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# Govt assures it has enough strategic food reserves

## Assembly to hold special session to discuss fallout of Ukraine crisis

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** The National Assembly is scheduled to hold a special session today to debate the fallout of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on Kuwait and the Gulf. The government has given assurances that it has sufficient food stocks and warned it will punish those who raise prices artificially. Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said he received two requests from the government and 10 MPs to hold the special session, adding that the government demanded

that the debate be held behind closed doors.

The speaker said the government wants to discuss the current global situation and the implications of the military confrontation between Russia and Ukraine. He said he also received a motion signed by 10 lawmakers to hold a special session today to debate the implications of the Russia-Ukraine war and its impact on the Arabian Gulf and Kuwait.

The lawmakers said in their motion that they want to know the government's position on a possible increase in food prices, a shortage in the state's

food strategic stockpiles and preparations for the possibility of nuclear pollution from nuclear plants. MP Abdullah Al-Turaiji, one of the signatories of the motion, said he believes there is no need to hold the session behind closed doors and the government should state its opinions publicly.

Meanwhile, Minister of Commerce and Industry Fahad Al-Shuraian said the government has prepared the necessary strategic plans to ensure the continuity of the flow of commodities and foodstuff to the domestic market and the stability of their

prices amid global fears of disruptions of supplies as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The minister said in a statement that the state has huge strategic stocks of basic food and consumer goods spread across the country's various governorates. He said supply chains to the Gulf and Kuwait have not been affected by the war. He said that the ministry's emergency teams are monitoring the markets round the clock to ensure that prices are not artificially raised, adding that legal measures will be taken against violators.

### News in brief

#### Power grid 'ready' for summer

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait is "ready" to provide adequate electricity to meet peak demand in the summer months, Energy Minister Mohammad Al-Fares said yesterday, citing new strategies put in place to handle the load on the national power grid. Fares said a well-trained national workforce is ready to deal with any stresses to the power system. He said his ministry is also working to ensure distribution networks are well prepared for the load. — KUNA

#### 13 soldiers killed in Syria attack

**DAMASCUS:** Thirteen soldiers died yesterday in an attack on a military bus in the Syrian desert, state news agency SANA said, with a war monitor blaming the Islamic State group. A "terrorist attack" with multiple weapons yesterday afternoon targeted the bus, "killing 13, including officers, and wounding 18 others", SANA reported. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said an IS group cell carried out the attack in the Palmyra desert. — AFP

#### At least 6 killed in US tornado

**WASHINGTON:** Four adults and two children were killed when a tornado hit Madison County in the US state of Iowa on Saturday, officials said. At least four other adults were injured in the tornado that caused "widespread damage to both homes and properties", the county's emergency management director told a press briefing. National Weather Service Des Moines tweeted at 7:30 pm (0130 GMT Sunday) that "the worst is over for central Iowa". — AFP

#### Zionists kill Palestinian teen

**JERUSALEM:** Zionist police shot dead a Palestinian teenager yesterday morning at the Bab Huta Gate in Jerusalem's Old City, Zionist police said. The teen was identified only as a 19-year-old resident of east Jerusalem. The Old City is in the Zionist-annexed eastern part of Jerusalem, which Palestinians claim as the capital of their future state. The Bab Huta Gate leads to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third-holiest site. — AFP

#### MSF workers kidnapped in Yemen

**DUBAI:** An armed group has kidnapped two foreigners working with Doctors Without Borders (MSF) in Yemen's east, a government source said yesterday, as the charity confirmed it had "lost contact" with some staff. "An armed group kidnapped two MSF workers, one a German national and the other Mexican, in Hadramawt," a Yemeni interior ministry source said, adding a "military campaign" was underway to track down the kidnapers. — AFP

## Man arrested over killing of Kuwaiti family

**KUWAIT:** Police arrested the prime suspect in the killing of three members of a Kuwaiti family in Ardiya recently, the interior ministry announced. The suspect is an Indian who was arrested in

Sulaibiya following investigations after he was identified using CCTV camera footage from nearby homes.

Police found KD 300 in cash plus gold the suspect is believed to have stolen from the house after allegedly stabbing to death the three victims - a couple and their daughter. The suspect was taken to the authorities where he faces premeditated murder charges, the interior ministry indicated in a statement.

According to media reports, the victims, an 80-year-old man, his 50-year-old wife and their 18-year-old daughter were discovered dead at their

house, each with multiple stab wounds. Their Ethiopian maid, who worked at their home part-time, was initially apprehended by the authorities, but was later released.

Security officials had earlier ruled out theft after gold and other valuables were found intact at the property, but later discovered that gold and KD 300 in cash were missing. The crime was discovered by the woman's brother, who discovered the bodies at their home, a security source told local media, and initial investigations revealed that the crime had occurred four days earlier.

## Bid to evacuate Ukrainian port city fails again

**KYIV:** A fresh attempt by Ukraine's besieged port city of Mariupol to evacuate its civilians failed again yesterday as Moscow and Kyiv traded blame for ceasefire breaches for a second consecutive day. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, now into an eleventh day, has seen more than 1.5 million people flee the country, in what the UN has called "Europe's fastest growing refugee crisis since World War II".

Pope Francis yesterday deplored the "rivers of blood and tears" flowing in Ukraine, as Washington cited "very credible reports" that Russia committed war crimes by deliberately attacking civilians. Hundreds of civilians have been killed and thousands wounded, with hundreds of thousands of mostly women and children pouring into neighboring countries such as Poland, Romania or Moldova for refuge.

After the West imposed unprecedented sanctions against businesses, banks and billionaires in a bid to choke off the Russian economy, US-based card

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STOYANKA, Ukraine: A Ukrainian serviceman looks through binoculars towards the town of Stoyanka yesterday at a checkpoint before the last bridge on the road that connects Stoyanka with Kyiv. — AFP

## TechWorks brings dreams of Jordan inventors to life

**AMMAN:** In the age of COVID, Jordanian mechanical engineer Saliba Taimeh pondered how to deal with one contaminated everyday surface: The handrails of escalators in shopping malls and transport hubs. He came up with a device to sterilize them with UV rays - and this is where TechWorks stepped in. A wealth of ideas would not have seen the light of day without TechWorks, a Jordanian platform aimed at bringing together youth, ideas and resources to jump-start innovations.

Set up in 2018, TechWorks says its mission is "to plug into entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystems" and turn ideas into reality. It is equipped with state-of-the-art technology such as 3D printers and affiliated with a foundation set up by Crown Prince Hussein. Last year, it attracted about 100 inventors and startup companies, enabling them to produce prototypes quickly and at low cost.

Taimeh, 39, said TechWorks "provided me with every support, back-up, advice and guidance" to help perfect the sterilizing device, after 23 attempts over almost two years. His invention sterilizes the handrails of escalators "from all kinds of viruses, such as coronavirus and bacteria," he said. After contacting several international companies, a German firm specializing in health and safety in

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AMMAN: Saliba Taimeh, a 39-year-old Jordanian mechanical engineer and inventor, holds a demo of his ultraviolet radiation sterilization device at the TechWorks digital fabrication lab on Feb 20, 2022. — AFP

## Saudi lifts most COVID curbs

**RIYADH:** Saudi Arabia said Saturday it was lifting most COVID restrictions including social distancing in public spaces and quarantine for vaccinated arrivals, moves that could facilitate the arrival of Muslim pilgrims. The decision includes suspending "social distancing measures in all open and closed places" including mosques, the official Saudi Press Agency cited an interior ministry source as saying.

Masks will only be required in closed spaces, according to the decision, which came into effect on Saturday. The Saudi kingdom, which is home to Islam's two holiest places in Makkah and Madinah, will no longer require vaccinated travelers to provide a negative PCR or rapid test before their arrival in the kingdom or to quarantine, SPA said.

The COVID-19 pandemic has hugely disrupted Muslim pilgrimages, which are usually key revenue earners for the kingdom, bringing in some \$12 billion annually. Hosting the pilgrimages is a matter of prestige for Saudi rulers, for whom the

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## Local

# Kuwait Amir receives Crown Prince, state officials

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Dar Al-Yamamah yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and Foreign Minister, State Minister for Cabinet Affairs and acting Defense Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Speaker Ghanem at Bayan Palace. His Highness Sheikh Mishal also received His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, as well as Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil, Minister of Electricity and Water, Sustainable Energy, Acting Minister of Interior Dr Mohammad Al-Fares. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and Foreign Minister, State Minister for Cabinet Affairs and acting Defense Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem.

## Zain Group enters strategic cooperation with GCC operators to address environmental challenges

**BARCELONA/KUWAIT:** Zain Group signed a MOU at the Mobile World Congress 2022 in Barcelona along with stc Group, e& formerly known as Etisalat Group, Bateco, du, and Omantel, aiming to accelerate and tighten cooperation to preserve and protect the environment and enhance climate change challenges as well as reduce the carbon footprint through operations. This memorandum comes within the cooperation of major telecom operators in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries to improve the ICT industry and activate their roles in facing environmental challenges, focusing on climate change and advancing the regional sustainability agenda.

The MOU aims to accelerate cooperation on climate change and highlight the importance of collaboration to preserve and protect the environment as well as to maintain a sustainable economy. The actions involved include a better understanding of the carbon footprint across operations. The memorandum also seeks to strengthen work across strategic partners and policy makers around necessary measures that contribute to avoiding the climate crisis and achieving sustainable growth.

Jennifer Suleiman, Zain Group Chief Sustainability Officer, said: "Climate change and reducing our carbon footprint are material to Zain's strategic objectives across our markets. This collaboration between like-minded operators is a transformative step towards advancing sustainability across the GCC and is in line with our sustainability ambition of providing meaningful connectivity leading to systemic change."

"This memorandum is an extension of KSA's vision in strengthening partnership between all sectors to preserve and sustain the economic, social and environmental resources achieved by the Gulf countries for future generations" said Abdullah Abdulrahman Alkanhl, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer.

"As a leading national company, stc has sensed this importance for a long time, and launched programs for sustainability and preservation of the environment. One of the most important results of which was a decrease in paper consumption to 50 percent, and a reduction in water use by 40 percent. Today we will work according to this memorandum to transfer these experiences to our partners in the sector from the companies of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries," added Alkanhl.

Salem Al-Mannai, Vice President of Technology Infrastructure and in charge of the climate change file at e&, said: "Through this memorandum, the group seeks to strengthen its partnerships to confront climate change and make all possible efforts to motivate other sectors to join these endeavors aimed at accelerating the achievement of carbon neutrality in the possible time frame in addition to our commitment to the GSMA initiative: to move the entire mobile industry to carbon neutral by 2050."

"The group also seeks, through this memorandum, to exchange experiences and best practices with regional counterparts regarding the pioneering role of the technology sector, which would become a major enabler to limit climate change," Mannai added.

ments reached on this acute humanitarian issue", the Kremlin said. But the governor of the eastern region Donetsk, Pavlo Kirlenko, said "the column to evacuate the population could not leave Mariupol... because the Russians regrouped their forces and started to bombard the city". "It is extremely dangerous to get people out in these conditions," he said, adding that humanitarian aid from Zaporozhzhia also could not reach the people.

Very few refugees from the port city made it out on Saturday, but one family - who did not give their names - arrived in the central city of Dnipro and recounted their harrowing experience. "We stayed in the basement for seven days with no heating, electricity or Internet and ran out of food and water. We think we might be the only people to get out," one said. "On the road, we saw there were bodies everywhere, Russians and Ukrainians. There was so much damage to the city. We saw that people had been buried in their basements."

Elsewhere, Russian forces have been inching closer to the capital Kyiv in an assault that has become ever-more indiscriminate - and deadly. At Bilogordoka on the outskirts of Kyiv, Ukrainian troops have planted explosives on what they say is the last intact bridge standing in the way of Russian forces advancing down the western flank of the capital. "This is the last bridge, we're defending it and not letting them break through to Kyiv," said a fighter who gave his name as "Casper".

The former paratrooper who joined Ukraine's volunteer territorial defense said his team will blow up the bridge if the Russians advance and "make sure to sink as many enemy tanks as we can while we do it." Dozens of civilians have been killed in Chernihiv. Those remaining live in craters or among ruins. "There were corpses all over the ground," a man who gave his name only as Sergei told AFP, as air raid sirens wailed. "They were queuing here for the pharmacy that's just there, and they're all dead."

AFP reporters saw scenes of devastation - despite Moscow's insistence it is not targeting civilian areas. Rejecting Moscow's denials, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told CNN that "we've seen very credible reports of deliberate attacks on civilians, which would constitute a war crime". — AFP



**BARCELONA:** Executives of major GCC telecom operators in Barcelona.

Commenting on this cooperation, Shaikh Bader bin Rashid Al Khalifa, General Manager Corporate Communications and Sustainability at Bateco, said: "Bateco attaches great importance to environmental sustainability and reducing the carbon footprint. We have started implementing initiatives in line with the company's aims of becoming an environmentally friendly entity and achieve our corporate sustainability goals. Bateco's most notable accomplishment is the launch of Bateco Solar Park, which contributes to the production of clean and renewable energy to support with running the company's operations. We are eager to continue with our environmental initiatives to help create a more sustainable future."

Salem Al-Blooshi, Chief Technology Officer, du said: "We, at du, recognize the crucial role played by ICT in strengthening the digital economy and ensuring long-term sustainable growth in the GCC region. We have put in place sustainability objectives that aim to guide us towards achieving our vision in alignment with the region's leadership vision. As forerunners in digital innovation along

with our strategic partners, we are committed to work towards a truly sustainable future with and for our stakeholders."

Said Al-Ajmi, Vice President Operations, of Omantel, said: "At Omantel, we have great concern towards sustainability, and our focus includes three main pillars: the economic pillar, the social pillar, in addition to the environmental pillar. We are proud to be one of the first telecommunication companies in the region to issue a sustainability report covering performance in all these aspects, as we issued our first report in 2012, in addition, we launched several initiatives aimed at reducing our impact on the environment by building on the digital transformation and automation and benefiting from it, in developing and transforming our procedures and processes."

"We are pleased to sign this agreement with stc and the other Gulf telecom companies to exchange knowledge and experiences, emphasizing our quest to preserve the environment and play the expected role in combating climate change and reducing the carbon footprint of our operations," Ajmi concluded.

## Bid to evacuate Ukrainian port...

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payment giants Visa and Mastercard were the latest companies to announce they would suspend operations in Russia. World leaders vowed further punitive action if Vladimir Putin failed to change course but the Russian leader has equated global sanctions with a declaration of war and has warned that Kyiv is "putting in question the future of Ukrainian statehood".

With a wary eye on Russia's nuclear stocks, NATO allies have so far rebuffed Ukraine's calls for a no-fly zone. Putin has threatened "colossal and catastrophic consequences not only for Europe but also the whole world" if a no-fly zone is set up. In the latest sign that sanctions were biting, Moscow said yesterday that retailers in Russia will restrict sales of essential goods including bread, rice and flour to limit black market speculation.

Cracking down on dissent at home, Russia detained around 2,500 people across the country for staging protests against its military assault on Ukraine. The Ukrainian military said yesterday it was engaged in "fierce battles" with Russian forces for the control of borders at the southern city of Mykolaiv and Chernihiv in the north. "The main efforts are focused on defending the city of Mariupol," it said in a Facebook post, adding an operation by Ukrainian forces was also underway in the eastern part of the Donetsk region.

Efforts Saturday to get people out of Mariupol - one of the most ferocious scenes of war - collapsed almost immediately with both sides accusing each other of breaching a ceasefire agreement. A fresh attempt yesterday again failed. The strategic city of Mariupol on the Azov Sea has for days been under siege and without electricity, food and water, with stop-start ceasefires.

In a telephone call with French President Emmanuel Macron, Putin blamed Kyiv for not keeping to "agree-

## TechWorks brings dreams of Jordan...

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public places signed up to manufacture the "Brigid Box". Weighing in at 7.2 kg, it can be installed in less than 15 minutes.

Taimeh's success story is only one of many. High school student Zain Abu Rumman, 18, has developed a tracking device for elderly patients and people with special needs, worn like a watch or around the neck. The "SPS Watch" has a battery that lasts eight days and is resistant to water, heat and breakage. "The device can send alerts to the mobile phone of a family member through a special application in case the person wearing it falls or is hurt, or if he strays from a certain place," Abu Rumman said. It took him two-and-a-half years to perfect and he has struck a production accord with a Chinese company.

Omar Khader, 26, works for "Jazri Studio", an industrial design company which has devised a "smart" plug to protect children from electric shocks. "TechWorks has advanced equipment, engineers and technicians that help us convert our ideas into successful products," he said.

Other designers, like 32-year-old civil engineer

Malik Nour, still have a long and expensive way to go to refine their products. Nour's brainchild is the "Pikler Triangle", designed as a safe and environmentally friendly children's toy. He hopes to attract Swedish furniture giant IKEA to take on his products, which he is already selling over social media to customers in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, under the label of "Fares World", named after his child.

Ismail Hakki, executive director of TechWorks, said its aim is to provide "a creative environment and all the necessary resources to support and enable young people to transform their projects from a mere idea into a real product". The doors of the project's "Fabrication Lab", or FabLab, are "open to all: we support students, entrepreneurs, and startups", he said. FabLab also provides services to doctors and hospitals in the fields of facial restoration, digital dentistry, face masks and sterilization.

At the request of a doctor, it transformed the chest x-ray of a patient with a malignant tumor close to the heart into a three-dimensional model of the patient's chest making it easier to operate. FabLab touts many successes, including a "smart home" which allows a mobile phone user to control electrical appliances inside the house from afar by turning on heating or cooling systems, and a piano keyboard to help a blind musician play. It plans to open two more branches in Jordan to provide technology training and help for school and university students. — AFP

most powerful source of political legitimacy.

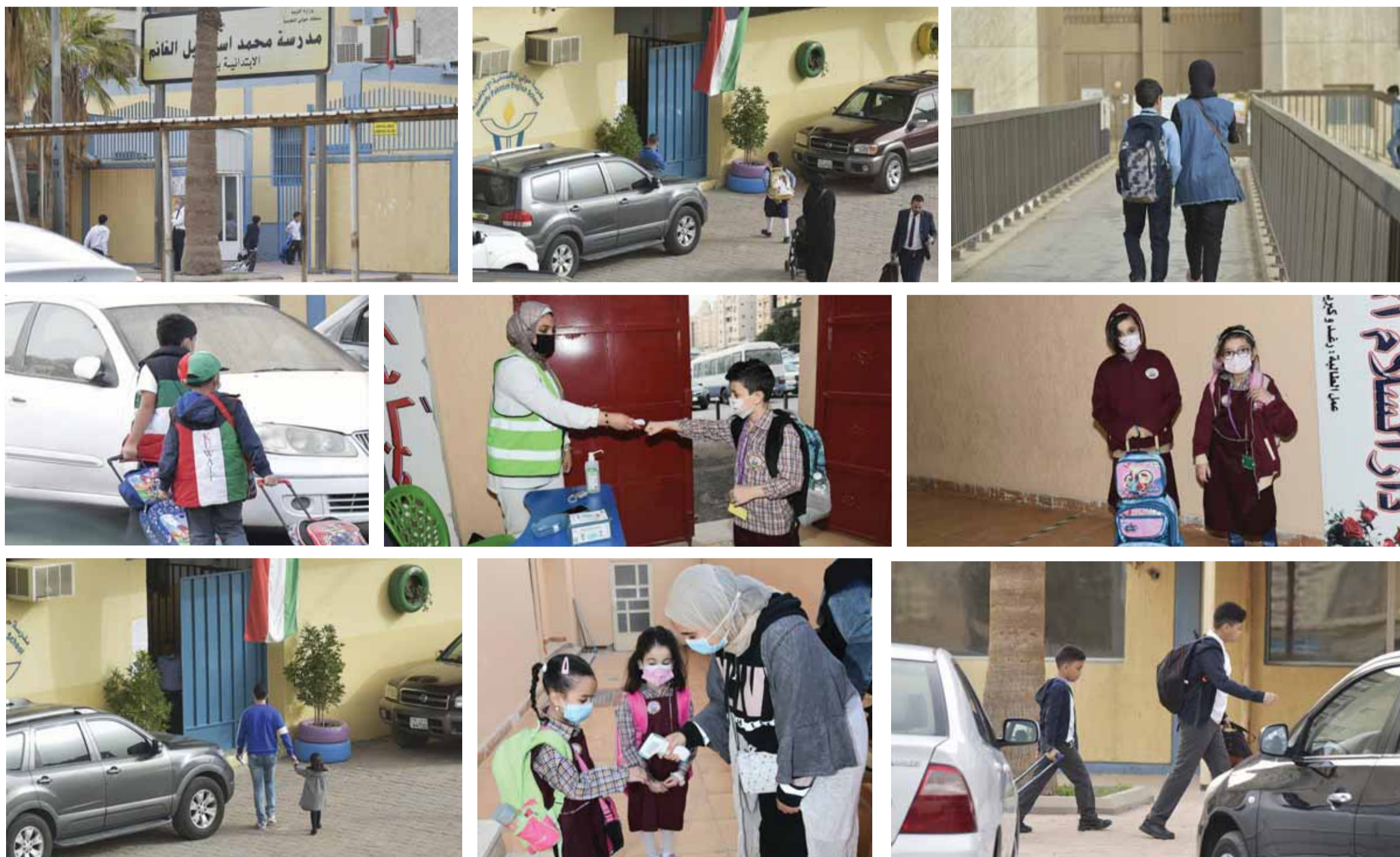
In 2021, the coronavirus outbreak forced Saudi authorities to dramatically downsize the hajj for a second year, and just 60,000 fully vaccinated citizens and residents of the kingdom took part. Since the start of the pandemic, Saudi Arabia has registered more than 746,000 coronavirus cases, 9,000 of them fatal, in a population of some 34 million. — AFP

## Saudi lifts most COVID...

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custodianship of Islam's holiest sites is their

# Students back to school for start of second semester



KUWAIT: Students returned to public and Arabic private schools around Kuwait for the start of the second semester of the 2021/2022 academic year. The Ministry of Education has maintained the two-group system for students until further notice. Under the system, each class of over 20 students is split into two groups that alternate in going to school every other day. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh



KUWAIT: Traffic jams returned to major highways around Kuwait after the end of the long national holidays, which coincided with the return of students back to school. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

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Kuwait Airways CEO Maen Razouqi

## Kuwait Airways launches 'Platinum', the highest category of Oasis Club

**KUWAIT:** As part of its continuous endeavor to provide distinguished services to its valued customers, Kuwait Airways has announced the launching of the Platinum Card Category, for Oasis Club members, which is the highest level among the Oasis Club cards.

In this regard, Kuwait Airways Chief Executive Officer, Engineer Maen Razouqi stated, "Kuwait Airways is pleased to announce to its dear customers the launching of its latest services, which is the Platinum Card for Oasis Club Members. This category of cards includes numerous exclusive benefits for its holders, most importantly of which is priority for check-in and arrival of their baggage and extra baggage allowance. Moreover, Platinum Card holders can have access to Kuwait Airways lounges in Kuwait and across all destinations to which the Blue Bird operates and in addition to two accompanying guests, as well as a date change waiver and various different services for its holders."

Razouqi added, "The services provided by the Oasis Club to Kuwait Airways customers are an important element in contributing to the success of the entire work system of the Blue Bird and distinguishing it from other airlines, where Oasis Card holders can enjoy diverse and exceptional services."

Meanwhile, the Director of Customer Service Department, Meshal Al-Mutairi said, "We are pleased to launch the Platinum Card for Oasis Club members, which is the highest tier level in the Oasis Club, as it includes distinct and different services which are aimed at assisting customers to the fullest. The Oasis Club team has worked on every minute detail that passengers aspire to have that will ensure that traveling on the Blue Bird aircraft is comfortable, effortless, and pleasant. Kuwait Airways has also been keen to design a card that suits the customer as they are distinguished, and the Platinum Card is characterized by a modern design that combines the national carrier and the Kuwait Towers of the State of Kuwait, which also represents a close link with loyal customers over the previous years."

Mutairi explained that the Oasis Club is the largest loyalty program in the State of Kuwait and the most eminent in the Gulf region as it has won numerous awards and certificates among major companies and from Mastercard and Visa which indicates the extent of its prominence, the excellence of the program and the confidence of its partners, pointing out that Kuwait Airways establishes among its objectives the widespread presence of these cards bearing the logo of the national carrier with all Kuwait Airways customers.

## DHAMAN organizes health check day for the Indian community in Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** As a part of its continuous efforts to encourage and initiate the culture of the health prevention, Health Assurance Hospitals Company (DHAMAN), in cooperation with the Embassy of India in Kuwait, organized a health check day for the Indian community at DHAMAN Primary Healthcare Centers (PHCs) in Hawally, Farwaniya and Dhajeej on Saturday.

On this occasion, DHAMAN CEO Thamer Arab said that this activity comes within the framework of community outreach carried out by DHAMAN with all segments of society, specifically the residents benefiting from the company's services in order to improve the healthcare indicators in Kuwait and support the efforts of the Ministry of Health in all fields, adding that similar activities will be organized in cooperation with other communities in Kuwait, in continu-

ation of the prevention and community awareness activities carried out by DHAMAN.

Arab added that DHAMAN adopts the principle of prevention and community awareness as one of the most important pillars of the integrated Health Maintenance Organization (HMO), which the company follows as the first entity in the Middle East to offer its services according to this model by providing the health assurance certificate with an integrated network of healthcare centers, hospitals and various services such as laboratories, pharmacies, radiology, as well as others related to consultation, diagnosis, treatment and prevention to raise healthcare indicators in Kuwait.

Arab added that DHAMAN's engagement with article 18 residents and their families is based on them being the pri-

mary segment for which the company will provide health services, indicating that activating the company's services will reflect positively on citizens, who will receive better services due to decreased traffic at health centers and hospitals of the Ministry of Health, in addition, reducing the pressure on the facilities of the Ministry of Health will lead to improving overall quality of healthcare services for both of citizens and residents.

Arab lauded the cooperation of the Indian Embassy in Kuwait with DHAMAN and their response to the Company's initiative to organize the Health Check Day for the Indian Community, and their encouragement of members of the community to participate in this activity.

The Health Check Day witnessed a large turnout from the Indian Community in Kuwait to take advantage of this service, which included medical examinations, blood tests and other services. The participants commended the level of services provided and the efficiency of the medical staff, expressing appreciation to DHAMAN centers for the efforts to achieve success in this health activity.

# Plantation event at Jahra Nature Reserve



**KUWAIT:** The Environment Public Authority organized a planting event at Jahra Nature Reserve yesterday as part of the Kuwait Environment Week. The Reserve will host plantation events every day until March 12th. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat





Mexico's women police squad on protest frontline

## US 'working actively' on deal for Polish fighter jets to Ukraine

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SEOUL: Supporters of South Korea's presidential candidate Yoon Suk-yeol of the main opposition People Power Party cheer during an election campaign in Seoul, ahead of the March 9 presidential election. —AFP

# South Korea to pick new president

## Anti-feminist or foul-mouthed liberal?

SEOUL: South Korea will elect a new president Wednesday and voters face a stark choice: a feminist-bashing conservative or a scandal-plagued liberal? So far, it's a dead heat. The two frontrunners, dour former prosecutor Yoon Suk-yeol of the People Power party and the incumbent Democratic party's maverick ex-governor Lee Jae-myung are trapped in a neck-and-neck race to become the next leader of Asia's fourth largest economy.

And what propels one of them to victory will not be their populist campaign promises or North Korea policy, analysts say. Instead, it's what the papers have dubbed a "cycle of revenge" in South Korea's famously adversarial politics. "This election is a battle between two opposite forces—the progressives and conservatives," said political analyst Park Sang-byoung.

South Korean presidents are allowed by law to serve a single five year term, and every living former president has been investigated and jailed for corruption after leaving office. Outgoing President Moon Jae-in himself swept to power in 2017 after his disgraced predecessor Park Geun-hye was impeached over an influence-peddling scandal that also put a Samsung heir behind bars.

Now, Park's conservatives are eager for revenge. Ironically, their candidate Yoon was chief prosecutor under Moon and pursued Park when she was impeached—an experience that boosted his profile and popularity and pushed him to enter politics.

### Realpolitik

South Korean politics has seen a "deepening divi-

sion" in recent years, with elections more focused on party rivalry than policy, analyst Yoo Jung-hoon told AFP. "Many conservatives still hold a grudge over the impeachment of Park Geun-hye," he said.

Yoon is appealing to these disgruntled voters, offering a chance at "revenge" for Park's ousting—even going so far as to threaten to investigate Moon for unspecified "irregularities". "We should do it," Yoon said last month, referring to prosecuting Moon and his administration.

His comments earned a rare rebuke from the presidential Blue House and the ruling Democratic party's candidate Lee said they indicated his rival was not fit to lead the nation. But analysts say it's just political business as usual in Seoul.

"The Moon administration has prosecuted many former officials in the name of rooting out deep-rooted corruption," Shin Yul, a political science professor at Myongji University. "I expect the same standard to be applied under the Yoon government should wrongdoings be found," he said.

Yoon's wife in January gave an unwitting insight into the realpolitik to come, claiming enemies and critics would be prosecuted if her husband won because that's "the nature of power," according to taped comments released after a court battle.

### Where's the policy?

Polls show that voters' top concerns this election cycle are skyrocketing house prices in the capital Seoul, stagnant growth, and stubborn youth unemployment—but campaigning has been dominated by mud-slinging.

bat the Russian air force.

"We are satisfied with the already arranged supplies of anti-tank weapons and ammunition," Kuleba told a small group of journalists at the border. "It's no secret that the highest demand that we have is in fighter jets, attack aircraft, and air-defence systems," he said.

"We need... big air-defence systems to ensure the safety of our skies. If we lose the skies, there will be much more blood on the ground," Kuleba said. He also criticized NATO's rejection of implementing a no-fly zone over Ukraine, an idea aimed at denying Russian aircraft free movement to conduct attacks and transport troops.

NATO said Friday that the idea would bring the alliance into direct conflict with Russia and risked expanding the war. "I think it's a sign of weakness," Kuleba said as he and Blinken stood together on the border. "It's the people of Ukraine who will pay the price for the reluctance of NATO to act," he added.

The top Ukraine diplomat expressed gratitude for global coordination in placing hefty sanctions on Russia in support of Ukraine. But he expressed concern that countries would grow weary of implementing those sanctions, especially as they also have an economic impact on the countries enforcing them.

War rivals, China and Russia have moved closer than ever since Xi Jinping took power nearly a decade ago, driven by their shared desire to confront US power.

But China seems to have been caught flat-footed by Russia's military offensive, fierce Ukrainian resistance, and the volume of the resulting international anti-Kremlin backlash. Beijing, which has long demanded respect for territorial integrity in border disputes with its own neighbours, has been forced into rhetorical contortions on Ukraine to avoid upsetting Russia.

While maintaining lip service to national sovereignty, China has insisted that Moscow's security concerns regarding Ukraine and the broader expansion of the US-led North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) are valid. It has refused to condemn Moscow, with Chinese government spokespersons admonishing foreign journalists at press conferences

Lee, a former mayor and provincial governor, has a slew of fresh policy offerings—from universal basic income to free school uniforms—but they've been overshadowed by media coverage of his scandals. He is being scrutinised over a suspect land development deal, with two key witnesses to the case having killed themselves.

He was forced to start his campaign by apologising for a profanity-laden family phone call, his wife was accused of misappropriating public funds, and he's been dogged by rumours of mafia-links.

His rival Yoon has himself made a series of gaffes, most recently having to delete a "tone deaf" tweet on Ukraine which included a tangerine with an angry face drawn on—a bizarre reference to that country's Orange Revolution.

Moreover, Yoon's most memorable policy is an offer to abolish the gender equality ministry, on the basis that—despite voluminous data to the contrary—South Korean women do not suffer "systemic gender discrimination," he says.

Yoon is more hawkish than Lee on North Korea, threatening a pre-emptive strike on the South's nuclear-armed neighbour if needed. But, despite a record-breaking seven weapons tests in a month in January, North Korea is not a major deciding factor in the vote, analysts say.

"The North's launches have minimal impact in elections because South Korea's competition for supremacy with the North is long over," said analyst Yoo. "South Korean elections have revolved around political rivalry rather than policy issues for many years." —AFP



KORCZOWA, Poland: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba speak to the media after meeting at the Ukrainian-Polish border crossing in Korczowa, Poland. —AFP

"Ukraine will win this war anyway, because this is the people's war for their land... The question is the price," Kuleba said. "If our partners continue to take bold systemic decisions to step up economic and political pressure... if they continue to provide us with necessary weapons, the price will be lower," he said.

However, he said: "If anyone in the world one day starts feeling sanctions fatigue, for example, then more people in Ukraine will be dying, suffering." —AFP

who refer to the assault on Ukraine as an "invasion".

### Bewildered Beijing

At the same time, censors on the tightly controlled Chinese internet have struggled to shape domestic public discourse, initially allowing vociferous posts that tracked Beijing's anti-US rhetoric, before pivoting to scrub lewd messages objectifying women fleeing Ukraine as well as anti-war sentiment.

"You could see the bewilderment in the early statements," said Sergey Radchenko, a professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. Failure to finesse the situation puts Beijing at risk of being labelled a Putin enabler, potentially alienating Western trading partners and endangering the tenuous balance of links China has cultivated in recent years with both Russia and Ukraine.

The situation has effectively paralysed China,

## At New York protest, thousands call for Western intervention

NEW YORK: Thousands of people gathered Saturday in Times Square in New York in support of Ukraine, demanding the United States, NATO or the European Union intervene to stop the unfolding war. Some were Ukrainian-American, while others were just New Yorkers who wanted to express their opposition to Russia's invasion of the former Soviet republic. The iconic New York square, known for its giant billboards, was a sea of blue and yellow, the colors of the Ukrainian flag. Protesters of all ages waved signs for hours calling for the end of the war, a no-fly zone over Ukraine and to simply "stop Putin," with some photo collages comparing Russian President Vladimir Putin to Hitler.

The rally easily filled Times Square, which extends for several blocks in the heart of Manhattan. Cars parked along the edge of the square revved their engines, as people stood out of the sun roofs waving Ukrainian flags.

Protester Tania Schneider, 32, called for "more military support, more humanitarian aid, medical aid, more ammunition, just support in general." "NATO needs to get involved. (The) European Union should get involved," she told AFP.

Another demonstrator was Vasyli Koval, 31. The web developer, who had left his parents in Ukraine, came to Times Square to demand that Western nations "close the sky" over his home country to Russian fighter jets. He urged the United States and NATO to act. In tears, Tatiana Dyakun, a 38-year-old Ukrainian who has lived in the United States for six years, denounced the Russian invasion of Ukraine as "terrorism" and a "crime." "We ask for help... Please don't wait!" she said to AFP, adding she was grateful for the "huge support" already coming from Western countries.

When asked if she thought Europe and the United States should intervene in Ukraine, she said "yes," even if it risked a third world war. "It's going to be anyway, tomorrow or after tomorrow," she said. Many of the slogans on the signs at the protest were in response to Putin's statement that an attempt by any country to impose a no-fly zone over Ukraine would be considered "participation in an armed conflict." Kyiv's request to impose a no-fly zone was rejected by both NATO and the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley. Milley said doing so would mean taking on Russian air forces. Protests in support of Ukraine blossomed all over the United States Saturday, with sister rallies taking place in Miami and Los Angeles. —AFP

## Blinken meets Ukraine FM Kuleba in show of support

KORCZOWA, Poland: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met Ukraine Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba on the Poland-Ukraine border Saturday in a show of solidarity on day 10 of Russia's invasion of its pro-Western neighbour. The two spoke for 45 minutes under high security at a border crossing full of refugees fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine, discussing more arms for Kyiv's military and how to keep up global pressure on Moscow.

"I hope the people of Ukraine will be able to see this as a clear manifestation that we have friends who literally stand by us," Kuleba said after they met at the Korczowa-Krakovets border crossing under high security.

Ukraine is "going to prevail", Blinken said. Kuleba said he had urged his US counterpart to boost the supply of arms to his country, especially fighter jets and heavy air-defence systems to com-

## Ukraine war tests China's 'no limits' bond with Russia

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin toasted a friendship with "no limits" at a warm meeting in February, but just one month later that bond is being tested by the war in Ukraine.

With international outrage and sanctions mounting against Russia, Beijing is scrambling to avoid being tainted by association with Moscow while also maintaining their increasingly close ties. Once bitter Cold

according to Richard Ghiasy, an expert at the Hague Centre for Strategic Studies. "Security interests virtually always trump economic interests" in China's calculus, and it will not fundamentally shift toward a more pro-Ukraine stance, he told AFP.

Russia is "a giant, nuclear-armed and resource-rich neighbour" that China won't risk agitating, Ghiasy said. Beijing's difficult position is compounded by the plight of its 6,000 citizens in Ukraine, who are now being gradually evacuated by road and rail to neighbouring countries along with other displaced persons. More than a dozen governments urged their citizens to leave Ukraine by mid-February, but China refrained from doing the same. It instead urged its citizens to "remain calm" and stay at home even as Russian troops moved onto Ukrainian soil, and was forced to cancel a proposed airlift after Ukraine closed its airspace to civilian planes. —AFP

## International

# US 'working actively' on deal for Polish fighter jets to Ukraine

## Weapons, ammunition and funds have poured into Ukraine from Western allies

CHISINAU, Moldova: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said yesterday that the United States was "working actively" on a deal with Poland to supply Ukraine with jets. "Can't speak to a timeline but I can just say we're looking at it very, very actively," he told reporters during a visit to Moldova.

Blinken said the US was "in very active conversation with Ukrainian officials... to get an up-to-the-minute assessment of their needs". "As we get that assessment, we are working on seeing what we and allies and partners can deliver" to bolster Kyiv's defenses against the Russian invasion, he said.

"We are looking actively now at the question of airplanes that Poland may provide to Ukraine and looking at how we might be able to backfill should Poland decide to supply those planes." Multiple US news outlets reported Saturday that US officials told them of the possible deal, in which Poland would send Soviet-era aircraft to Ukraine in return for American F-16 fighter jets.

Since Russia invaded 10 days ago, the economic and humanitarian toll of the war has spiraled and officials have reported hundreds of civilians killed. Weapons, ammunition and funds have

poured into Ukraine from Western allies.

"We are working with the Poles on this issue and consulting with the rest of our NATO allies," a White House official was quoted as saying in reports by the Wall Street Journal and NBC. Kyiv has urged the West to boost military assistance to the besieged country, including warplanes, with President Volodymyr Zelensky pleading for Eastern European neighbours to provide Russian-made planes that his pilots are trained to fly.

The Ukrainian leader had addressed US lawmakers by video call Saturday, pleading for further funding and an embargo on Russian oil imports. The Wall Street Journal's report cited two people on the call, who said Zelensky requested fighter jets after Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell asked the Ukrainian president what he needed most.

US legislators promised an additional \$10 billion aid package, but the White House has so far ruled out an oil ban, fearing it would ratchet up prices and hurt American consumers already stung by record inflation.

The Journal said US officials mentioned a number of challenging practical questions, including getting the planes to Ukraine, and that the deal



CHISINAU: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (L) and US Ambassador to Moldova Kent Doyle Logsdon participate in a Civil Society roundtable in Chisinau, yesterday. —AFP

would require White House approval and congressional action. Washington last week autho-

rised \$350 million of military equipment for Kyiv—the largest such package in US history. —AFP



### Ukrainian leader plead for funding and embargo on oil

#### Latest developments

## Russia's war in Ukraine

KYIV: Here are the latest developments in Russia's war in Ukraine:

#### Pierce battles

Ukraine's military says it is fighting "fierce battles" with Russian forces on the edge of the southern city of Mykolaiv, which controls the road to the key Black Sea city of Odessa in the west.

President Volodymyr Zelensky warns that Russia is preparing to shell the historic port near the Romanian and Moldovan borders.

#### Chernihiv pummelled

Dozens of civilians are being killed in the battle for Chernihiv in the north, with those who remain in the city living in craters or among the ruins. AFP has witnessed scenes of devastation.

#### Deadly and indiscriminate

The Russian push on Kyiv is also becoming more deadly and indiscriminate despite Moscow's denials that it is targeting civilian areas. People are fleeing the towns of Bucha and Irpin as they are pounded by air strikes.

#### Refugee crisis: Fastest since WWII

Ukraine is the fastest growing refugee crisis since World War II, says the UN. More than 1.5 million people have fled into neighbouring countries since Russia invaded on February 26.

#### New Mariupol ceasefire

The besieged Ukrainian city of Mariupol — which has neither power nor water — attempts again to evacuate civilians after a ceasefire on Saturday broke down.

Doctors Without Borders call the situation in the battered Sea of Azov port "catastrophic".

#### Polish jets deal

The United States says it is working on a deal with Poland to supply Ukraine with fighter jets that its pilots are trained to fly.

Zelensky had pleaded with former Warsaw Pact countries in Eastern Europe to give Ukraine Russian-made warplanes.

#### Russia limits essential food sales

Russian shops are told to limit sales of essential foodstuffs to counter black market speculation as Western sanctions bite.

#### 1,000 held at Russia protests

More than 1,000 people are held across Russia after new protests against the war in Ukraine, bringing to 10,000 the number arrested since the invasion began, according to a monitor.

#### Zelensky's plea to US

Zelensky phones President Joe Biden after pressing US lawmakers for an embargo on Russian oil imports. The White House is against a ban for fear of driving up prices.

#### Putin: Ukraine could cease to exist

Russian President Vladimir Putin warns Ukraine it may cease to exist as a state if leaders "continue to do what they are doing". He also says countries imposing a no-fly zone over Ukraine will be considered combatants, while equating sanctions with a declaration of a war.

#### Visa and Mastercard ban

Credit card giants Visa and Mastercard refuse to do business with Moscow over the invasion of Ukraine but Russian banks say they will use China's UnionPay system.

#### Erdogan calls for ceasefire

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also talks with Putin and calls for an "urgent general ceasefire".

#### Media blackout

A host of international broadcasters, including the BBC and CNN, say they will stop reporting from Russia because of a new law threatening up to 15 years in jail for "fake news" about its invasion. —AFP

## Fears of Grozny and Aleppo haunt Ukrainian cities

PARIS: Images of devastation from the Ukrainian cities like Mariupol, Chernihiv and Kharkiv bring back memories of the bloody sieges of Aleppo in Syria and the Chechen capital Grozny, both razed on the orders of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

#### Aleppo

The Syrian regime backed by Russian air power retook the key rebel bastion of Aleppo in December 2016 after a siege whose final bloody weeks cost 1,867 lives.

Syria's economic capital had been divided between districts loyal to President Bashar al-Assad in the west and rebel-controlled areas in the east.

In September 2016 the regime launched its final campaign.

Russian warplanes bludgeoned rebel-held parts of Aleppo, which came under a blitz of barrel bombs, shells and rockets.

The regime took the whole ruined city in December as a horrified world looked on.

"Without Russia, nothing would have happened with Aleppo," said Alexei Malashenko, an analyst at the Carnegie Center in Moscow.

In an emotional appeal at the time, Samantha Power, the US envoy to the United Nations, asked Assad and his backers Russia and Iran: "Are you truly incapable of shame?"

## Canada urges citizens to leave Russia

MONTREAL, Canada: Canada called Saturday on its nationals to avoid all travel to Russia because of its invasion of Ukraine and on Canadians in Russia to leave the country. In an update to its travel advice, the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs recommended that its nationals "avoid all travel to Russia due to the impacts of the armed conflict with Ukraine."

"If you are in Russia, you should leave while commercial means are still available," the statement added. Ottawa had previously advised its citizens to avoid nonessential travel to Russia. In the travel advisory, the ministry said that sanctions on Moscow and Russia's response "may have an important impact on the availability and the provision of essential service. Flight availability is

becoming extremely limited."

The ministry also noted that Russia had passed a law on March 4 that "severely restricts free speech." The legislation punishes the publication of what it calls "fake news" about its invasion with jail terms of up to 15 years.

Foreign journalists and other media workers in the country "may face considerable risks," the advisory said. Ottawa urged Canadians in Russia to refrain from discussing the invasion, participating in protests or sharing or publishing information related to current events in Russia and Ukraine.

Canadians who wished to stay in Russia despite the travel advisory were warned they might have to stay "longer than expected" and could be affected by shortages of essential products and services. They also ran the risk of being unable to use their bank cards, and "should not depend on the Government of Canada to help you leave the country."

Canada, which has already levied many economic sanctions on Russia, "will continue to impose punitive sanctions on Putin and the oligarchs" so that



KYIV, Ukraine: Kyiv mayor Vitali Klitschko (R) and his brother Ukrainian heavyweight boxing world champion Wladimir Klitschko react on a check-point on Kyiv outskirts yesterday. —AFP

#### Grozny

The capital of Chechnya, a small republic in the Caucasus where separatists fought two wars against Moscow, was razed during the winter of 1999-2000 by Russian artillery and air strikes.

The bloody battle was ordered by then prime minister Putin, helping seal his rise from little-

known former KGB officer into Boris Yeltsin's successor on New Year's Eve 1999.

The UN at the time described Grozny as the most destroyed city in the world.

US rights group Human Rights Watch and Russia's Memorial group estimate the number of civilians killed in the siege at around 10,000. —AFP



Lviv, Ukraine: Displaced Ukrainians have lunch at the Resurrection New Athos Monastery in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv. —AFP

they understand their "monumental error," Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Friday, while announcing a European trip.

Trudeau is due to leave Ottawa yesterday to travel to London, Riga, Berlin and Warsaw to discuss support for Ukraine. —AFP

## Ukraine dominates social media info war with Russia

PARIS: Ukraine has succeeded in dominating social media in the first days since the Russian invasion, in an intensifying information war with Moscow that Kyiv so far appears to be winning, analysts say. Even as President Volodymyr Zelensky remains bunkered down in Kyiv amid heavy bombardment and the fear of assassination, his government has forced an all-out assault on social media to win supporters for their cause.

Zelensky's daily video addresses, usually published with English subtitles, have become viral sen-

sations, while the defence and foreign ministries tout the military resistance of Ukraine in snazzy graphics. Meanwhile, Ukrainians have posted videos showing the success of their forces that have become viral trends, including a Ukrainian missile shooting down a Russian helicopter and a Ukrainian farmer towing away captured Russian military hardware on his tractor.

Self-shot videos of Ukrainians sobbing amid the ruins of their towns after Russia stepped up bombardments have also gripped people around the world. More unverifiable viral claims have included the so-called "ghost of Kyiv", a flying ace said to have downed a dozen Russian warplanes, or the Kyiv woman who purportedly knocked out a Russian drone with a jar of pickled cucumbers.

"In the first phase of the conflict, in terms of international opinion, the Ukrainians are clearly ahead in information," said Baptiste Robert, founder

of Predicta Lab, a French company fighting disinformation. "The most impressive thing is that it is organic," he said. "There is a real desire of the Ukrainians to document this war. When something happens, they pull out their phones."

Robert said the majority of pro-Ukraine videos doing the rounds on Twitter are genuine, but there have been claims which subsequent fact-checking proved to be exaggerated. In the early stages of the war, Kyiv hailed as heroes 13 border guards who it said lost their lives defending a tiny Black Sea island after swearing at the Russian forces over the radio.

They had in fact all survived, as the Ukrainian authorities later acknowledged. Ukraine's embassy in Paris denies any deliberate attempt to mislead, saying "we don't do fake news". Russia, accused of spreading disinformation in the 2016 US election to weigh the balance in favour of Donald Trump, is seen as a past master of such tactics. —AFP

## International

# Rohingya boat with dozens of children lands in Aceh

## Bangladesh arrests Rohingya cleric over murder of activist

**BIREUN, Indonesia:** A boat carrying more than one hundred Rohingya refugees, including dozens of children, landed on the coast of Indonesia's westernmost province Aceh early yesterday, police said. The vessel, which sailed from a Rohingya camp in Bangladesh, arrived shortly after 3:00 am on a beach in Bireun district.

It was carrying 114 people, including 58 men, 21 women and 35 children aged under 15 years old, police said. "We will conduct a general health check up and COVID-19 rapid antigen tests for these foreigners," local police chief Mike Hardy Wirapraja told AFP.



### Most live in cramped camps

He said they would later be transferred to neighbouring Lhokseumawe district which has a shelter for refugees. Police found out about the arrival after some local fishermen reported that a boat filled with Rohingya people had landed on the beach.

The boat appeared to be in good condition and the refugees had sufficient food and supplies during the journey. "We are originally from Myanmar but we fled to Bangladesh and we started our journey from Bangladesh," one of the refugees, Omar Faruk, told an AFP journalist, adding that the group had been at sea for 25 days. "We left Bangladesh because the Rohingya situation at the camp is not good, it's getting very bad at the moment," the 11-year-old said in English.

Faruk said he left his mother in Bangladesh and followed his uncle to start a new life, preferably in a

Muslim majority country like Indonesia or Malaysia.

"We left Bangladesh to this country to make a beautiful future... I have no father, only one uncle and my mom is still in Bangladesh. I came here because I want to improve my education," he added.

It is the second arrival by the persecuted minority in Muslim-majority Indonesia in the recent months. More than 100 Rohingya also arrived in Bireun in late December after drifting for days before the Indonesian government eventually allowed them to land and dragged their stricken boat to shore. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims have fled Buddhist-majority Myanmar since 2017 after a military crackdown that refugees said included mass killings and rape.

Most live in cramped camps in Bangladesh, where human traffickers run lucrative operations promising to find them sanctuary abroad.

Each year hundreds of Rohingya make perilous, months-long journeys from refugee camps in Bangladesh to Southeast Asia. Relatively affluent Malaysia is usually the favoured destination, but they also end up in Indonesia. Meanwhile, Bangladesh police arrested a powerful Muslim cleric who allegedly issued an execution edict against a prominent Rohingya activist shot dead last year in the vast refugee camps near the Myanmar border, officials said yesterday.

The murder last September of Mohib Ullah, the head of an important civil society group, sent shockwaves through the massive settlements that house hundreds of thousands of Rohingya who fled a violent crackdown by Myanmar's army in 2017. His family blamed the murder on the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), which is the main Rohingya insurgent group in western Myanmar and believed to be involved in drug smuggling and violent crime in the camps.

On Saturday, an elite Bangladeshi police unit arrested Moulvi Zakoria, the alleged chief of the Ulema Council, a council of powerful clerics tied to ARSA.



**KUTUPALONG, Bangladesh:** File photo shows, Mohib Ullah (C), a leader for the Rohingya community, addresses a ceremony organised to remember the second anniversary of a military crackdown that prompted a massive exodus of people from Myanmar to Bangladesh, at the Kutupalong refugee camp. — AFP

"Moulvi Zakoria issued a fatwa (a religious edict) to assassinate Mohib Ullah. Then Mohib Ullah was killed. Zakoria went into hiding," said police official Naimul Haque. Haque said Zakoria had "disagreements with Mohib Ullah".

"Mohib Ullah was working for the repatriation of Rohingya people to Myanmar. But the work of the so-called ARSA was to destroy the discipline in the camps," he said. The overwhelming majority of the Rohingya people are conservative Muslims. Sources said ARSA has a firm grip on the religious affairs of the Rohingya people through the Ulema Council.

In October last year, ARSA was also accused of killing six people in an Islamic seminary in a refugee camp in Bangladesh's southeast, which was allegedly

controlled by its rival, Islami Mahad.

Working among the chaos and unease in the camps, Ullah and his colleagues quietly documented the crimes that his people suffered at the hands of the Myanmar military while pressing for better conditions.

The former schoolteacher shot to prominence in 2019 when he organised a protest of about 100,000 people in the camps to mark two years since their exodus. He also met US president Donald Trump in the White House that year and addressed a UN meeting in Geneva. But his fame appears to have gone down badly with ARSA. They saw Ullah as threatening their place as the sole voice representing the Rohingya—one who was opposed to their violence, his colleagues and rights activists say. — AFP



**MEXICO CITY, Mexico:** File photo shows members of the women's police squad known as "Atenea" standing guard outside the National Palace during a protest in Mexico City. — AFP

## Mexico's women police squad on protest frontline

**MEXICO CITY:** At a police station in Mexico City, women train with riot gear in preparation for an International Women's Day march in one of the countries hardest hit by gender-based violence.

The squad of 500 officers is tasked with ensuring the demonstrations that draw thousands of women do not block roads or damage public property. Although their work usually involves tense confrontations with fellow women, they feel united with the feminist cause because they too suffer violence and abuse by men.

But they question some of the protesters' methods. The demonstrators "hit me because they see the uniform and because of history. You see a police uniform and (think of) repression, corruption, impunity," said Itzania Otero, 35, who commands the unit preparing to police Tuesday's march. She favors empathy to show the protesters "that this uniform is not what they think," and that her officers only seek to contain—not repress—them. "We policewomen have also suffered a thousand things," she said.

In recent years, protests against gender-based violence have brought together thousands of women in the capital and other Mexican cities. Mexico registered 1,006 femicides last year, marking an increase from 978 in 2020, according to government figures.

Recent victims include Michelle Perez Tadeo, a 29-year-old television host and model whose body was found last month in a wooded area on the outskirts of the capital. Other gender-based crimes such as harassment, sexual abuse and domestic violence have

increased in recent years, resulting in a rising number of calls to emergency lines.

### 'Staying calm'

During the training session, instructor Tania Arrazola teaches the police how to put on their protective equipment, which includes a vest, gloves, helmet, shin guards and a shield. She also shows them how to use the shield in cases of aggression and how not to be provoked.

But "staying calm while they attack and hit you, enduring the many times that they throw paint on your face and say many things to you, it's difficult," she admitted. Even though the protests put them in direct confrontation, some policewomen emphasize the importance of the feminist struggle to them.

"It's a very complex issue because within our own corporation we suffer the same type of violence and also with our partners," said officer Sandra Gonzalez, 32. The police's special gender unit is investigating hundreds of cases of alleged abuses committed against female police officers by colleagues and superiors.

At the same time, Gonzalez criticizes the use of violence by hardcore protesters, who sometimes hurl Molotov cocktails at the police. She believes there are better ways to express discontent. The police squad, created in September 2020, is also tasked with implementing protection measures for women victims of violence. Although the squad says that its role is not to oppress, some protesters accuse them of doing just that, such as when they use fire extinguishers to put out the firebombs and disperse people. "In the end they have an advantage over us. They have a weapon and are trained to react. We don't," said an activist who plans to participate in Tuesday's march. "There's very little training in restraint. They act like a male oppressor," said the woman, who asked not to be named. — AFP

anti-jihadist force set up in February in the southwest, near the border with Burkina Faso. Since 2017, western Niger has been regularly targeted by Islamist groups, despite the deployment of thousands of anti-jihadist troops and the imposition of a state of emergency.

IED attacks on the army have become particularly frequent in Torodi and neighbouring Gotheye.

Both are located in the flashpoint "three borders" zone between Niger, Burkina and Mali, where jihadist groups including the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara operate.

Security sources say the jihadists have recruited many young people in Niger, particularly in areas along the border with Burkina, where they have "set up several logistics bases". — AFP

## Kazakhstan permits large pro-Ukraine rally amid sanctions

**ALMATY, Kazakhstan:** Russia's ally Kazakhstan permitted a large peace rally in its biggest city Saturday as authorities in the Central Asian country look to distance themselves from Moscow's sanctions-triggering military invasion of Ukraine.

Ex-Soviet Kazakhstan's regime regularly blocks political demonstrations but has appeared spooked by suggestions that unprecedented Western sanctions against Russia over Ukraine should target Moscow's allies too.

The Kazakh foreign ministry has stressed its neutrality in the conflict and this week invited Britain's ambassador for talks after a UK lawmaker on Monday appeared to call for sanctions against individuals in the country "complicit and supporting" Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

The protest in Almaty, a financial hub of 1.8 million people, gathered over 2,000 demonstrators, who

stood for the Ukrainian national anthem and chanted pro-peace slogans and insults against Putin.

Kazakhstan's foreign ministry on Saturday said it had received assurances from London that the country would not be sanctioned by the United Kingdom over Russia's invasion.

The consultations came after lawmaker Margaret Hodge, a member of the opposition Labour party, asked UK foreign secretary Liz Truss whether individuals from "jurisdictions like Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan" would be targeted by sanctions over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Truss replied that she would "look into the issues around Kazakhstan and other nations" during the Monday parliament session.

Moscow in January played a decisive role in bringing about an end to a bloody political crisis in Kazakhstan after Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev called in troops from the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) — a six-member military bloc consisting of former Soviet states — to bolster government control.

More than 200 people died in the clashes that followed largely peaceful protests against a fuel price hike. Kazakhstan has blamed the violence on "terrorists" with international connections for the unrest, despite a lack of evidence for the theory. — AFP



**SYDNEY, Australia:** Volunteers from the State Emergency Service (SES) rescue animals from flooded farm houses in western Sydney, as the area faces its worst flooding after record rainfall caused its largest dam to overflow. — AFP

## Australia braces for wild weather

**SYDNEY:** Australian towns devastated by deadly flooding over the past week prepared for further intense weather yesterday, with expected downpours halting volunteer recovery and clean-up efforts. The national weather bureau warned of severe thunderstorms and major flooding in the state of Queensland, where 11 people died in the past week's floods.

Flash flooding is forecast for the major city of Brisbane, home to 2.6 million people. Heavy rains, large hailstones and damaging winds were also expected to hit further south in the state of New South Wales, including the town of Lismore, which last week saw record flooding and dramatic rescue efforts to save residents stranded on their roofs.

The death toll from the floods in New South Wales

stands at five, after the body of a man was found Saturday. Some locals in flood-affected areas have taken to social media to vent frustration about what they see as a lack of police, defence personnel and emergency services on the ground to help with the recovery effort.

In Lismore, Tom Wolff, who runs a local charity organisation, said he spent Saturday collecting donations of insulin, which were then delivered by a privately-chartered helicopter to diabetic residents in the nearby town of Woodburn.

Defence Minister Peter Dutton yesterday defended the work of his department in the aftermath of the record flooding, saying he was "absolutely satisfied with the defence response". "We've come in in force, and we will increase the numbers dramatically," he said, promising there would be 5,000 troops on the ground in the coming days.

Scientists say climate change is making Australia's floods, bushfires, cyclones and droughts more frequent and more intense. — AFP

## Niger soldiers killed in IED explosion

**NIAMEY, Niger:** Five soldiers have been killed by a mine in Niger's southwestern Torodi region, where jihadist attacks using improvised explosive device (IEDs) are increasingly frequent, the defence ministry said yesterday. Three soldiers were wounded in the blast, which occurred on Friday when an army patrol vehicle ran over the IED, the ministry said in a statement carried on national television.

The troops were part of the 2,160-strong Niya

## Business

MONDAY, MARCH 7, 2022

# Russia banks turn to China after Visa, Mastercard suspension

## Shops to limit food sales to counter black market in Russia

**MOSCOW:** Russian banks said yesterday they planned to issue cards using China's UnionPay system after Visa and Mastercard moved to suspend operations in Russia over Moscow's military intervention in Ukraine. Russian Visa and Mastercard bank cards will no longer be valid abroad, and cards issued abroad will no longer work in Russia, the global payments companies announced Saturday. Major Russian lenders Sberbank and Alfa Bank said they are working on a rollout of UnionPay cards.

"Sberbank is working on the possibility of issuing co-branded Mir-UnionPay cards. We will inform you later about the timeframe for the issue," Russia's largest bank Sberbank said in a statement.

The country's largest private lender Alfa Bank said it is "already working on launching cards on UnionPay, China's national payment system". Rosbank, Tinkoff Bank, and the Credit Bank of Moscow (MKB) are also working on releasing UnionPay cards, Russian news agencies reported.

Russia's economy and in particular its financial sector are reeling under the weight of unprecedented sanctions after Moscow sent tens of thousands of soldiers into Ukraine with the aim of over-

throwing the Kyiv government. Russia's central bank said that Visa and Mastercard cards already issued by national banks will continue to work within Russia until their expiry, since all payments in Russia are made through a national system. However, it warned that Russians travelling abroad would need to carry alternate means of payment. Russia to let banks cut back reporting results amid sanctions.

Russia's central bank announced yesterday it was allowing lenders in the country to reduce the frequency of their financial disclosures, a measure it said was necessary to mitigate sanctions fallout. Moscow has been hit with a damaging package of financial and cultural penalties by Western countries in the wake of Russia's military incursion into Ukraine.

The central bank in recent days has taken unprecedented measures, including capital controls, to shore up the struggling economy and the ruble. "The Bank of Russia decided to temporarily reduce the volume of publication of financial statements of credit institutions," it said in a statement on its site.

"This was done to limit the risks of credit institutions associated with the

sanctions imposed by Western countries." It added, however, that financial institutions would still be required to submit reports to it, a step it said would "make it possible to fully exercise effective supervision over their activities and analyze the sector."

The EU this week cut seven Russian banks from the SWIFT payment system as part of Western-coordinated sanctions on Russia for its operation in Ukraine. The tanking ruble revived unpleasant memories of financial instability of the 1990s, when millions of Russians saw their savings evaporate under the effect of a devaluing currency and soaring inflation.

Retailers in Russia will limit sales of essential foodstuffs to limit black market speculation and ensure affordability, the government said yesterday, as sanctions imposed over Moscow's military incursion into Ukraine began to bite. The trade and industry ministry over the weekend said there had been cases where essential foodstuffs had been purchased "in a volume clearly larger than necessary for private consumption (up to several tons) for subsequent resale".

Trade organizations representing retailers had proposed retailers be allowed to limit the volume of specific



goods sold to individuals at any one time, the ministry's statement said. "The Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Ministry of Agriculture supported the initiative of trade organizations," the release said, noting that the organizations themselves would work out the policy.

Essential goods, whose prices are subject to state controls, include bread, rice, flour, eggs and selected meats and dairy products among others. Moscow has been hit with a damaging package of financial and cultural penalties by

Western countries since the Kremlin initiated what it has called "a special military operation" in neighboring Ukraine on February 24.

The central bank in recent days has taken unprecedented measures, including capital controls, to shore up the struggling economy and the ruble. The tanking ruble has revived unpleasant memories of financial instability of the 1990s, when millions of Russians saw their savings evaporate under the effect of a devaluing currency and soaring inflation. — AFP

## Turkey tourism recovery hurt by Russia invasion

**ISTANBUL:** Every Sunday Noori Sani welcomes his old friends around a bountiful Turkish breakfast in Istanbul. But surrounding him now are empty tables on his terrace at his restaurant by the Blue Mosque. "On a day like this, we should be full," the owner of Serbethane restaurant said in the city's historic district.

Within a few days of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, Ukrainians and Russians cancelled reservations for trips, disastrous for Turkey where tourism represented 10 percent of GDP before the pandemic. There had been high hopes for a tourism revival in 2022 and the sector was in desperate need of a boost after the Turkish lira lost significant value last year and inflation soared to over 50 percent in February.

Visitors from Ukraine and Russia made up over a quarter of all tourists who arrived in Turkey last year, usually opting for the turquoise beaches on the Mediterranean and Aegean, according to tourism ministry figures. "Russia and Ukraine are very important markets for us," Hamit Kuk of the Association of Turkish Travel Agencies (TURSAB) said.

Around 4.5 million Russian and two million Ukrainian tourists descended on Turkey last year.

TURSAB expected seven million Russians and 2.5 million Ukrainians this year, but Kuk said it would "likely have to review these figures".

"The war between Russia and Ukraine is making everyone nervous here. Both from a human and commercial point of view," Kuk said. "Normally, there would be a rush of summer reservations in March. But the demand has stopped," he added.



An aerial view of Istanbul

### Sanctions pain

"If it goes on like this, there will be a very serious problem," warned TURSAB president Firuz Ballikaya.

"We try to wait as calmly as we can." In front of the Hagia Sophia mosque, Russian tourists were rushing to follow their guide, ducking their heads and refusing interviews.

There were even a few Ukrainians, including a young couple from Kyiv who "arrived as tourists and became refugees" and who were now tearfully looking to leave for a third country.

"Maybe the United States?" they asked, wishing to remain anonymous. The situation is tricky for Turkish travel agents like Ismail Yitmen because of Western sanctions against Russia.

In his office opposite the Hagia Sophia, Yitmen

despaired. "Travel agencies like mine working with Russia are really suffering right now. Taking into account the deposit amount I have paid for hotels, my loss is more than 11,000 euros (\$12,000) so far," he said. If more groups cancel, he could lose between \$65,000 and 76,000.

"A group was supposed to arrive in Turkey in two months, but we couldn't receive the money, so it's cancelled. It's because they stopped SWIFT transfers. We had already paid for the hotels." Several Russian banks were cut off from the SWIFT messaging system, which allows banks to communicate rapidly and securely over transactions. Despite being a NATO member, Ankara did not sanction Russia and unlike many other countries, Turkey has not closed its airspace to Russian planes. — AFP

## Ukraine conflict fuels supply chain concerns

**LONDON:** At a logistics expo in London this week, Russia's invasion of Ukraine dominated discussions, rather than interest in the latest package-tracking devices or how to kick-start the sector after the coronavirus pandemic. A week of fighting has forced many companies to suspend operations out of Ukraine as well as Russia, as world governments began imposing tough financial sanctions.

Now there are fears the conflict could cause more disruption to the sector and hinder recovery from the pandemic, which battered world supply chains. Dan Smith-Cox, a business development director at Zencargo, told AFP: "We've seen a few manufacturers pull into eastern Europe from Ukraine and Russia as opposed to China."

"A lot of production is moving to Turkey," he said at the Retail Supply Chain & Logistics Expo at London's

giant ExCeL conference venue. Another attendee, who declined to give their name but works in the metal cutting sector, said they bought raw materials from Poland, Russia, Germany and Ukraine.

Many of their suppliers were directly impacted, he said, fearing even tougher times ahead. "The invasion is going to be much more difficult than the lockdowns," he added. Ratings agency Moody's called Russia's invasion of Ukraine "the greatest risk" facing supply chains since the pandemic—and the conflict is already having an effect. On Tuesday, the world's three largest shipowners, MSC, Maersk and CMA CGM, among others, announced they were halting their services to Russian ports, from Saint Petersburg on the Baltic to Vladivostok in the Pacific.

Not only do companies have to find new routes in haste, but shipping prices immediately increase due to longer journeys, causing more pain at a time of sky-high inflation.

Stopping transport to Russian ports is affecting air and rail shipments crossing the country, "making rates more expensive because of oil prices going up as a result of the



war", said a spokesperson for Freightos, an online international shipping marketplace. Oil prices have rocketed since the invasion as Brent North Sea crude rose to \$120 per barrel and gas prices have also hit record highs.

Supply chain fears have gripped markets while industrial metals have also surged, with aluminium hitting a new all-time-high on Friday.

### Product-specific crisis

Freightos also pointed to increased insurance premiums for carriers potentially crossing the conflict zone. Dave Howorth, executive director at Scala, a supply chain consultancy, said

the supply chain crisis would be "product-specific" rather than general as in the pandemic.

On top of energy and commodities prices, semiconductors—already subject of a global shortage—are also set to see prices go up. Ukraine is responsible for more than 90 percent of semiconductor-grade neon shipped to the United States.

Mike Hawes, head of UK industry body the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, said Russia and Ukraine produced key raw materials such as aluminum and neon used in semiconductor manufacturing, and are part of the European automotive supply. — AFP

## IMF sees devastating damage to economy from war escalation

**WASHINGTON:** The IMF warned on Saturday that the already "serious" global economic impact of the war in Ukraine would be "all the more devastating" should the conflict escalate.

Even as forecasts remain subject to "extraordinary uncertainty, the economic consequences" of the invasion launched last week by Russia on its eastern European neighbor "are already very serious," the IMF said in a statement.

A surge in energy and commodity prices, with a barrel of oil now close to \$120, have piled on the inflationary hike that the world was already experiencing as economies recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. "Should the conflict escalate, the economic damage would be all the more devastating," the international lender said in a statement after a meeting Friday of its executive board on the economic impact of the war.

"Price shocks will have an impact worldwide, especially on poor households for whom food and fuel are a higher proportion of expenses."

In Ukraine, "the economic damage is already substantial," with infrastructure shut down, damaged or destroyed, with the country due to "face significant recovery and reconstruction costs."

The IMF said emergency financial assistance requested by Ukraine, already reported on February 25, amounted to \$1.4 billion, adding the request could be brought before the executive board as early as next week, according to the statement. "The sanctions on Russia will also have a substantial impact on the global economy and financial markets, with significant spillovers to other countries," the IMF said. — AFP

## Germany to build LNG terminal to cut Russia reliance

**BERLIN:** Germany said on Saturday it would build a liquefied natural gas terminal on its North Sea coast, as it seeks to reduce its reliance on Russian gas imports after the invasion of Ukraine. "It is necessary to reduce our dependence on Russian gas as quickly as possible" in light of Moscow's aggression, Economy and Climate Minister Robert Habeck said in a statement.

Germany was financing the project in Brunbuettel, northern Germany, via the public lender KfW, together with the state-owned Dutch gas company Gasunie and German energy group RWE. The process of liquefaction makes LNG easier to transport, allowing it to be imported by sea from producer countries that cannot be connected by pipelines, such as the United States or Qatar.

Before the outbreak of war, Germany imported 55 percent of its gas from Russia, via pipelines running through Ukraine, Poland and under the Baltic Sea. The Russian invasion of Ukraine forced a strategic reassessment in Berlin, with Germany hoping to substitute Russian gas supplies with LNG. — AFP



## Business

# As Ukraine pushes oil over \$100, Nigerians see mixed blessings

## Unruly lines of cars cause massive traffic jams

LAGOS: Weaving in between the Lagos traffic, hawkers selling plantain snacks and water more recently offer drivers another treat: jerry cans filled with petrol to help with fuel shortages. Petroleum-producing nations may be reaping extra revenue since Ukraine's crisis pushed oil prices above \$100 a barrel, but Nigerians this week were struggling with yet another round of fuel scarcities.

President Muhammadu Buhari says Africa's top producer has a "great opportunity" with higher oil prices, but that was a hard sell for Lagos accountant Abdulazeez Oyefeso after three hours in a line for fuel. "It's more revenue for the country, but it doesn't get down to the common man," Oyefeso said, leaning against his Lexus among the cars snaking along Lagos' main Alfred Rewane road near a gas station.

On the opposite side of the major avenue, touts carrying plastic jerry cans filled with yellow fuel and funnels crafted from water bottles flagged down passing cars offering to fill tanks for a premium.

Oil sales account for nearly 90 percent of Nigeria's export revenue. But soaring prices—the highest in ten years after the invasion—are a mixed blessing. OPEC member Nigeria has little capacity to refine its own crude and relies heavily on fuel imports so higher oil prices mean more budget spending.

Nigeria also operates a byzantine system of fuel subsidies that costs the state billions of dollars to artificially keep fuel costs low. In place since the 1970s, fuel subsidies are politically sensitive and Nigeria's import reliance also leaves the domestic market open to sporadic fuel shortages.

Currently, a liter of gasoline costs an average of 165 naira (40 US cents). On the black market this week it was fetching between 350 to 500 naira. Since last month, the government said a batch of adulterated fuel was removed from the market, causing a shortfall. State-run Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation chairman Mele Kyari on Thursday said measures were in place to get adequate supplies to depots. "I am very sure that very soon we will see relief from this," he told reporters.

### Sleeping in car

Unruly lines of cars searching for fuel caused massive traffic jams earlier this week in Lagos and other cities. Motorbikes ferrying men on the back clutching four or five jerry cans to find fuel were a common sight. Some commuters just walked. Others jumped off Lagos' typical yellow Danfo minibuses caught in jams to continue on

foot.

"My gauge was on reserve when I left home early this morning but the car stopped mid-way. Luckily, I have a small keg," said one Lagos driver Onifade. "The government has to do something." Around Awolowo district of Lagos, where several filling stations operate, roads were blocked early in the week. Drivers wait on the sidewalk under the sun. Some had slept in the line overnight. "People that had fuel this morning are the ones that slept in the queue yesterday night," taxi driver Ali said. "And those people you see right now might sleep here tonight."

### More budget costs

Nigeria approved a long-awaited new oil law last year that aims to improve operating conditions to bring in more foreign investment to the flagging sector. But some of Nigeria's production is tied up in deals with refining companies for fuel and swaps for infrastructure projects so oil high prices are not the revenue boon they should be. Today, most of Nigeria's 1.4 million barrels per day oil output comes from off-shore "deep water" projects, where the government takes only 20 to 30 percent of revenue, said Bismarck Rewane, an economist at Financial Derivatives Co.

"The increase in price is not enough to compensate for the loss in production," Rewane said. "Theoretically the picture looks great, but in reality it is more complicated." Nigeria's finance minister last year suggested the costly fuel subsidy program would end in June as urged by the World Bank and IMF. But in January, ministers delayed the plan, saying the timing was problematic.

Less than a year from an election, ending subsidies could be costly as Nigerians see cheap fuel as one tangible benefit they get from oil wealth. "Nigeria, however, is in the uncanny position of being stuck in a subsidy arrangement that guarantees that high oil prices leads to an exponential rise in government expenditure," said local risk analyst group SBM Intelligence.

"Momentary gains in the government's coffers, therefore, might not make a big dent in the fiscal deficit," Lagos hawkers, though, did not let macroeconomic concerns deter them from another chance for a fast buck. Sitting on an empty blue 10-litre jerrycan on the roadside, Ahmed said he came just to make cash to supplement his carpet business. "This is just a hustle," he said. "This is our oil, and it's a way to make quick money." — AFP



LAGOS: Nigerians are struggling with yet another round of fuel scarcities.

## Greek growth hits 8.3% in 2021

ATHENS: Greece said its economy expanded by a massive 8.3 percent in 2021, wiping out the losses of the previous year, but it warned of uncertainties ahead arising from Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Gross domestic product in the fourth quarter of 2021 was 7.7 percent over the same period a year earlier, the official statistics agency Elstat said. That brought annual growth to 8.3 percent, after the economy shrank by 8.2 percent in 2020, battered by the coronavirus pandemic.

"Growth exceeded every early forecast and according to the European Commission's estimates,

should be among the highest in the euro zone," Finance Minister Christos Staikouras said in a statement.

Inflation, however, is high, with prices rising 6.2 percent in January compared with a year earlier, said Elstat—a record for Greece since it adopted the European Union's single currency in 2001. Electricity prices surged by 56 percent in January, fuel by 21.6 percent and natural gas by 156 percent.

Those increases were recorded before Russia's invasion of Ukraine—an event that Staikouras referred to indirectly as a "new world environment, with high uncertainty and insecurity" that was also likely to hit family budgets. The conservative government has vowed to help "the most vulnerable" citizens and boost the minimum wage, currently around 650 euros (\$709) per ton. — AFP

## NBK supports 'Let's Be Aware' campaign for second year

KUWAIT: In line with its commitment to support the initiatives aiming to raise community awareness and to actively participate in promoting financial culture and inclusion among all segments of society, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues to support the activities of "Let's Be Aware" banking awareness campaign for the second year in a row. The bank continues to intensify awareness campaigns by publishing educational materials and awareness content on all its social media platforms digital channels, with the aim of shedding light on the rights of customers and educating them regarding dealing with banks.

On this occasion, Sulaiman Al-Marzouq, Deputy CEO of National Bank of Kuwait - Kuwait, said: "For the second year in a row, NBK strongly supports 'Let's Be Aware' campaign, which comes as an initiative from the Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association. This support reflects NBK's belief in the importance of promoting financial culture among the different segments of society and raising awareness about how to make the utmost benefit from the various services provided by banks."

Al-Marzouq indicated that NBK is a key and active partner in all initiatives aiming to raise awareness, in collaboration with the Central Bank of Kuwait and all concerned authorities.

As the leading financial institution in Kuwait and the region, NBK is always keen to organize various events that contribute to raising community awareness about all issues related to the banking sector, he added. The "Let's Be Aware" campaign adopts a highly important awareness agenda including familiarizing customers with banks' role as financial intermediaries, the importance of saving and investment and ways to benefit from the products provided by banks, he explained.

It is worth mentioning that the "Let's Be Aware" campaign aims to raise awareness about customers' rights in relation to personal finance, whether consumer or housing loans, the mechanism for submitting complaints about banking services, in addition to the different types of bank cards, and main precautions for protection from fraud, and awareness about the risk associated with "loan shark" schemes, and high-risk investments, as well as other key topics.

The campaign comprises many topics such as the process of borrowing, bank cards, awareness of the rights of special needs customers, as well as tips related to cybersecurity and the protection of bank accounts. It also provides guidance regarding complaint submission mechanisms and protection of customers' rights, and introduces the functions of the banking sector and its role in stimulating and developing the economy, in order to create awareness among all segments of society about banking and financial dealings.

## ABK cardholders enjoy a 10% discount at Al-Shaya Stores

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) presents its credit, debit and prepaid cardholders with a 10 percent discount when spending KD 50 and above at Pottery Barn, Pottery Barn Kids, West Elm and Williams Sonoma. This exciting offer is valid from 7th March through to 5th April 2022.

## Sri Lanka hikes rates as economy skirts collapse

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's central bank hiked interest rates by one percentage point on Friday and urged the government to increase taxes as the country skirts economic collapse. The troubled South Asian island nation is in the grip of a severe foreign exchange crisis that has led to acute shortages of food, fuel, medicines and industrial raw materials, sending inflation soaring.

Food inflation hit a record 25 percent in January while overall price increases reached 16.8 percent, a fourth consecutive monthly record. Public transport has been crippled since Wednesday with no diesel for buses and large parts of the country of 21 million people hit by lengthy power cuts.

On Thursday, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa sacked the energy and industry ministers after they both criticized the government's efforts to deal with the crisis. Another senior minister Vasudeva Nanayakkara expressed solidarity Friday with the sacked ministers and said he would not attend cabinet meetings.

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka hiked the benchmark deposit and lending rates by 100 basis points each to 6.5 percent and 7.5 percent respectively. The move follows a January decision to lift borrowing costs by 50 basis points. The increases "will dampen the possible build-up of underlying demand pressures on the economy, which would, in turn, help ease pressures in the external sector", the bank said in a statement.

It also urged the government to increase fuel prices and electricity tariffs immediately as well as raise taxes to shore up government revenue. That came after a similar call by the International Monetary Fund.

The bank also appealed to officials to suspend ongoing infrastructure projects, sell state-owned land and discourage "non-essential" imports. A broad import ban has been in place since March 2020 to shore up foreign reserves after the pandemic knocked out the lucrative tourism sector which previously earned about \$4.5 billion annually. In a statement following its annual review of Sri Lanka's economy, the IMF on Thursday warned the country that its foreign debt was "unsustainable" and called for urgent action. Official data shows Sri Lanka needs nearly \$7 billion to service its foreign debt this year, but the country's external reserves at the end of January were only \$2.07 billion—just enough to finance one month's imports. — AFP



2022  
CONFERENCE SERIES



OFFICIAL SPONSOR

## The National Leadership Institute launches Conference Series 2022

KUWAIT: The National Leadership Institute (NLI), part of the NTEC Group, is delivering its second Conference Series during March to June this year, consisting of nine conferences/master classes delivered virtually in Kuwait.

The series will be delivered by a group of top international speakers that includes renowned experts from various industries, and best-selling authors. Collectively, the speakers have worked with some of the top universities and organizations around the world including University of Cambridge, London Business School, University College London, George Washington University, BBC, Formula 1, ESPN, and more. During the conferences, the speakers will be joined by prominent Kuwaiti entrepreneurs and businessmen and women who have made a real impact on Kuwaiti society to bring a local context and knowledge to the conversations. The guest speakers are Dr Saad Al-Barrak, Sheikh Al-Zain Al-Sabah, Sheikh Majda Al-Sabah, Ahmad Marafi, Ahmed Al-Majed, Nezar Al-Saleh, Salma Al-Hajjaj, Haya Al-Mana and Essa Behbehani.

The main topics of the conferences for 2022 are in direct correlation with the Kuwait Vision for 2035 which aims to transform Kuwait in every aspect. They encompass an extensive array of topics including technical and soft skills as well as emerging concepts needed to excel in today's evolving and business savvy world such as digital transformation, leading the next generation, growth mindset and having courageous conversations. As the world is still undergoing various challenges with the global pandemic, the series will take place on Zoom webinar. The NLI Conference Series 2022 is proudly sponsored by the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK).

To register or to find out more about NLI and the upcoming Conference Series 2022 visit us on Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn @nliedukw or visit www.nli.edu.kw.

The National Leadership Institute (NLI) is an institute fully owned by NEST, a national company for educational services and training, which is a subsidiary of NTEC - the National Technology Enterprises Company, a governmental entity fully owned by the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA).

## Business

# ECB reckons with impact of war on eurozone's doorstep

## Central bank policymakers to meet on Thursday

**FRANKFURT:** Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine has added an extra layer of complexity to the decisions facing European Central Bank policymakers as they meet on Thursday. Already managing record inflation figures and a fragile recovery from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, members of the bank's 25-member governing council now have to reckon with the impact of war on the edge of the eurozone.

The pace of consumer price rises shifted up a gear in February, rising to 5.8 percent from 5.1 percent the previous month, a new all-time high for the euro area. The spike has been driven in no small part by soaring prices for energy, caught in the middle of the conflict with Russia, a major supplier to European countries.

ECB President Christine Lagarde responded to the February 24 invasion by saying the central bank would "take whatever action is necessary" to stabilize the euro region's economy.

Prices for gas and oil were "likely in the short term to increase inflation", she said, sustaining it for longer than the bank previously expected.

### Stepwise

Soaring inflation has put the ECB under pressure to follow its peers in the

United States and Britain by moving to end its economic stimulus and raise interest rates soon.

At its last meeting at the beginning of February, the ECB left its plan for a "step-by-step" reduction in its asset-purchasing programs untouched. The pandemic emergency bond-buying program, which has been the ECB's main crisis-fighting tool, aimed at keeping borrowing costs low to stoke economic growth, will come to an end in March.

Under the current guidance, a separate pre-pandemic bond-buying scheme will be boosted to 40 billion euros (\$44 billion) monthly in the near term and carry on till at least October. Any policy tweaks were pushed back to the meeting this week, when the governing council will make use of new economic forecasts to support their decision making.

In December, when the figures were last updated, the bank foresaw inflation at 1.8 percent in 2023, below its two-percent target. The new inflation projections, which will take account of the Ukraine conflict and the most recent data, could see a sharp upwards revision.

The outlook was however shrouded in "significant uncertainty", ECB executive board member Isabel Schnabel said after

Russian tanks moved on Ukraine.

At the same time, the high cost for energy was likely to weigh on the economy and slow production, narrowing policymakers' room for manoeuvre. The double risk will encourage the ECB to "tread carefully", said Andrew Kenningham of Capital Economics.

It will also encourage the bank to give a signal it "could even step up support if needed", he added.

### Normalization?

In Russia, where the economy is reeling from Western sanctions, central bankers propped up the ruble by more than doubling the main interest rate to 20 percent. Such high levels are completely alien to the ECB which has long kept its rates at historic lows, including a negative deposit rate that effectively charges banks to park their cash overnight.

But more "hawkish" members of the governing council who would like to see the ECB act faster have grown more vocal. Inflation fears meant policymakers needed to keep their "sights trained on the normalization of our monetary policy", Bundesbank chief and governing council member Joachim Nagel said.

Observers will be listening closely to Lagarde's news conference at 14:30 local



time (1330 GMT) to see if the former French finance minister makes any advance on her pledge for the ECB to be "data-driven". Lagarde's previous insistence that any hike in 2022 was "very unlikely" disappeared after the February meeting, as markets bet on an earlier increase. In light of the tense situation in

Europe, "the ECB will want to avoid hinting at end dates" for its bond-buying "or start dates for rate hikes", said Carsten Brzeski, head of macro at the bank ING.

Instead, Lagarde could follow her predecessors to "never pre-commit", Brzeski said. —AFP

## Student Al-Otaibi wins Gulf Bank's first draw prize for youth 'red' account

**KUWAIT:** In keeping with its commitment to rewarding its customers and fulfilling customers' dreams, Gulf Bank conducted its first monthly draw of 2022 for the youth "red" account, announcing the student, Mohammed Fahad Mansour Al-Otaibi, as the winner of the cash prize. The draw was conducted under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.



Mohammad Al-Qattan

In light of this occasion, the General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank, Mohammad Al-Qattan, said, "We would like to congratulate the student, Mohammed Al-Otaibi, on winning the first monthly draw prize of the year for our "red" account. We would like to wish all our clients the best of luck in the upcoming monthly draws, in addition to the annual grand prize draw on April 11, 2022, for the chance to win 12 times the student subsidy, or the equivalent of KD 2,400." Al-Qattan pointed out that the "red" savings account, designed specifically for high school, college and university students between the ages of 15 and 25 years old, offers many benefits to local youth, including 10 percent cashback on monthly spends and a 50 percent discount on Cinescape and VOX cinema tickets throughout the week. The "red" savings account also includes weekly offers such as free gas fill-ups up to KD 5 at participating Alfa stations, a discount of KD 4 on Deliveroo Kuwait, and various monthly draws and gifts.

He noted that at the beginning of last year, Gulf Bank had launched several new features and benefits to the "red" account for local youth. The new features included a new and innovative design for the card, which was designed by local youth for local youth as part of Gulf Bank's initiative to create the perfect banking experience for younger customers. He added: "Before the end of 2021, the bank launched the new "red plus" prepaid MasterCard card, the first prepaid card in the Middle East to offer a cashback program for the youth category, with the added benefit of offering the highest cashback program in Kuwait. In addition, the new card is also the first prepaid MasterCard card to have a unique vertical design."

The Mastercard "red plus" card offers the youth segment access to discounts at their favorite shopping outlets, all while earning cashback on their transactions. With a Gulf Bank "red plus" prepaid card in hand, cardholders can take advantage of a variety of unique benefits, including 15 percent cashback on local and international telecommunication bills, movie theaters, coffee shops and restaurants, and up to KD 300 cashback every year.

It is worth noting that Gulf Bank's "red plus" Prepaid Cashback cardholders can enjoy a multitude of benefits, including discounts of up to 25 percent at more than 550 renowned restaurants and cafes in Kuwait as part of the Bank's Gulf Dining program. Cardholders can also avail instant discounts of up to 30 percent at more than 300 retail outlets across travel, entertainment, health, beauty, and lifestyle segments as part of Gulf Bank's Gulf Promotions program.

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

## Huawei launches new MatePad in Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** Huawei Consumer Business Group (BG) yesterday announced the launch of the new Huawei MatePad, a new-generation smart office mid-range educational tablet powered by HarmonyOS 2. Featuring a 10.4-inch 2k full view display and 4 speakers that are tuned by Harman Kardon for an immersive sound experience. The tablet is also compatible with the HUAWEI M-Pencil Package (2nd generation) and offers consumers multiple smart features to get tasks done in addition to a wide range of note-taking apps. The new and improved Huawei MatePad supports a rich ecosystem, positioning itself as an all-rounded mid-range tablet that boasts solid and unmatched features for an accessible price point.

The Huawei MatePad will be available in Kuwait on the 14th of March, 2022, with pre-orders starting on the 6th of March, 2022 with a starting price of KD 69.9 from Huawei's online platforms as well as certified retailers.

Customers who pre-order Huawei MatePad 128GB, will get free gifts worth KD 64.198! Those gifts include

mouse, 1-year warranty (multi-country support), M-Pencil 2, 3-months subscriptions of Huawei Music, 3-months subscription Huawei Video, Huawei Cloud Space Discount, 3-months subscription Starzplay.

Customers who purchase Huawei MatePad 128GB in retail, will get Free gifts worth KD 39.198! Those gifts include mouse, 1-year warranty (multi-country support), mini speaker, 3-months subscriptions of Huawei Music, 3-months subscription Huawei Video, Huawei Cloud Space Discount, 3-months subscription Starzplay.

Customers who pre-order Huawei MatePad 64GB, will get free gifts worth KD 64.198! Those gifts include mouse, 1-year warranty (multi-country support), keyboard, 3-months subscriptions of Huawei Music, 3-months subscription Huawei Video, Huawei Cloud Space Discount, 3-months subscription Starzplay. Customers who purchase Huawei MatePad 64GB in retail, will get free gifts worth KD 48.098! Those gifts include mouse, 1-year warranty (multi-country support), mini speaker, flip cover, 3-months subscriptions of Huawei Music, 3-months subscription Huawei Video, Huawei Cloud Space discount, 3-months subscription Starzplay.

### Huawei MatePad

The Huawei MatePad brings advancements in all



aspects. Being slim and portable, it embodies the beauty of minimalism while merging ergonomics and technological aesthetics, resulting in a perfect balance between looks and user experience. Equipped with a 10.4-inch, 2K resolution Huawei FullView Display, the Huawei MatePad is set-up to deliver better image quality over a wide range of content. As a smart office and educational tablet, the Huawei MatePad enable users to better harness smart productivity and creativity, yielding an elevated learning experience.

## KFH Capital arranges 2 sukuk issuances for Turkish govt, DIB

**KUWAIT:** The CEO of "KFH Capital", the investment arm of the Kuwait Finance House Group "KFH", Abdulaziz Nasser Al-Marzooq, said that the company successfully arranged two sukuk issuances for Dubai Islamic Bank, worth \$750 million, and the Turkish government, worth \$3 billion, reflecting "KFH Capital's" position among the major global organizers of sukuk issuance, as well as enhancing the role of Sukuk as a financing tool for companies, banks and governments.

In a press release, Al-Marzooq explained that "KFH Capital" played the role of lead organizer in the issuance of \$3 billion sovereign sukuk for the Turkish government; the largest in terms of size. The issuance attracted a substantial demand from over 200 regional and international investors, and the coverage on the issuance amount was more than three-fold the sought volume, i.e. about \$10.75 billion. The initial indicative yield hit the level of 7.5 per-

cent—7.625 percent per annum, where the over-demand for the issuance contributed to pricing the Sukuk at a final yield of 7.25 percent per annum. The sukuk, rated B+ by Fitch and B2 by Moody's, these sukuk will be listed in the Dublin Stock Exchange.

He noted that the structure of the sukuk used is leasing and will mature after 5 years from the date of issuance. For the Turkish government, the issuance of these sukuk is seen as a step forward in its efforts to provide adequate funding from multiple sources for its projects and plans in line with economic development. The issuance gained a large coverage in a record time, attracting investors from the region and the world, which confirms the significance of this sharia product that provides subordinate financing for the growth and expansion operations of governments, companies and mega development projects. He stated that KFH Capital is proud to participate in this distinguished issuance of sukuk early in a new year. It marks continuation of the company's successes and the series of successful issuances it leads, both in terms of size and quality, which solidifies its position among the major global sukuk arrangers.

About the issuance of Dubai Islamic Bank Sukuk, Al-Marzooq said that it comes in line with the constant strong relations between the two sides, which resulted in several issuances during the past years. He explained that the

\$750 million, 5-year issuance yields 2.74 percent. The volume of demand for subscription to the issuance amounted to about 3-fold the required amount, and KFH Capital acted as the lead arranger of the transaction, which are sukuk rated A3 by Moody's and A by Fitch. The sukuk will be listed on the Dublin and Nasdaq Dubai markets.

Al-Marzooq stressed the leadership role of KFH Group on the list of best arrangers for sukuk issuances during 2021, as these two issuances confirm the prominent role of "KFH Capital" in the capital and sukuk markets, reflecting the confidence that issuers attach to the company in addition to its expertise, competencies and capabilities. All these factors contribute to achieving positive results for the company's corporate and government customers all over the world. This also reflects the leadership of the KFH Group and its distinctive role in managing and arranging sukuk issuances.



Abdulaziz Al-Marzooq

### NBK Money Markets Report

## Growing stakes as Russian missiles rain on Ukraine

**KUWAIT:** Undeterred by international condemnation and sanction slams, Russia tightened its grip and intensified attacks in Ukraine. A fire in the eastern region, near Europe's largest nuclear power plant, blasted deafening alarms of radiation worries before being extinguished after the fire was put out and safety of the power plant was confirmed. Global peers, including corporate giants who chose to pitch in, proceeded isolating Russia with ever-expanding sanctions on Russian elites and major banks and halted or exited business operations to financially cripple Russia. To avoid hampering wider economic growth and stoking unanchored inflation, embargos on oil and gas were untouched. Ongoing relentless diplomatic efforts failed to beget any resolution of a ceasefire.

The latest sanction package delivery from the US and Europe to Russia stabbed the ruble and immobilized the Moscow Exchange which has been closed since last Monday. The ruble crashed to 121 against the dollar, driving Russia's central bank to shoot interest rates from 9.5 percent to 20 percent to prevent a run on banks.

### Nuclear threats poison FX markets

Impulsive war developments and problematic uncertainty echoing into global economies spilled demand for the dollar as it dominated the safe-haven territory. Being in close proximity to the war overwhelmed European currencies. Carrying the weight

of the mass exodus of Ukrainian refugees to the region, the euro perished to close the week at 1.0926 despite reassuring comments on the safety of the nuclear plant. The sterling plunged into the ocean of 1.3220. The run to secure liquidity propped up the battle between the dollar and the safe-haven yen and Swiss franc. The yen slipped below 115.00 and the Swiss franc traded below 0.9170. The ballistic commodities rally ignited the commodity-linked Australian dollar above 0.7300.

### Commodities

Commodity prices joined inflation figures as prices across the board break records as the war threatens supply in an already tight and volatile backdrop. Unresolved US-Iran talks, OPEC+ not increasing their supply quota, and companies shunning Russian crude exports have prompted the US and major allies to approve releasing emergency stockpiles in the face of threatened supply. Quelling concerns failed to calm oil prices below \$100 a barrel. Gold also fluctuated wildly as it traded above \$1,900 an ounce amid higher safe-haven demands and careful trading from central banks to move forward against inflation. Wheat soared to a 14-year high to above \$10 a bushel as about a quarter of world's export is threatened by the war.

### Full economic tank

The American economy marched on in its robust economic recovery trek with the latest ISM manufacturing and services PMIs both signaling economic expansion in February. In addition, despite labor shortages, dropping virus cases and easing restrictions kept the job market prospering.

### Kuwait

Kuwaiti Dinar  
USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30320.

## Burgan Bank reveals winners of Yawmi account draw

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

### The lucky winners are:

- \* Kholoud Ibrahim Alquoud
- \* Hamad Abdullah Alateeqi
- \* Dina Adnan Alhamar
- \* Jaber Haneef Alhunaif
- \* Hamada Abdalla Hussein

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

Business

# America is finally cleaning up its abandoned and leaking oil wells

## Abandoned wells nationwide estimated to be around 3.5 million

WILMINGTON: Bill Suan bought his family's cattle farm in the mountains of West Virginia a decade-and-a-half ago with little thought for the two gas wells drilled on the property-but then they started leaking oil onto his fields and sickening his cows.

After taking the operator to court, Suan was successful in plugging one well, but the company has since disappeared, leaving him to contend with a small-scale environmental disaster that's a symptom of the larger problem of orphaned oil wells across the United States.

"It's shocking to think that it was like that for decades," Suan said. From rural areas in the east where modern oil production began to cities in southern California, where pumpjacks loom not far from homes, the United States is pockmarked with perhaps millions of oil wells that are unsealed, haven't produced in decades, and sometimes do not have an identifiable owner.

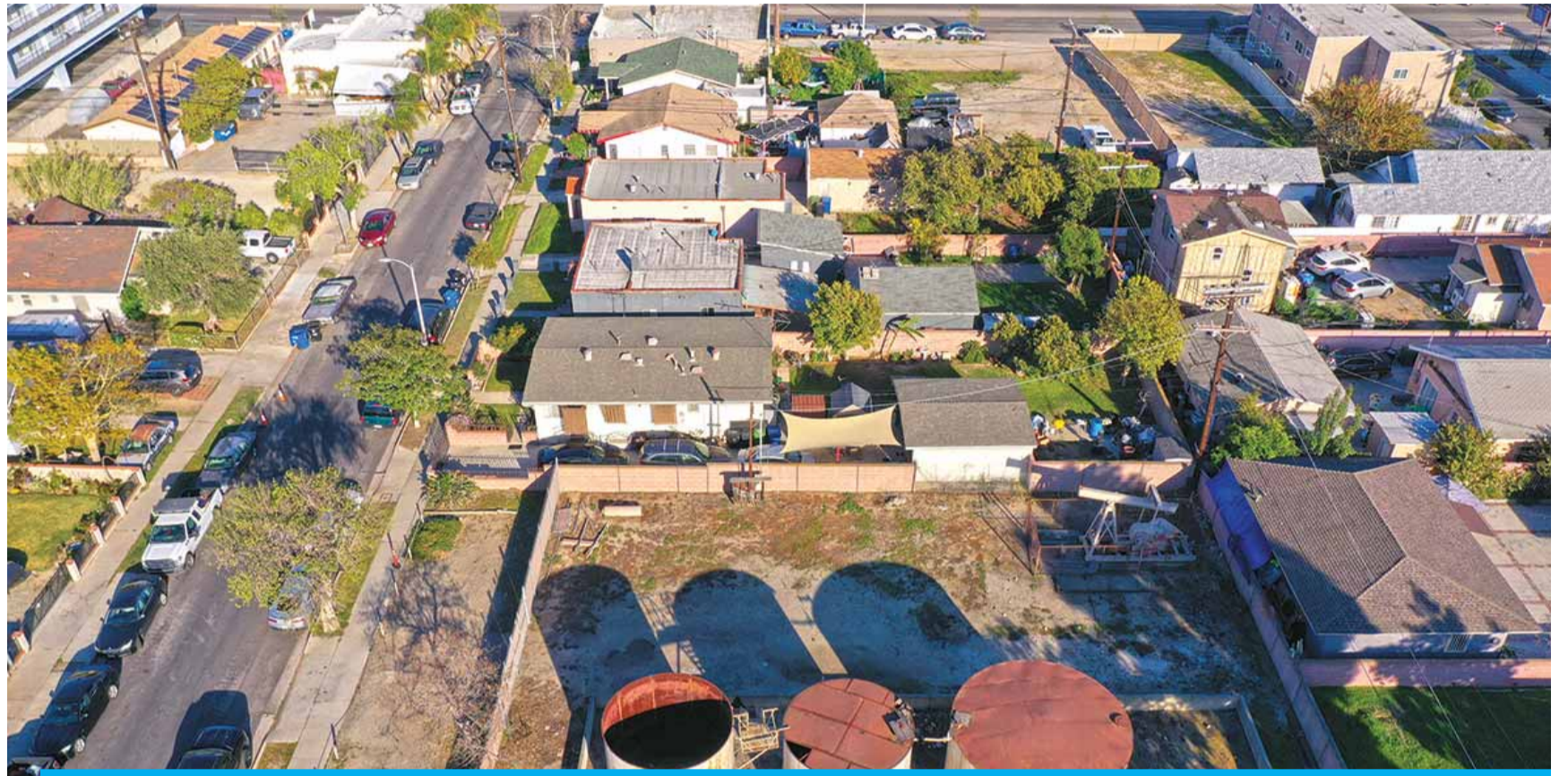
The detritus of lax regulation and the petroleum industry's booms and busts, many states have struggled to deal with these wells, which can leak oil and brine into water supplies as well as emit methane, a particularly potent greenhouse gas. In a first, Washington is making a concerted effort to plug these wells through a \$4.7 billion fund, passed as part of an expansive overhaul of the nation's infrastructure.

"The money available to the states (has) never been commensurate to the scale of the problem, and now for the first time it will be," said Adam Peltz, a senior attorney at the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) non-profit. The funds will likely not be enough to solve the problem entirely, though, and environmentalists warn that the patchwork of state laws governing oil production include many loopholes that could allow companies to continue abandoning wells.

### Disappearing owners

Since the first commercial barrel of oil was extracted in Pennsylvania in 1859, the United States has been at the center of global petroleum production. But in many US states, it took more than a century to pass regulations governing record-keeping for wells and their sealing, or plugging.

Today, the exact number of abandoned wells nationwide is unknown, but the Environmental Protection Agency this year estimated it to be around 3.5 million. The EDF estimates around nine million Americans live within a mile of a well that's considered orphaned, meaning that it's neither operating, nor has a documented owner.



WILMINGTON: Oil production equipment is seen among homes in the Wilmington neighborhood of Los Angeles, California. — AFP

In southern California's Kern County, the Central California Environmental Justice Network has received reports of abandoned petroleum infrastructure leaking oil next to schools and homes. "A lot of the infrastructure that was built, that was now abandoned... is very much centered around poor communities," said Gustavo Aguirre Jr., the network's director in the county. States have largely been left to their own devices when it comes to addressing these wells.

California plugs a few dozen per-year, according to the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission (IOGCC), and is currently in the process of sealing 56 near the city of Santa Clarita, just north of Los Angeles, some of which date back to 1949. The bulk of America's orphaned wells are thought to be in eastern states where the industry was born, and where more than 160 years later, it's not unheard of for landowners

to find a hole in the ground or a pipe protruding from the earth that's leaking oil or brine. Pennsylvania, which is thought to have the most, plugged 18 orphaned wells in 2020, according to the IOGCC. In the same year, West Virginia, which has thousands of documented orphaned wells, plugged one.

"It's been decades of neglect, just letting them get away with it, not forcing the plugging regulations," said Suan, who has had to fence off the unplugged well on his land to keep cattle from getting into the leaked oil. "And now we're stuck with all of them."

### 'Every slice'

The federal infrastructure bill Congress approved last year will likely allow a chunk of these wells to be sealed, said Ted Boettner, a senior researcher at the Ohio River Valley Institute, which studies energy in the

eastern region where oil production began. However, he warned that in some states there aren't enough inspectors or financial requirements to keep drillers from continuing to walk away from their wells. "This is just a drop, then, and the bonding coverage is so inadequate," Boettner said.

A McGill University study published last year ranked abandoned wells as the 10th greatest methane emitter in the United States, far below industries like cattle and natural gas production.

But with President Joe Biden's administration trying to curb the country's emissions where it can, and as estimates of future damage by climate change grow increasingly dire, Peltz characterized the plugging investment as a start. "If we have to give every slice of the pie, which we do, we have to get this slice of the pie," he said. — AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار  
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

## KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 03 MARCH 2022

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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	35,417	8,599.39	3.4%	3.4%	12.6%	321,115,154	157,751,852	17,958	31.0	2.7	76.8%
Main Market	10,712	6,351.65	1.0%	1.0%	7.9%	364,157,338	49,691,220	13,590	17.9	1.4	23.2%
All Share	46,128	7,850.58	2.8%	2.8%	11.5%	685,272,492	207,443,072	31,548	27.8	2.3	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
BANKS	27,094	1,821.49	3.7%	3.7%	12.2%	164,381,650	96,375,359	8,165	31.4	2.6	58.07%
BASIC MATERIALS	1,023	1,146.75	1.3%	1.3%	11.9%	17,863,885	7,805,115	739	26.9	1.6	2.19%
CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY	788	1,540.58	-0.2%	-0.2%	15.3%	8,214,225	3,010,922	922	31.7	6.6	1.69%
CONSUMER STAPLES	223	731.27	1.3%	1.3%	0.0%	3,565,720	2,095,541	415	15.1	1.6	0.48%
ENERGY	285	1,369.99	-0.1%	-0.1%	-4.1%	8,357,079	512,288	470	13.3	1.4	0.61%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	4,589	1,608.01	2.0%	2.0%	13.0%	348,282,477	53,016,464	10,607	10.7	2.1	9.84%
HEALTH CARE	403	812.74	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	0	0	0	29.0	5.1	0.86%
INDUSTRIALS	4,545	1,280.31	1.1%	1.1%	12.2%	32,716,089	17,471,380	3,900	39.7	1.4	9.74%
INSURANCE	669	1,598.25	-1.0%	-1.0%	4.2%	704,897	313,662	112	7.9	1.2	1.43%
REAL ESTATE	2,955	1,373.96	2.0%	2.0%	3.6%	77,336,520	13,357,492	3,888	16.5	1.3	6.33%
TECHNOLOGY	10	720.23	4.2%	4.2%	5.3%	26,000	2,567	9	-	0.9	0.02%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	3,824	1,246.74	2.4%	2.4%	14.4%	16,771,866	11,896,387	1,957	16.1	2.0	8.20%
UTILITIES	248	592.11	1.8%	1.8%	-1.3%	7,052,084	1,585,895	364	19.1	4.0	0.53%

### Top Gainers

Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
NCCI	144	22.03	16,393,193	2,350,677	808
URC	88.9	11.26	7,065,991	607,829	299
ALSAFAT	204	10.27	15,165,446	2,969,269	480
AGHC	450	10.02	1,994,975	880,462	230
PAPER	243	9.46	247,111	56,155	52

### Top Losers

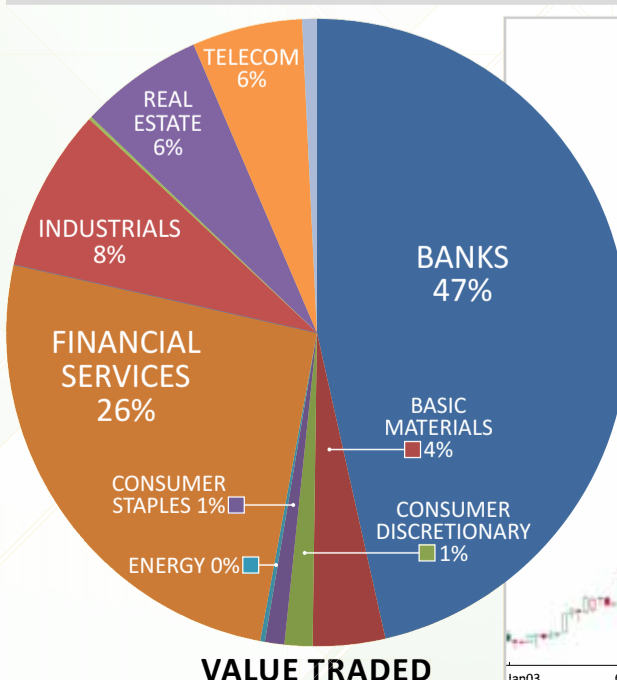
Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
ENERGYH	47.6	-8.28	1,993,148	97,395	191
FCEM	42	-7.28	170,001	7,387	13
HAYATCOMM	102	-7.27	273,600	28,480	37
UNICAP	74	-6.21	1,161,460	85,422	46
MRC	89	-5.32	45,500	4,089	14

### Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GFH	103	3.31	127,387,729	13,127,395	1,208
AUB	309	3.34	46,989,546	14,512,401	773
KPROJ	197	1.55	43,282,426	8,810,835	1,138
NBK	1103	4.55	33,588,177	36,437,583	2,277
ALOLA	82.5	-1.20	32,433,982	2,703,698	972

### Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
NBK	1,103	4.55	33,588,177	36,437,583	2,277
KFH	994	5.30	29,966,384	29,394,417	2,836
AUB	309	3.34	46,989,546	14,512,401	773
GFH	103	3.31	127,387,729	13,127,395	1,208
ZAIN	638	2.90	14,226,144	8,968,801	1,221



### Market Summary:

- Both Premier and All Share indexes reached new all-time high levels.
- Technically, the All-Share index registered a new all-time high-level closing at 7850, support levels at 7810, 7677, and 7635, while resistance at 7853. Premier index registered a new all-time high-level closing at 8599, support levels at 8539, 8369, and 8283, while resistance at 8599. The Main index closed at 6351, support levels at 6321, 6267, and 6216, while resistance at 6383.



# ELIE SAAB'S DARKER SIDE FEATURE AT PARIS FASHION WEEK



Lebanese fashion designer Elie Saab acknowledges the audience at the end of the Elie Saab Fall-Winter 2022-2023 collection fashion show during the Paris Womenswear Fashion Week in Paris. — AFP photos

The Lebanese designer, famous for his va-va-voom silhouettes and pastel palette, went in a darker direction on Saturday. Crowning the trend of black, Elie Saab experimented with eyelets this season.

The golden holes teemed over black pantsuits. The V-neck - another autumn trend - was also featured, first on floaty

black silk gowns, and then as a scallop shape, which scooped out the torso with a beautiful Grecian gold hem. Shoulders were rounded or lopped off, in another nod to the season's styles. But at times, this collection seemed to lack an overarching visual theme. — AFP



Models present creations for the Elie Saab Fall-Winter 2022-2023 collection fashion show during the Paris Womenswear Fashion Week.



Lifestyle | Features



Mia Hansson poses for a photograph with her embroidery replica of The Bayeux Tapestry at the library in Wisbech, east of England. — AFP photos



Mia Hansson looks at her work as she unrolls her embroidery replica of The Bayeux Tapestry at the library in Wisbech, east of England.

London restaurant revives Chicken Kyiv to help Ukrainians

A London restaurant has put Chicken Kiev back on its menu, renaming the 1970s-era staple Chicken Kyiv and making a donation with each order to help Ukrainian refugees. Il Portico restaurant, an Italian family restaurant in west London that opened in the 1960s, has revived the traditional breadcrumb-coated, butter-filled dish, which was once a trusted favorite of British dining. "What people really want right now is comfort," the restaurant's owner James Chiavarini told AFP, adding that staff decided to bring it back-but using the Ukrainian spelling.

"Kiev" reflects the way the city's name is pronounced in Russian, so Ukraine prefers "Kyiv". "I thought: why don't we just put a £5 (\$6.6) donation for every one sold to the Red Cross. And it's a nice way... for all of our customers to get involved in the cause," said Chiavarini. British companies and ordinary members of the public have responded with numerous charitable drives to help Ukrainians fleeing Moscow's invasion.

Reflecting the national mood, British supermarket chain Sainsbury's has also announced that it is renaming its version of the dish. The origins of the chicken dish are contested, with Russia claiming to have had a hand in it, along with the French. In Britain, it was the first chilled ready meal sold by Marks & Spencer in the late 1970s.

"It's one of those staple dishes that everyone used to joke about-you know, think about those old 70s foods: the dessert trolleys, the Black Forest gateau, the Chicken Kiev," said Chiavarini. The restaurateur added that the renaming was not intended to be "anti-Russian"-conscious that the restaurant is located close to both Russian and Ukrainian embassies. "This is here specifically just to raise money for the Red Cross, to help out people in Ukraine, especially refugees," he said. One of the diners tucking into Chicken Kyiv, Anglican priest Graham Morgan, said he enjoys the dish in any case, and "on this occasion it is, in a very small way, helping the people of Ukraine". — AFP



UK woman on 11-year mission to reproduce Bayeux Tapestry

Curling up on her sofa in the east of England, former teacher Mia Hansson carefully adds another stitch to her life-size reproduction of the world-famous Bayeux Tapestry. Swedish-born Hansson began the project in 2016, working for several hours a day to reproduce the epic 70-metre (230-foot) embroidery of William the Conqueror's invasion of England. "I had nothing to do and I was really, really bored so I thought I needed a project that I can't finish in a hurry, and what's bigger than the Bayeux Tapestry?" Hansson, 47, told AFP at her home in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire.

The nearly 1,000-year-old original is a symbol of the frequently tempestuous relations between the UK and the European mainland. Hansson, who has lived in Britain for more than 20 years,

has been working on her version for three to four hours a day for the last five-and-a-half years. In January, she reached the halfway mark. She must keep her work rolled up as her house isn't big enough to unfurl it, and knows the tapestry so intimately that she even knows the little mistakes made by the original creators. "Look here for example: you can see four soldiers' heads but only four legs, something is wrong!" she said. "But who am I to correct what they did?"

8,000 meters of wool

The 11th-century embroidery tells the story of events leading up to William the Conqueror's Norman conquest of England, culminating with King Harold Godwinson's death at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. The tapestry, believed



A detail is seen on Mia Hansson's embroidery replica of The Bayeux Tapestry at the library in Wisbech, east of England.

to have been made in England, was recognized by UNESCO in 2007 as a "Memory of the World". Today it is housed in a museum in the town of Bayeux, in the Normandy region of northwestern France. There is talk of the original visiting Britain on loan, but not before a full restoration, currently set for late 2024 and due to take at least 18 months.

Hansson said she was not much interested in the history when she began the project, but stitching the 626 characters has made her an expert. "You have everything-you have birds and dragons, camels, horses, ships, buildings... and nothing is ever the same," she says. "Even if there's two horses, they're not going to be the same. There will never be a repeat." Hansson is using seven different colors of wool on a linen base.

"If I remember correctly I calculated about 8,000 meters of wool in total," she said. She's given herself another five years-until July 13, 2027 — to finish the project, or a total of 11 years to the day after she began. "As far as I know, there's nobody else in Europe" who has reproduced the tapestry, she said, although Hansson heard of someone in Canada taking 10 years to make one. Once hers is completed, Hansson says she might sell the work, noting that her husband has been working to support her obsession. "It would be nice if it paid for itself so I can put my feet up," she said. "If someone gives me an offer I can't refuse, that's fine." — AFP



Mia Hansson sits on the couch at home while she works on her embroidery replica of The Bayeux Tapestry in Wisbech, east of England.



Mia Hansson looks at her embroidery replica of The Bayeux Tapestry at home in Wisbech, east of England.

Queen Elizabeth will no longer live in Buckingham Palace

The 95-year-old monarch and her late husband, Prince Philip - who died last April aged 99 - moved out of their London residence to isolate at Windsor Castle at the start of the coronavirus pandemic two years ago and she is said to have grown to enjoy her life there so is keen to settle permanently. Her London residence is midway through a 10-year reservicing program and although the queen had planned to temporarily move out of her private apartments and relocate to another set of rooms in the palace while her quarters were renovated, she has now changed her mind. A royal source told The Sunday Times newspaper: "The reservicing does not end until 2027. While ongoing, it is not really a place to stay long-term." While the queen has previously felt con-



ducting her work from Buckingham Palace helped with the smooth running of state affairs and was important symbolically, she will now adopt a "work from home" approach from Windsor and will "predominantly" undertake her engagements there to reduce her travel. She will return to London for occasional engagements but is believed not to have stayed

at the palace since March 2020. Royal author Hugo Vickers, who knows the queen, said: "Windsor is the place she loves. She has her memories with Prince Philip there, she has her ponies there and family nearby. It makes sense." Windsor is convenient for regular family visits from Princes Charles and William and Princess Anne, while Prince Andrew lives in Royal Lodge on the Windsor estate and Prince Edward and his wife Sophie, Countess of Wessex, are not far away at Surrey's Bagshot Park. The castle used to be used by the queen for weekend breaks and at Easter and during Royal Ascot in June, while she spends the summer at Balmoral in Aberdeenshire and Sandringham in Norfolk from December until February.

Drake files for restraining order against alleged stalker

Drake is seeking a temporary restraining order against his alleged stalker. The 35-year-old rap star has requested a temporary restraining order against Meshia Collins, who has been accused of harassing the 'Hotline Bling' hitmaker over recent years, Complex reports. Collins has been accused of showing up at Drake's house on multiple occasions and even threatening the chart-topping star. Drake is now seeking a restraining order that would stop her from going near the rapper and his four-year-old son Adonis, as well as his mother and father. Last year, Collins filed a lawsuit against Drake, after being arrested for trespassing at his Hidden Hills property in 2017. The \$4 billion lawsuit alleged defamation and invasion of privacy. However, Drake subsequently

rubbished the claims, insisting he didn't even know her name until last summer. He said: "In April 2017, somebody broke into my Los Angeles home when I was not there. At the time of that incident, I was not told any details about the trespasser, including her name. I understand that [Collins] filed a lawsuit against me in August 2021. When this lawsuit was filed and served on me, I learned that Plaintiff



is the same person who broke into my house in Los Angeles in April 2017." Meanwhile, Drake previously admitted that he's struggled to cope with the pressures of fame. The rap star confessed to suffering "overwhelming stress" at one point in time. He shared: "You get artists in this position who go crazy and don't know how to handle it." There are people who have killed themselves. There's the overwhelming stress, how tired you are, the weight on your shoulders of going out there and giving 18,000 people entertainment ... it's a lot of pressure."

Davidson and Kardashian 'looked closer than ever' in Beverly Hills

Pete Davidson and Kim Kardashian had "a great time" during a recent date in Beverly Hills. The 28-year-old comedian and Kim, 41, were spotted enjoying lunch with friends at the Beverly Hills Hotel earlier this week, and the loved-up duo appeared to be happier than ever, according to an eyewitness. The source told E! News: "Kim and Pete made their way to the pool for lunch at the Beverly Hills Hotel, where they sat at a table along with three male friends. "Both Kim and Pete seemed to be having a great time enjoying their day together." The celebrity duo started dating last year,



after Kim filed for a divorce from rap star Kanye West. Pete - who previously dated the likes of Kate Beckinsale and Kaia Gerber - is said to have been wowed by the brunette beauty over recent months. A source explained: "Pete loves that Kim is such a great, hands-on mom and also a boss. She has created an empire and Pete really respects that she has been able to balance multiple successful businesses and a stressful divorce all at the same time. "He admires her class and thinks she is a supermom." The comedian and Kim are also said to have great

"chemistry" when they're together, and they've already forged a "really special bond". The insider added: "Kim and Pete are always laughing together and are constantly in hysterics. "Pete brings out a side of Kim that she loves. She adores Pete's sense of humor and their chemistry is on another level. Kim likes that he is so authentically himself. He's also really sweet and always puts Kim first. They get along wonderfully and share a really special bond." — Bang Showbiz

Italian brand Prada suspends retail sales in Russia

Italian luxury label Prada has announced it is suspending retail sales in Russia following the invasion of Ukraine. Prada is following in the footsteps of other multinationals and luxury brands, including the French giants LVMH, Hermès and Chanel. "The Prada Group suspends its retail operations in Russia," the firm said on its LinkedIn site, adding that the move was effective from Saturday. "Our primary concern is for all colleagues and their families affected by the tragedy in Ukraine, and we will contin-

ue to support them," Prada said. "The Group will continue to monitor further developments."



## Sports

# Kipchoge wins Tokyo marathon in fourth-fastest time in history

## Ethiopia's Bekere, Gebreslase grab 2nd and 3rd positions respectively

### News in brief

#### India beat Sri Lanka

**MOHALI:** Indian skipper Rohit Sharma called Ravindra Jadeja one of the world's best all-rounders after the left-hander stood out in the team's crushing Test win over Sri Lanka yesterday. India won the first of the two Tests-Virat Kohli's 100th five-day match and Rohit's first as longer-format captain-inside three days by an innings and 222 runs in Mohali. Jadeja smashed an unbeaten 175 and claimed a match tally of nine wickets with his left-arm spin to be named man of the match. "To me he is one of the top all-rounders," Rohit told reporters. "Look at the performances. In the past as well, when we played in India his contribution with the bat lower down the order and picking those crucial wickets... he seems to be adding a lot more to his game every time he plays." Jadeja, 33, is currently placed third in the Test all-rounders list behind Ravichandran Ashwin and number one Jason Holder of the West Indies. —AFP

#### Fulham eye Premier League

**LONDON:** Fulham took another step closer to a return to the Premier League after a 2-0 win over Blackburn on Saturday took them nine points clear at the top of the Championship. The London club strengthened their bid for a top-two finish and automatic promotion thanks to first-half goals from Neeskens Kebano and Harry Wilson at Craven Cottage. Bournemouth remained in the play-off places as they missed the chance to go second as Preston grabbed a late winner in a 2-1 victory at Deepdale. Emil Riis struck in the 89th minute, shortly after Daniel Iversen had made a fine save from Bournemouth's Nat Phillips at the other end of the pitch. In the commotion that followed Riis' goal, Bournemouth had both manager Scott Parker and defender Adam Smith, on the touchline after being substituted, shown red cards. —AFP

#### Horschel, Gooch share lead

**MIAMI:** Billy Horschel rolled in a 28-foot birdie putt from off the green at 18 on Saturday to grab a share of the third-round lead alongside Tador Gooch at the Arnold Palmer Invitational. Horschel, the 2014 FedEx Cup champion, had four birdies in his one-under-par 71 on a day when gusting winds and slick greens made for tough going at Bay Hill in Orlando, Florida. Gooch joined Horschel on seven-under-par 209 with an even-par 72. "It was a tough, tough day out there," Horschel said. "I did a really good job of staying patient. To make that putt on 18 to shoot one-under par on a really tough day is really satisfying." Gooch had jarred a 33-foot birdie putt at 15 and a 14-footer at 16 to reach eight-under, then got up and down for par from a greenside bunker at the par-three 17th. But he missed a five and a half foot par putt at 18, his fourth bogey of the day dropping him into a share of the lead. —AFP

#### Ahly survive CAF scare

**JOHANNESBURG:** Mohamed Sherif scored twice as holders Al Ahly of Egypt claimed three crucial points by beating Al Merrikh of Sudan 3-2 in a CAF Champions League group match in Cairo on Saturday. Victory lifted Ahly, who are hoping to win the marquee African club competition a record third consecutive time, to second in Group A, level with Merrikh on four points but ahead on head-to-head records. Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa top the table with seven points from three matches following a shock away victory over Ahly last weekend and the clubs clash again on March 12. At the other end of the standings, Al Hilal of Sudan have just one point and must defeat arch domestic rivals Merrikh in Omdurman this Friday to have any hope of a top-two finish and a quarter-finals place. Egypt international Sherif struck after three and 34 minutes at the Al Salam Stadium to convert the supremacy of the 10-time Champions League winners into a two-goal advantage. —AFP

#### MLB cancels more games

**LOS ANGELES:** Major League Baseball has cancelled more pre-season exhibition games, a sign that the start of the regular season could be further delayed as contract negotiations with players drag on. Opening Day of the regular season, originally scheduled for March 31, has already been pushed back. MLB commissioner Rob Manfred said Tuesday that failure of the two sides to reach agreement on a series of economic issues left the league with no choice but to cancel the first two series of regular-season games. The cancellation of pre-season games at least through March 17 could have a knock-on effect leading to more regular-season cancellations. Manfred has said that a four-week exhibition season is needed to guard against player injuries. Some players, however, have indicated that a three-week pre-season would be sufficient to prepare. —AFP

#### Pogacar wins cycling classic

**SIENA:** Tadej Pogacar won the Strade Bianche one-day cycling classic on Saturday with a long-range solo attack on the gravel roads of Tuscany. The 23-year-old Tour de France champion Pogacar made his move 50 kilometres from the Siena finish line on a wind-swept day, finishing 37 seconds ahead of Spanish veteran Alejandro Valverde after nearly five hours of riding. The Team UAE leader made his way alone up a steep incline to a sun-kissed Piazza del Campo in Siena to win the 184km race at his fourth attempt, the latest scalp in his already long list of major career triumphs. Valverde defied his 41 years to finish 37sec back, the 2018 world champion arriving at the line and immediately making his way to Pogacar before embracing and congratulating the Slovenian for a phenomenal victory. —AFP

**TOKYO:** Kenya's double Olympic champion Eliud Kipchoge said he would aim for "one thing at a time" after narrowly failing to beat his own world record in a dominating performance at the Tokyo marathon yesterday. Kipchoge won the race in 2hr 2min 40sec, the fourth-fastest time in history, to give him victories in four of the world's six major marathons.

But Kipchoge was unable to beat the 2:01.39 he clocked at the 2018 Berlin marathon, hindered partly by a wrong turn around the 10-kilometre mark that cost him valuable seconds. The 37-year-old has now run three of the four fastest marathons in history and has ambitions to win a record-breaking third consecutive Olympic gold at Paris 2024. "I think I am happy to run a course record here in Tokyo," said Kipchoge, who joined a select club of athletes last year when he defended his 2016 Rio Olympics gold at the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Games.

"I always say that I aim one thing at a time," Kipchoge said. "I am going back to Kenya to talk with the coaches, talk with the management, my team about the opportunities and the goals that we are going to set together because we are working as a team." The Tokyo marathon was taking place for the first time in two years because of the pandemic, and it took an unexpected twist when the leading pack took a wrong turn around the 10km mark.

#### 'Inspire the world'

The runners had to double back on themselves after following a TV truck in the wrong direction, disrupting their rhythm and costing them about 10 seconds. Kenyan Amos Kipruto was the only runner able to keep up with Kipchoge until the world record holder broke free around the 35km mark. Kipchoge crossed the tape to savor victory finally in Tokyo, having won his Olympic title in Sapporo last summer after the race was relocated over heat concerns. "The reason I came back, first, was to run in the streets of Tokyo as I promised last year," said Kipchoge.

"Second was to come and run strong, third was to



**TOKYO:** Kenyan Eliud Kipchoge crosses the finish line to win the men's category in the Tokyo Marathon 2021 yesterday. —AFP

come and inspire the world, fourth was to come and enjoy the streets of Tokyo by telling people that if we come together we can resolve." Kipruto finished second in a personal-best 2:03.13 and Ethiopia's Tamirat Tola was third in 2:04.14. Ethiopian Mosinet Geremew, who entered the race with the fourth-fastest marathon time in history, dropped out around the 25km mark. Kenya's Brigid Kosgei, another world record holder, won the women's race in 2:16:02.

Ethiopia's Ashete Bekere was second in 2:17:58,

while her compatriot Gotytom Gebreslase was third in 2:18:18. Kipchoge was making his debut in Tokyo, one of the six major marathons alongside New York, Berlin, Chicago, London and Boston. Kipchoge had already won in London, Chicago and Berlin and it is one of his career objectives to land all six. He made history in 2019 by breaking the two-hour barrier in a specially designed challenge run, but his 1:59:40 does not count as a world record primarily because of the use of 41 rotating pacemakers. —AFP

## Vastrakar, Rana record stand sees India overwhelm Pakistan

**MOUNT MAUNGANUI:** India dispatched a meek Pakistan by 107 runs after a record stand by Pooja Vastrakar and Sneha Rana overcame a mid-innings slump in their Women's Cricket World Cup clash at Mount Maunganui yesterday. The first clash between the Asian rivals since India's victory in the 2017 World Cup ended with Pakistan all out in the 43rd over for 137 in reply to India's 244 for seven.

Pakistan sensed they had the upper hand when they had India six for 114 in the 34th over. But Vastrakar and Rana rescued the innings with a World Cup record seventh-wicket stand of 122 to get the score up to 244 for seven. Vastrakar, the player of the match, belted 67 off 59 deliveries before she was bowled by Fatima Sana at the start of the final over while Rana was unbeaten on 53 off 48. While it was a comprehensive victory

for India, captain Mithali Raj said there was plenty to work on if they were to make the playoffs.

"A very important partnership there between Pooja and Sneha brought us to the total we put on the board, but that is something we would like to address, because when you start playing the tournament, it's important that your top order scores runs," she said. At the top of the order for India, Smriti Mandhana and Deepti Sharma contributed 52 and 40 respectively and, along with Vastrakar and Rana, the quartet provided all but 32 of their total. Pakistan did not help their cause by giving away 11 extras including three in a nine-ball over from Fatima Sana that included two wides and a no ball.

While the required run rate was under five an over, Pakistan fell off the pace from the start and after seven



**TAURANGA:** India's Pooja Vastrakar (right) plays a shot as Pakistan's wicket-keeper Sidra Nawaz looks on during the Round 1 Women's Cricket World Cup match between India and Pakistan at Bay Oval in Tauranga yesterday. —AFP

overs had only eight runs on the board. At the halfway stage, they were 78 for five, compared to India's 100 for three, and struggling to cope with the spin of Rajeshwari Gayakwad and the superb glove work of 18-year-old

Richa Ghosh behind the stumps. The veteran left-armed Gayakwad took four for 31 off her 10 overs while teenager Ghosh had a hand in five dismissals with four catches and a stumping. —AFP

## Kuwait Women League



**KUWAIT:** Juventus Academy Girls football team remained on top of the League standings after beating the Gulf Academy 3-0 in the sixth round to reach 12 points. Gulf Academy remained at the bottom with 6 points only. Meanwhile Tadhmon beat Salwa Al-Sabah Club 1-0. Tadhmon is in the fourth place while Salwa dropped to fifth. Fatayat Al-Oyoun took the second place with 11 points after defeating the Schools Federation 3-0.

## PSG lose at Nice without Mbappe

**PARIS:** Paris Saint-Germain lost 1-0 at Nice in Ligue 1 on Saturday ahead of next week's trip to Real Madrid in the second leg of their blockbuster Champions League last-16 tie. Substitute Andy Delort struck two minutes from the end as Nice won for just the second time in 18 league meetings with PSG, who struggled to create chances without suspended top scorer Kylian Mbappe.

Nice bolstered their chances of qualifying directly for a first appearance in the Champions League group stage, climbing into second place and moving two points above Marseille. PSG remain 13 points clear at the top but the loss serves as a warning that Mauricio Pochettino's side must sharpen up considerably to keep their European dreams intact on Wednesday.

"We were a little bit unlucky. In the end maybe we didn't deserve to win, but we didn't deserve to lose," Pochettino told broadcaster Canal Plus. "We didn't find the solutions in the last 20 metres but we have to think about the next game against Madrid. It's very important for us but we are very disappointed with the defeat."

Mbappe's 24 goals this season are more than Lionel Messi, Neymar, Angel Di Maria and Mauro Icardi combined, and his absence at the Allianz Riviera further underlined just how important he is to the French champions. "They have (Marco) Verratti, Neymar, Di Maria, Messi... they go well with other players but there's a PSG with Kylian and one without," said Nice coach Christophe Galtier. "To beat Paris you need to

have everyone on the same wavelength. We've taken four points against them. That doesn't happen often and it makes up for silly points dropped here and there."

#### Crunch time in Madrid

Mbappe, out of contract in July and strongly linked with a move to Madrid, will return well rested in Spain as PSG try to defend their 1-0 lead the France star secured with an injury-time goal last month. Gianluigi Donnarumma and Presnel Kimpembe are also likely to be recalled after being given the night off at the Allianz Riviera, while Idrissa Gana Gueye only made a brief appearance.

Nice twice threatened early on through Amine Gouiri, who led the club to a first French Cup final since 1997 in midweek following a 2-0 victory over fourth-tier Versailles. The former Lyon forward forced Keylor Navas into a save low to his right before bending another shot just wide as Nice's quick ball movement troubled the visitors. Neymar released Di Maria in behind the Nice defense but the Argentine's attempted scoop was flicked behind by the fingertips of Walter Benitez, while Messi was kept quiet.

A repeat of the 0-0 draw when the clubs met in December looked on the cards before Delort grabbed the winner minutes after Justin Kluijver wasted a glorious chance for Nice. Calvin Stengs whipped over a cross that Delort met on the half-volley and slammed in via the underside of the crossbar to condemn PSG to a third defeat in Ligue 1 this term. Marseille could reclaim second on Sunday when they host a Monaco side wounded by their midweek penalty shootout loss to Nantes in the French Cup semi-finals. —AFP

Sports

# Brilliant LeBron scores 56 as Lakers down Warriors

## Miami Heat too hot for Sixers

LOS ANGELES: LeBron James produced a 56-point masterpiece as the Los Angeles Lakers snapped their four-game losing streak with a thrilling 124-116 win over the Golden State Warriors on Saturday. James delivered his highest single-game points tally since joining the Lakers in a pulsating battle with the Warriors, who themselves are in a mini-slump that now runs to four straight defeats.

A see-saw game at the Lakers' newly renamed Crypto.com Arena saw the lead change hands nine times, with the Lakers jumping out to a 14-point lead in the first quarter before the Warriors hit back with a 42-point second quarter display. That left the Warriors in the driving seat and leading by 14 before James and the Lakers gradually worked their way back into the contest with a late burst of scoring in the fourth quarter.

James, who finished with 56 points and 10 rebounds, said afterwards that "desperation" had inspired the Lakers. "Just desperation," he said. "We needed this win for sure. It means a lot. Obviously they're the second best team in the West. They've been struggling a little bit of late, but we've been struggling all year pretty much. For us to get a win like this in front of our home fans—they deserve it. We haven't played like much of anything of late so it's good to get a win like that in front of them."

James hopes the win can act as a catalyst for the Lakers' troubled season. The 2020 NBA champions remain out of the automatic playoff places and are ninth in the Western Conference with a 28-35 record. "We've gotta see where we can take it from here,"

James said. "We've got a two-game road trip coming up so let's see what we can do." Lakers coach Frank Vogel meanwhile saluted James' leadership. "He leads us with his consistent demeanor, trying to get better every day," Vogel said. "What he did tonight was spectacular."

### Heat too hot

James' scoring was backed with 20 points from Russell Westbrook while veteran Carmelo Anthony added 14 off the bench. Stephen Curry led the Warriors scorers with 30 points while Jordan Poole added 23. Elsewhere Saturday, Jimmy Butler scored 21 points as the Miami Heat shut down Joel Embiid to end the Philadelphia 76ers' five-game winning streak with a 99-82 victory. The much-anticipated duel between the first and second-placed Eastern Conference rivals was a mostly one-sided affair with the Sixers weakened by the decision to rest star new recruit James Harden.

That left Sixers big man Embiid isolated as the Heat's defense took control to restrict the Sixers scoring, including a season-low 14 points in the first quarter. Butler was one of four Miami players to finish in double figures. Tyler Herro added 21 off the bench, while Gabe Vincent finished with 16 points and Caleb Martin 14. Embiid led the Sixers, scoring 22 points, while Tyrese Maxey finished with 17 points and Tobias Harris 16 on a disappointing night for the visitors, who looked weary after facing Cleveland at home on Friday. Save for a brief moment in the opening minute of



LOS ANGELES: Austin Reaves #15 of the Los Angeles Lakers drives to the basket during the game against the Golden State Warriors on March 5, 2022. —AFP

the first quarter, Miami led from start to finish, racing into a 20-point lead early in the second quarter. "We wanted to set the tone and make a statement and we

were able to do that and come out with a win," said Heat point guard Vincent, paying tribute to Heat talisman Butler's performance. —AFP

## Red Bull to hold 3-on-3 Street Basketball event

KUWAIT: Red Bull Half Court, the fast-paced street basketball tournament, is launching next month in Kuwait. The event is open to the public for both attendance and participation. Red Bull Half Court will take place this March, with the following dates now in place: The qualifiers round will be March 22 and 23, at Marina Crescent. The finals round will happen on March 24, also at Marina Crescent.

Red Bull Half Court is based upon the FIBA rules for 3-on-3 basketball, with a few minor changes implemented to give it a Red Bull style flair. The most obvious of these is the overall team scoring system called the Own The Court score. Each time a team wins a game, their score increases by five points. Teams with tied scores will go head-to-head to find out who will come out on top. The top two teams with the highest Own The Score from each pool earn the right to advance to the next round. In the rare case that three teams tally the same score, a sudden-death free throw shootout will decide which teams move forward.

Starting possession for games is decided by a coin toss, with teams then being able to accept first possession or to defer to when and if a potential overtime case occurs at the end of regulation. All games are

played for a single period of 10 minutes, with no half time and no quarters. The timer only stops at one minute before the period ends. Teams must consist of a maximum of four players, three of which must be present on the court at all times. All men's games are played using the official Spalding Half Court size 7 basketballs, which are made especially for the tournament.

The tournament is an offense-heavy style of basketball borne of the American street basketball games played on courts around the United States. The half-court nature and smaller teams make it very easy to put together pick-up games at public basketball courts. The game has since spread around the world.

An additional fun aspect of Red Bull Half Court is the mandatory inclusion of music that must be played throughout the tournament to encourage both the crowd and the teams to enjoy themselves and get into a festive and celebratory mood.

Teams looking to sign up for the sporting event are directed to the official Red Bull Half Court Kuwait page at:

<https://www.redbull.com/mean/events/red-bull-half-court-kuwait/>

Additional rules following the official FIBA 3X3 format can be found here:



<https://fiba3x3.com/en/rules.html>  
The event is expected to remain true to the street basketball format and will

be fun to watch for spectators of all ages. Public attendance is welcomed and encouraged.

## Liverpool ride their luck to cut gap on Manchester City

LIVERPOOL: Jurgen Klopp hopes a nervy 1-0 win over West Ham will be more fondly remembered at the end of the season after Sadio Mane's goal closed the gap on Manchester City at the top of the table to three points. Defeat leaves West Ham still two points outside the top four having played more games than all their rivals for a place in next season's Champions League. But David Moyes' men will rue a host of missed chances to salvage a point, which would have given City breathing space at the top of the table. Pep Guardiola's men can restore their six-point advantage when they host Manchester United in a derby at the Etihad.

"You cannot only win the ones where you are flying, today we were obviously not flying and had to dig really deep," said Klopp. "I don't know if we will remember this game as one of the important ones. You have to get over the line and I was pleased with that. If you are not well organized you have to defend with passion and that's what we did. After lifting the League Cup last weekend, Liverpool remain on course for a historic quadruple of trophies."

The pursuit of City may be the biggest challenge in that quest, but a run of seven straight league wins has at least enlivened a fight for the title after City looked set to cruise towards a fourth league win in five seasons at the turn of the year. Liverpool roared out of the blocks and should have been in front within seconds when Mohamed Salah fired wastefully straight at Lukasz Fabianski with just the keeper to beat.

West Ham were without the influential presence of Declan Rice in midfield due to illness, while Jarrod Bowen limped off early in the second half with a nasty looking injury. Should Bowen be sidelined for a lengthy spell, Michail Antonio will be even more crucial to any remaining dreams of a place in the Champions League next season. Antonio has only scored once in the Premier League in 2022 but showed signs of regaining his best form as he twice forced Alisson Becker to turn the ball behind for a corner. —AFP

## Abraham boosts Roma's hopes

ROME: Tammy Abraham boosted Roma's Champions League hopes on Saturday with the only goal in a 1-0 win over Atalanta which moves his team to within three points of the top four. England

international Abraham classily finished the 13th goal of his debut Serie A season as Jose Mourinho's side closed in on fourth-placed Juventus before their match with Spezia on Sunday.

Roma are unbeaten in seven league matches and their win over Atalanta was characterised by a steeliness that had been missing earlier in the season. "A couple of months ago maybe we concede a goal in the last minute, but we win as a team and lose as a team and now we can enjoy it, go have a drink and

celebrate with the fans," Abraham said to DAZN.

The 24-year-old has decided two straight matches after netting the winning penalty in the 99th minute at Spezia last weekend and looks happy in Rome after a difficult end to his time at Chelsea under Thomas Tuchel. "There was a low time in my career and Roma lifted me up and gave me that confidence," he added. "I'll do anything for this club and I enjoy it every time I step on this pitch." —AFP

# Classifieds

## Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Rawda	22517733
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Adaliya	22517144
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Khaldiya	24848075
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Kaifan	24849807
Chest Hospital	24849400	Shamiya	24848913
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Shuwaikh	24814507
Adan Hospital	23940620	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Nuzha	22526804
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Qadsiya	22515088
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## Man City thrash Man United 4-1

Arsenal beat Watford to climb into Premier League top four



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's English defender Harry Maguire (center) tackles Manchester City's Belgian midfielder Kevin De Bruyne (right) during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Manchester United yesterday. — AFP

**MANCHESTER:** Kevin De Bruyne and Riyad Mahrez scored twice as Manchester City reopened a six-point lead at the top of the Premier League by brushing aside Manchester United 4-1 at the Etihad yesterday. Defeat means there is now a 22-point gap between the clubs and is another blow to United's chances of just qualifying for the Champions League next season.

The Red Devils now trail Arsenal by a point in fourth, who also have three games in hand. At the top of the table, Liverpool also have a game in hand to reduce City's advantage to three points. But Pep Guardiola's men responded to the pressure applied by the Reds' seven-game winning run in the league by bouncing back from two sup-par performances against Tottenham and Everton.

Just as in their meeting at Old Trafford earlier in the season, there was a gulf in class between the sides as City secured just a second league double over their local rivals since an Abu Dhabi takeover in 2008 swung the balance of power in Manchester. United were without the injured Cristiano Ronaldo and Edinson Cavani in attack, but it was defenders Raphael Varane and Luke Shaw, missing due to positive cases of coronavirus, whose presence was most keenly missed.

The visitors were breached by City's first sustained attack as Bernardo Silva's low cross found De Bruyne completely unmarked to sweep home from just inside the box. Despite their dominance over United when it comes to finishing higher in the table in recent years, City had only won one of the last seven derbies at the Etihad. United have consistently had joy on the counter-attack in that run and the pace of Jadon Sancho and Anthony Elanga caused problems once more.

Sancho left City as a 17-year-old to make

his name at Borussia Dortmund after growing tired of waiting for a pathway into the first team. The England international took time to find his feet at United after returning to the Premier League for huge £73 million (\$97 million) fee. But Sancho has been one of the few successes of Ralf Rangnick's interim spell in charge and produced a stunning finish into the far corner on 22 minutes.

United captain Harry Maguire had to cope with more reports this week of members of his own team questioning whether he is of the required standard to lead the team. More criticism is sure to come Maguire's way as he was wrong-footed twice for City's second.

Phil Foden looped the ball over his England teammate and when he was denied by a brilliant save from David de Gea, the loose ball finally found its way to De Bruyne to smash home. Rangnick's men then had to sustain a period of pressure just to get to half-time still in the game. Foden fired wide from a perfect De Bruyne pass before more De Gea heroics prevented Riyad Mahrez finding the bottom corner. The one way traffic continued after the break and only another day this season when De Gea was United's best performer prevented an even more embarrassing rout.

The Spaniard held onto De Bruyne's fierce free-kick before Mahrez blazed over from the edge of the area. But United did not learn their lesson as the Algerian was left unmarked at the edge of the box when he was picked out by De Bruyne's corner and connected sweetly to find the far corner. De Gea was forced into further saves from Mahrez and Joao Cancelo. But even he could not stop Mahrez's powerful effort to rub salt into United wounds in stoppage time after VAR ruled the City winger was not offside.

hit a bad kick straight to Daniele Rugani.

The centre-back passed to Dusan Vlahovic, whose lay off to Manuel Locatelli was followed by a quick pass to Morata, who pushed a low finish under Provedel. Spezia responded in the second half and had two great chances to level, with Emmanuel Gyasi heading a huge opportunity straight at Wojciech Szczesny five minutes after the break. Szczesny then had to be at his best to stop Kevin Agudelo, the Poland keeper charging out of his goal with 10 minutes remaining to make sure the Colombian's close-range finish didn't earn Spezia what would have been a deserved point.

### Berardi hot streak

Vlahovic's replacement at Fiorentina, Krzysztof Piatek scored his sixth goal since arriving in Florence in January in a 1-1 home draw with Verona. Piatek opened the scoring with a neatly taken finish with nine minutes on the clock but Gianluca Caprari leveled the scores from the penalty spot 10 minutes later. Lucas Torreira then missed two sitters for the hosts who are 10 points behind Juve and all but out of the Champions League race despite having a game in hand. Domenico Berardi continued his impressive season for Sassuolo with a brace of penalties in a 4-1 win at strug-

### Arsenal beat Watford

In another development, Bukayo Saka starred as Arsenal leapfrogged Manchester United into the Premier League top four yesterday with a 3-2 win at struggling Watford. Martin Odegaard struck early for the visitors before Cucho Hernandez equalised with a stunning overhead kick minutes later but England star Saka restored Arsenal's lead in an entertaining first half. Brazilian winger Gabriel Martinelli made it 3-1 early in the second half and the Gunners held out for a crucial win despite a late goal from Moussa Sissoko.

The victory lifted Mikel Arteta's men into fourth place in the Premier League—one point ahead of United, who were in action in the later kick-off against leaders Manchester City. Arteta, whose team started the season with three straight league defeats, said it was "very pleasing" to be in the top four, although he felt the win should have been more comfortable. "We know how difficult it is to be in this position in this league," he told Sky Sports. "We've earned it—we have come a long way as a team."

Arteta was asked about the role he played in the build-up to Arsenal's third goal—he grabbed the ball when it went out of play and quickly passed it to Saka, who launched the ultimately decisive move with a throw-in. Arsenal jokingly awarded their manager an assist on their Twitter feed. "I saw an advantage and I took it," said Arteta. "We have to be alive and that is the way I live the game. I try to instil that in the team as well."

Watford had the ball in the net a few seconds after kick-off but Emmanuel Dennis's effort was ruled out for offside. Arsenal settled quickly after their early fright and were in front in the fifth minute after neat work down the right, with Saka cutting back to Odegaard, who finished with his left foot. — AFP

gling Venezia. Italy winger Berardi struck from the spot in the 17th and 71st minutes in an entertaining match in which Giacomo Raspadori opened the scoring in the second minute and Gianluca Scamacca netted another spot-kick just before the half-hour mark.

Berardi has scored 12 times this league season and is also in double figures for assists in the best campaign of his career. With Federico Chiesa out for the season the 27-year-old will be in Italy boss Roberto Mancini's thoughts ahead of the Azzurri's crucial 2022 World Cup qualification play-offs later this month. Alessio Dionisi's flamboyant Sassuolo sit 10th on 39 points after a win which wasn't all one-way traffic on the Venice Lagoon.

Thomas Henry cut the deficit to two goals when he headed home his sixth of the season shortly after Scamacca scored, but the hosts missed chances in a strong period just after half-time and Berardi punished their profligacy. Paolo Zanetti's Venezia are third-from-bottom on 22 points, three behind Cagliari who were thumped 3-0 by Lazio on Saturday. Genoa are four points behind Venezia in 19th after Alexander Blessin became the first Serie A coach to draw his first six matches in charge following a goal-less stalemate with Empoli. — AFP

## Barcelona go third



ELCHE: Elche's Argentinian forward Lucas Boye (center) vies with Barcelona's Spanish midfielder Sergio Busquets (left) and Barcelona's Spanish defender Gerard Pique for a header during the Spanish league football match yesterday. — AFP

**MADRID:** Barcelona moved up to third in La Liga yesterday after coming from behind to beat Elche 2-1, with Memphis Depay scoring a late penalty to seal a hard-fought victory. Elche took a surprise lead at the Martinez Valero when Fidel capitalized on a Pedri error on the stroke of half-time but Barca came storming back thanks to two substitutes. Ferran Torres diverted in from close range on the hour before Depay scored an 84th-minute penalty after the striker had drawn Elche's Antonio Barragan into a handball.

"It seemed we were going to lose a game we did not deserve to lose," said Barca coach Xavi Hernandez. "We deserved to win by more than one goal." Victory sends Barcelona two points above Real Betis and three clear of Atletico Madrid in the table, before Betis and Atletico face each other in a crucial battle for the top four later on.

It also continues an impressive run of form for Xavi's side, who have not lost in the league since December and came into this game on the back of scoring four times in three consecutive games for the first time since 2017. When Xavi was appointed in November, Barcelona sat ninth but they might now justifiably have their sights set on Sevilla, who are only seven points ahead in second.

"We have four wins in a row, this has not happened for a long time, it's a good sign," said Xavi. "The players believe in what we are doing. We are on the right path." Barcelona had the better of the chances in the first half, the best of them falling to Frenkie de Jong, who darted in behind but failed to beat Edgar Badia. Then Ousmane Dembele sprinted clear and his lifted shot was parried out to De Jong, whose follow-up was cleared off the line by Diego Gonzalez.

Elche then landed a sucker-punch a

minute before half-time as Barca failed to deal with a straight-forward goal-kick downfield and amid the confusion, Pedri poked the ball back, past his own defense and through to Fidel. Fidel took a touch and fired into the far corner. Barcelona equalized on the hour as they worked the ball from left to right, where Dembele drove to the line and hung up a cross. Jordi Alba was unable to catch the ball clearly but Torres was perfectly placed to steer in.

Elche were tiring, Barca pushing for a winner and in the 82nd minute they got their chance as Depay wriggled around Barragan, the ball popped up and Barragan instinctively lifted his arm to meet it. The referee consulted the replay, pointed to the spot and Depay swept the penalty into the top corner. There was more late drama to come, as Alba and Sergio Busquets were both relieved to see penalty claims for handballs waved away before Guido Carrillo headed towards the corner in the 94th minute. Marc-Andre ter Stegen dived and Barca held on.

In another development, Real Madrid enjoyed the perfect preparation for Paris Saint-Germain by thrashing Real Sociedad 4-1 on Saturday to move eight points clear at the top of La Liga. Madrid had to come from behind at the Santiago Bernabeu as two scintillating long-range strikes from Eduardo Camavinga and Luka Modric turned the game on its head, before a Karim Benzema penalty and a tap-in for Marco Asensio completed an emphatic victory.

Camavinga's strike, his second goal for Madrid, was timely given the 19-year-old may have to start against PSG on Wednesday, with Toni Kroos, absent here, struggling with a hamstring strain. "Camavinga is definitely an option," said Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti. — AFP

## Juve boost title push

**MILAN:** Juventus continued their slow creep into the Serie A title race yesterday with a 1-0 win over Spezia which moved them to within five points of leaders Inter Milan. Alvaro Morata scored for the first time since mid-January with 20 minutes on the clock at the Allianz Stadium in Turin to keep Juve on the heels of champions Inter, who hammered Salernitana 5-0 on Friday. Juve could find themselves seven points from the summit as Napoli hosted AC Milan in late match, with both a point behind Inter ahead of one of the biggest matches of the season so far.

However, regardless of the result at the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona, Juve are applying pressure thanks to a run of 14 league matches without defeat stretching back to the end of November. Yesterday's was a far from accomplished performance from a team missing a host of players including Paulo Dybala, Weston McKennie, Giorgio Chiellini, Leonardo Bonucci and Denis Zakaria. Juve's only goal came thanks to a dreadful error from Spezia goalkeeper Ivan Provedel, who