —AFP



Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem receiving a memento from Suwayan.



Kuwait Sports Club Handball team book second round

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Sports Club Handball team qualified for the second round of the 38th Gulf Cup winner championship after winning their second match against UAE's Aljazeera Club 28-21 in the first group. Al-Ahli (Qatar) defeated Oman's Muscat 25-17 in the same group and qualified along with Kuwait. Aljazeera and Muscat are no longer in competition.

The match between Kuwait and Aljazeera was attended by National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-

Ghanem and Director General of Public Authority for Sports Dr Humoud Fulaiteh. On Tuesday, the fourth and final round of the preliminaries will see Kuwait's Salmiya facing off with Najma (Bahrain) after which Kuwait will play Qatar's Al-Ahli.

Kuwait's player Abdallah Al-Khamees congratulated the Club for qualifying to the next level of the championship. "We were able to win our first two matches due to the support of the administration and fans, adding that the team has experienced players, along with young ones," he said.

Australia feel the heat in World Cup quest

DOHA: Australia must prove they can fight in the fiery World Cup temperatures if they are to reach a fifth straight World Cup final in Qatar this year, according to embattled coach Graham Arnold. The Socceroos take on United Arab Emirates in Doha on Tuesday for the right to play Peru in an inter-continental playoff six days later. The winners of that game will go into a group against defending champions France in November.

Following a spectacular collapse in form, Arnold's job could depend on results in Qatar, where New Zealand and Costa Rica will also dis-

pute a place at the finals on June 14. Australia set a FIFA record of winning 11 qualifiers in a row up to last October to top their Asian group. But then they won only one of their seven following matches and ended third behind Saudi Arabia and Japan. The Emirates side, looking for a first appearance at the finals since their debut in 1990, just claimed third spot in their group ahead of Iraq to reach the playoff.

Outside the Ahmad bin Ali Stadium, temperatures are soaring past 40 degrees Celsius (105 Fahrenheit) during the day, but the match will start at 9.00pm and Qatar's specially developed stadium air conditioning will also help the two sides. Arnold is less worried by the temperatures than his side's ability to fight back from a goal down. UAE beat Australia 1-0 when they met in the Asian Cup quarter final in 2019. Australia have shown a similar lack of fight in the past six months but did come back from a goal down to beat Jordan 2-1 in their last friendly against Jordan last week.

"What we have been driving since we got into camp is reaction when we lose the ball. I have been disappointed over the campaign about the mentality of that," Arnold told Australian media after the Jordan game. Midfielder Riley McGree said that getting revenge for 2019 could help in Tuesday's match. "It's a big game for us as a country, and we are right up for it," he said. Honor is also at stake for UAE, where Argentine coach Rodolfo Arruabarrena only took over in February.

The Arab team are 26 places below Australia at 42 in the FIFA rankings but believe an upset is possible as they will have thousands of fans in the stadium. Veteran UAE striker Ali Mabkhout, who scored the winner in 2019 and has more international goals than the whole Australia squad combined, insists the two sides are "eventually matched". "Being just 180 minutes away from a World Cup is an opportunity that doesn't come around too often. Our fate is in our own hands," he declared. —AFP

Ukraine players make nation proud despite falling short of WCup

CARDIFF: Ukraine's World Cup dream is over after a cruel 1-0 defeat to Wales in Sunday's play-off final left a nation ravaged by war without the release of seeing their country compete in Qatar later this year. Heads bowed, the Ukrainian players were still saluted like heroes from the small band of visiting fans decked out in blue and yellow flags in one corner of the Cardiff City stadium on Sunday. "To get to the World Cup would have lifted the spirit of the people," Igor Makarenko, 44, told AFP. "The spirit Russia is trying to crush."

The tradesman had travelled with his family from their home in London to support Ukraine. Having deliberated over whether to return to his homeland to fight, Makarenko stayed put in Britain to help coordinate supplies for Ukrainian refugees who have fled to Europe and his family who are still living close to the Belarusian border. "I have three brothers on the frontline," he added. "I asked them whether I should come back and they told me it was better to stay and send money for petrol to make Molotov cocktails."

Manchester City's Oleksandr Zinchenko faced a similar dilemma. The 25-year-old admitted earlier this week to having "one hand on the weapon" when war broke out before being convinced he could do more good by using his profile positively. Zinchenko symbolically wrapped the Premier League trophy in the Ukrainian flag after winning the title with City last month. On the field, he was outstanding as Ukraine made a nation proud by beating Scotland 3-1 on Wednesday in their first competitive match since Russia's invasion.

"We, as football players, need to still represent our country as much and as best as we can," said Zinchenko. "We need to show the people everyone needs to live in peace and we need to stop the war all together because we don't know what is going to happen tomorrow. Today it's Ukraine but tomorrow Russians can be in your country, so we need to be united." In the midst of wild celebrations as Wales clung on to secure their place at a first World Cup since 1958, Gareth Bale led the Welsh players over to applaud the Ukrainian support and team.

"We are fully aware of what is going on, we just wanted to show our appreciation to them," said Wales manager Robert Page. "They deserve a lot of credit for what they have done. We wanted to show them that respect." After the Ukrainian players disappeared down the tunnel to a dressing room decorated with a flag sent by soldiers fighting on the frontline, the Welsh squad and crowd united for a chorus of the traditional folk song "Yma o Hyd" (We're still here).

The same can be said of Ukraine's footballers, who in the week the war passed 100 days, gave some sense of normality to their people with proud performances on the pitch. "We have war raging all over the country, women and children dying on a daily basis, our infrastructure ruined by the Russian barbarians," said Ukraine coach Oleksandr Petrakov.

"The Russians want to hurt us but the Ukrainians are resisting. We just want your support, to understand what is happening at home. God forbid it would touch you and you feel what we can feel deep inside." —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Khalidiya	24848075
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Kaifan	24849807
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Shamiya	24848913
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Shuwaikh	24814507
Chest Hospital	24849400	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Nuzha	22526804
Adan Hospital	23940620	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Qadsiya	22515088
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Dasmah	22532265
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
		Shaab	22518752
		Qibla	22459381
		Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
		Mirqab	22456536
		Sharq	22465401
		Salmiya	25746401

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144

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SAN FRANCISCO: Stephen Curry #30 of the Golden State Warriors shoots during the first half against the Boston Celtics in Game Two of the 2022 NBA Finals at Chase Center on June 05, 2022. —AFP

Warriors down Celtics to level series

Curry stars as Warriors roar back into NBA Finals contention

SAN FRANCISCO: Stephen Curry scored 29 points as the Golden State Warriors roared back into NBA Finals contention on Sunday with a series-leveling 107-88 game two victory over the Boston Celtics. Curry spearheaded a deadly display of Golden State shooting in San Francisco while a superb Warriors defensive effort shut down Boston's key offensive weapons.

The Warriors, who squandered a 12-point fourth-quarter lead in game one, were in no mood to allow lightning to strike twice as they cut loose to build a double-digit advantage in the third quarter to tie the best-of-seven series at 1-1. Curry led the scoring for Golden State, with Jordan Poole (17 points), Andrew Wiggins (11), Kevon Looney (12) and Klay Thompson (11) also making double figures. Jayson Tatum topped the Boston scorers with 28 points, but crucially 21 of those came in a hardfought first half.

Only two other Boston players—Jaylen Brown with 17 points and Derrick White with 12 - cracked double digits. The Warriors defense, marshaled brilliantly by Draymond Green, suffo-

ated Boston in the second half, with two high-scoring Celtics heroes from game one - Al Horford and Marcus Smart—held to just four points combined. The series now moves to Boston with game three scheduled for Wednesday and game four on Friday.

"We said we needed to play with desperation and that's what we did," said Curry. "It's a good feeling to get back on track and now we've got to take it on the road. "We got off to a better start defensively where we made an imprint on the game and they felt us more than they did in game one. Our third quarter was great and we got a bit more separation that made the fourth quarter easier tonight." The Warriors put themselves in a winning position after outscoring Boston 35-14 in the third quarter to take an 87-64 lead into the fourth quarter.

Poole party

Poole electrified San Francisco's packed Chase Center after launching a buzzer-beating three-pointer from near halfway at the end of the third to

cap a devastating passage of play from the home team. The Warriors kept up the pressure in the early part of the fourth quarter, extending their lead to 29 points as the Celtics scrambled to regroup before closing out a blowout win.

"I thought everybody was more engaged," Golden State coach Steve Kerr said. "It was pretty obvious, just our level of force and physicality was ramped up quite a bit, and it had to be. "What Boston did in the fourth quarter the other night, we knew we had to come with a much better focus and sense of aggression, and I thought that started right from the beginning." Boston, who erupted for 40 points in the final quarter to win game one, picked up where they left off on Sunday, jumping out to an early 13-5 lead with Brown leading the way.

A Brown three-pointer took Boston into a 22-13 lead early in the first quarter before a sustained Warriors rally led by Curry saw the hosts get back to within one point. A Curry layup on the buzzer gave Golden State a 31-30 lead heading into the second quarter. Again though Boston found another

er gear, with Tatum nailing a three-pointer to put the Celtics 33-31 ahead. The Celtics took a five-point lead at 40-35 with a White three-pointer.

The Warriors responded with a 10-0 lead to go up 45-40 and there was little to separate the two teams in the closing stages of the half. Wiggins scored from an offensive rebound to give the Warriors a slender 52-50 half-time lead. Boston looked the more dangerous team for long periods of the first half, and made 10-of-19 from three-point range, including five from Tatum while Brown finished the half with 15 points.

But the Warriors—who made only six from beyond the arc in the first half—erupted after the break to seal the game. The Celtics meanwhile coughed up 18 turnovers as the Warriors defense took charge. Celtics coach Ime Udoka was left ruing his team's failure to build on a bright start. "The third quarter was disappointing but the first half was just as disappointing," Udoka said. "Had our opportunities. Came out, jumped out up nine early. Then turnovers started happening. Let them back in the game." —AFP

Ronaldo steers Portugal past Switzerland; Spain held in Prague

PARIS: Cristiano Ronaldo marshalled Portugal past Switzerland in the Nations League on Sunday as Gavi made history becoming Spain's youngest ever scorer. Ronaldo scored two goals in four first half minutes and had a third ruled offside by VAR as Portugal crushed Switzerland 4-0 in Lisbon. The Manchester United striker had set up William Carvalho for the opener with Joao Cancelo completing the rout to fire Portugal to the top of League A, Group 2, on goal difference from the Czech Republic. In Prague, Jakub Pesek put the hosts in front before Gavi levelled with a low curling left-footer at the record age of 17 years and 304 days just before halftime.

Jan Kuchta had the Czechs back in control with a delicate chip but Athletic Bilbao defender Inigo Martinez headed home in the final minute to salvage a 2-2 draw. "It is wonderful to be able to say that we are disappointed to lose points against Spain," said Czech captain Tomas Soucek. "We showed heart and great teamwork. If somebody told us that we would have four points before these two games, we would have taken it. We have started well and look forward to the next games." "We lacked fluency so the game was really tough" shrugged Spain coach Luis Enrique.

Martinez conceded it wasn't Spain's "finest" match. "We came away with a point, but the aim was to win. When you don't win, when you have great difficulties, you come away disappointed." Spain reached the final of last year's Nations League, beating European champions Italy in the semis before losing to France, and they enjoyed a relatively smooth qualification for the World Cup. But they are now on the back foot in this competition and after their opening 1-1 stalemate with Portugal on Thursday are placed third in the



LISBON: Portugal's forward Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates after scoring a goal during the UEFA Nations League, League A Group 2 football match between Portugal and Switzerland on June 5, 2022. —AFP

group, two points adrift.

Elsewhere Northern Ireland extended their winless run in the competition to 12 with a drab goalless draw in Cyprus And Georgia are in command at the top of League C Group 4 after dishing out a 5-2 drubbing to Bulgaria while Manchester City's new headline signing Erling Haaland produced the goals in Norway's 2-1 win in Sweden. The Norwegians top League B, Group 4 after two wins from Serbia, 4-1 winners over Slovenia. On Monday world champions France have their second run out in Split against Croatia with Kylian Mbappe one of several key components of Didier Deschamps' team

to skip eve-of-match training.

The Paris Saint-Germain forward came off with a left knee niggle at half-time of Friday's 2-1 loss by last year's Nations League winners to Denmark at the Stade de France. Also missing were Karim Benzema, Kingsley Coman, N'Golo Kante and Jules Kounde. "We'll see about tomorrow (Monday)," Deschamps said on Mbappe's prospects of turning out against the team Les Bleus defeated to win the 2018 World Cup in Moscow. Number two keeper Mike Maignan will earn his third call-up in place of Hugo Lloris with Presnel Kimpembe taking the captain's armband in this League A, Group 1 tie. —AFP

Palat lifts Lightning to NHL playoff win

MIAMI: Ondrej Palat fired in the winning goal with 41.6 seconds remaining and the two-time defending Stanley Cup champion Tampa Bay Lightning beat the New York Rangers 3-2 on Sunday in the NHL playoffs. The host Lightning scored three unanswered goals to pull within 2-1 in the best-of-seven Eastern Conference final, which continues in Tampa on Tuesday.

The series winner will face either the Colorado Avalanche or the Edmonton Oilers in the championship series. Czech left wing Palat fired his team-record 10th career game-winning playoff goal from the left glove of Rangers netminder Igor Shesterkin and the post. "I was just trying to shoot quick and lucky enough it went in," said Palat, whose 43 career playoff goals rank second in Lightning history.

Rangers center Mika Zibanejad netted a power play goal 7:37 into the second period to open the scoring, the Swede zipping a slap shot from the face off circle past Lightning goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy. It was Zibanejad's 10th goal of the post-season and his sixth playoff power play goal, match the Rangers' single-season record. Just 2:07 later, New York made it 2-0 after Chris Krider tucked in a rebound off a Zibanejad shot for a power play goal, his 10th tally of the playoffs.

Only 66 seconds after that, Tampa Bay trimmed the deficit on Nikita Kucherov's power play goal, the Lightning pulling within 2-1 entering the third period. "It was pretty calm," Palat said of the locker room between periods. "We knew we were playing a good game. We were shooting pucks. We had a chance. We just needed to keep going. And we did." Steven Stamkos lifted Tampa Bay level on a power play goal 82 seconds into the third period, setting the stage for the dramatic finish. —AFP