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# Saudi Arabia executes record 81 in one day for terrorism

## Riyadh confirms 10-year travel ban for freed blogger Raif Badawi

### News in brief



Space station could crash: Roscosmos

**MOSCOW:** Western sanctions against Russia could cause the International Space Station to crash, the head of Russian space agency Roscosmos warned yesterday. According to Dmitry Rogozin, the sanctions could disrupt the operation of Russian spacecraft servicing the ISS. As a result, the Russian segment of the station - which helps correct its orbit - could be affected, causing the 500-tonne structure to "fall down into the sea or onto land". Publishing a map of the locations where the ISS could possibly come down, he pointed out that it was unlikely to be in Russia. — AFP

### Portugal detains rabbi

**LISBON:** Portuguese prosecutors have detained a rabbi and carried out raids over the naturalization process of a number of Jewish people, including Roman Abramovich, the Russian billionaire owner of Chelsea football club. Portugal's Public Prosecution Service said late Friday that it has detained the leader of Porto's Jewish community, Daniel Litvak, as part of their investigation into possible cases of "influence peddling, active corruption, falsification of documents, money laundering or even tax evasion". Litvak was arrested as he was preparing to travel to the Zionist entity. — AFP



Superyacht Solaris, owned by the Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich, sails towards the luxury yacht marina Porto Montenegro yesterday. — AFP

### Abramovich superyacht in Montenegro

**TIVAT, Montenegro:** A superyacht belonging to the Russian billionaire owner of Chelsea football club sanctioned over Russia's invasion of Ukraine anchored off Montenegro yesterday. Roman Abramovich's 140-m-long Solaris cruised into the Porto Montenegro marina on the Balkan country's Adriatic coastline. The United Kingdom on Thursday hit Abramovich with an assets freeze and travel ban as part of new sanctions against seven Russian oligarchs it described as part of Russian President Vladimir Putin's inner circle. The football club owner has denied any association. Canada followed suit the next day. — AFP

**RIYADH:** Saudi Arabia said yesterday it executed a record 81 people in one day for a variety of terrorism-related offences, exceeding the total number it sentenced to death in total last year. All had been "found guilty of committing multiple heinous crimes", the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported, saying they included convicts linked to the Islamic State group, or to Al-Qaeda, Yemen's Houthi rebel forces or "other terrorist organizations".

Those executed had been plotting attacks in the kingdom - including killing "a large number" of civilians and members of the security forces, the SPA statement read. "They also include convictions for targeting government personnel and vital economic sites, the killing of law enforcement

officers and maiming their bodies, and planting land mines to target police vehicles," the SPA said. "The convictions include crimes of kidnapping, torture, rape, smuggling arms and bombs into the kingdom," it added.

Of the 81 people killed - the kingdom's highest number of recorded executions in one day - 73 were Saudi citizens, seven were Yemeni and one was a Syrian national. SPA said all those executed were tried in Saudi courts, with trials overseen by 13 judges, held over three separate stages for each individual. "The kingdom will continue to take a strict and unwavering stance against terrorism and extremist ideologies that threaten stability," the report by SPA added.

The wealthy Gulf country has one of the world's highest execution rates, and has often carried out previous death sentences by beheading. Saudi has been the target of a series of deadly shootings and bombings since late 2014 carried out by Islamic State group fighters. Saudi Arabia is also leading a military coalition that has been fighting in Yemen since 2015 to support the government against Iran-backed Houthi rebels, and who have launched strikes in return on the kingdom.

Yesterday's announcement of 81 deaths marks more than the total of 69 executions in all of 2021. Around 50 countries worldwide continue to use the death penalty.

Continued on Page 2

## Russia squeezes Kyiv, shelling near Mariupol mosque

**KYIV:** Russian forces upped pressure on Kyiv yesterday, pummeling civilian areas in other Ukrainian cities, amid fresh efforts to get aid to the devastated port city of Mariupol. Russian strikes destroyed the airport in the town of Vasylkiv yesterday morning, about 40 km south of Kyiv, while an oil depot was also hit and caught fire, the mayor said.

The northwest suburbs of the capital, including Irpin and Bucha, have already endured days of heavy bombardment while Russian armored vehicles are advancing on the northeastern edge. Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak on Friday called it a "city under siege", while Mayor Vitali Klitschko said yesterday Kyiv was reinforcing defenses and stockpiling food and medicine. Buses were continuing to bring refugees into the city from the hard-hit suburbs Klitschko said in a video message, adding: "We will not give up."

Continued on Page 2



KYIV: A Ukrainian serviceman exits a damaged building after shelling in the capital yesterday. — AFP

## Russia ramps up ties with Sudan as Ukraine war rages

**KHARTOUM:** As much of the West seeks to isolate Russia after it invaded Ukraine, experts say Moscow is boosting relations with its longtime African ally Sudan, eyeing its gold wealth and strategic location. Khartoum has lost crucial Western support since army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan led a military coup last October, a move that triggered broad condemna-

tion and punitive measures, including a suspension of \$700 million in US aid. On Feb 23, the day before Russia invaded its neighbor, a Sudanese delegation headed by powerful paramilitary commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo arrived in Moscow for an eight-day visit. The two sides discussed "diplomatic, political and economic topics", as well as "Russian-Sudanese national security...joint cooperation and counterterrorism", said Daglo, commonly known as Hemei, at a news conference upon his return.

Sudan relied militarily on Russia under strongman Omar Al-Bashir, who was ousted in 2019 following three decades in power marked by international isolation and crippling US sanctions. Russian private companies have reportedly benefited from Sudan's gold

mines by ramping up ties with the military and Daglo's powerful Rapid Support Forces, which emerged from the Janjaweed militias accused of atrocities during the Darfur conflict that erupted in 2003.

"Moscow has been following a clear and coherent policy... to serve its interests" in Sudan and in Africa more broadly, analyst Khaled Al-Tijani said. "Russian investments in Sudan, especially in gold, and ties with security forces have remained shrouded in ambiguity," he added. Researcher Ahmed Hussein said that Daglo likely discussed in Moscow arrangements between his forces and "Russian (security) apparatuses with links in Sudan and Africa, especially Wagner Group".

Continued on Page 2

## Iran says US failed to stop oil exports

**TEHRAN/PARIS:** Iran said yesterday that US attempts to seize its tankers and oil cargo had failed to stop exports that are subject to sanctions imposed by its arch foe. The comments by Iran's oil minister, Jawad Owji, came after US court documents showed the United States had seized the cargo of two tankers accused of carrying Iranian crude. "Attempts by the enemy to reduce Iran's oil exports and capture the country's ships have

taken place many times" in past months, Owji said.

"When the enemy saw that it was helpless and could not stop our exports and contracts, it went for our ships," he said, quoted by the government's Iran newspaper. Court documents that have been made public showed US authorities seized several weeks ago 700,000 barrels of oil which they said had left Iran in 2020 before being transferred to other vessels to avoid detection.

The United States had previously issued a number of warrants to seize the cargo of tankers carrying Iranian oil to different countries. It confirmed in Aug 2020 the seizure of fuel aboard four tankers sent by Iran to Venezuela.

Continued on Page 2



TEHRAN: Iranians walk past an anti-US mural on a wall of the former United States embassy yesterday. — AFP

## Local

# 'Splendors of India' showcases India's diverse culture, products

## Indian embassy hosts daylong festival at Yarmouk Cultural Centre



KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador Sibi George cuts the ribbon to officially inaugurate the day-long festival in the presence of Kamel Abdul Jalil and Ahmad Bastaki.

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: Embassy of India, Kuwait yesterday hosted a day-long cultural event titled 'Splendors of India-Festival in Kuwait', showcasing India's cultural diversity and some well-known Indian products that are available in Kuwait. The festival was held at Kuwait's prestigious Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah Museum-Yarmouk Cultural Centre and was part of the ongoing year-long celebrations, marking 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between Kuwait and India and 75th anniversary year of India's independence.

Indian Ambassador Sibi George inaugurated the day-long festival in the presence of Kamel Abdul Jalil, secretary general of National Council of Culture and Arts (NCCAL), Ahmad Bastaki

(Kuwait Investment Authority), embassy officials, exhibition participants and visitors. The event consisted of "Teas of India" exhibition, book exhibition, demonstration of Indian martial arts, live music and dance performances and screening of select Bollywood films.

"This is part of our self-reliant India (Aatmanirbhar India) and 3T (trade, technology and tourism) series of events we organize regularly at the embassy. I am confident that today's festival will further help build our partnership with Kuwait at both economic and cultural levels. It will further inspire our Kuwaiti friends to make India as their next tourism destination," the ambassador said in his inaugural address.

The ambassador dedicated yesterday 'Splendors of India' festival to more than fifty



Indian Ambassador Sibi George accompanied by Kamel Abdul Jalil visits the book exhibition pavilion.

thousand Indian school children who are studying in various Indian schools in Kuwait. "I recall the many challenges our children faced during the pandemic. The pandemic deprived them of two years of their childhood. Despite the challenges, they have managed an extraordinarily academic year with extraordinary resilience and understanding. Now that they are back to school, I wish them all a very successful academic year 2022. In coming weeks and months, I hope to connect directly with our children, our teachers and parents," he said.

The embassy will shortly launch a registration drive of all Indian children enabling them to connect with the embassy directly, he said.

The ambassador said the embassy had a series of cultural and business events in collaboration

with various organizations and institutions in Kuwait since the launch of the yearlong celebrations in June last year during the visit of India's External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar. He also recalled the MoU the embassy signed with NCCAL for year-long cultural events and the joint events both Kuwait and India held together.

"I am happy to see the huge turnover at today's festival and the overwhelming response from the participants," the ambassador told the Kuwait Times on the sidelines of the exhibition. He said the embassy is enrolling participants only through registration and strictly following the COVID-19 health protocol. Later in the evening, the embassy honored Indian students and artists who have been participating in the various cultural events organized by the embassy during 2021.

## Gulf Bank celebrates International Women's Day with workshop

KUWAIT: On the occasion of International Women's Day, Gulf Bank's Human Resources department organized a workshop for all bank employees to attend titled "Levelling the Playing Field", which has a number of leaders from the bank participating by sharing their wisdom and success stories in relation to empowering women.

The workshop included a panel discussion that revolved around topics that affect women in the workplace, such as: self-empowerment, how to be an ally to your colleagues, different ways to balance work and social life, and showing

appreciation to those who deserve it.

The workshop panelists were: The Deputy General Manager of Corporate Banking, Faisal Algharabally, The Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking, Head of Marketing, Najla Al-Eissa, The Assistant Manager of Corporate Banking, Noura Al-Houti, The Executive Manager of Human Resources, Hamed AlTamimi.

On this occasion, Salma Al-Hajjaj, General Manager of Human Resources, stated that Gulf Bank's interest in women empowerment is to implement the bank's strategy for 2025, which is

also aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development goals that advocates for equal rights in the workplace and society. This was also incorporated in the decision of the Gulf Bank's Board of Directors to cancel all cases of discrimination between male and female employees to ensure equality, which makes Gulf Bank the first to implement this decision in Kuwait.

Hajjaj indicated that these activities aim to shed light on the importance of empowering women at the bank and in society. By exchanging success stories to raise awareness, Gulf Bank takes the leading role in the banking and commercial sector.

"Our employees make us proud as we firmly believe that establishing a working environment that promotes equality will support and empower women at the bank and help us achieve even greater success. It also creates a healthy work environment for all employees, thus,

allowing Gulf Bank to be the preferred working destination in the Kuwaiti financial sector," she added.

She noted by empowering women at work, there will be an increase in talent and expertise at the bank since they will be working alongside their male colleagues. This will diversify the innovative ideas in different fields at the bank. It will create a healthy competitive atmosphere that will encourage employees to reach leading positions, which will support Gulf Bank in the decision-making process that contributes to the bank's strategy and achieving goals.

She concluded by stating: "Our employees are the reason behind our success at Gulf Bank, and for this reason, we always work towards creating a healthier work environment that is based on equality and fairness, while engaging and empowering the employees to advance their careers and maintain the bank's status as an employer of choice

for current employees and job seekers."

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.

## Russia ramps up ties with Sudan as...

Continued from Page 1

Wagner, a Russian private military contractor with links to the Kremlin, has faced accusations of involvement in turmoil in Sudan's neighbors the Central African Republic and Libya, while French President Emmanuel Macron last month warned of the shadowy group's "predatory intentions" in Mali.

The European Council on Foreign Relations has said Wagner personnel were deployed in Sudan "to mining exploration sites" following a 2017 meeting between Bashir and Russian President Vladimir Putin, who agreed gold mining deals and negotiated the construction of a Russian naval base on Sudan's Red Sea coast. Wagner personnel subsequently provided "a range of political and military assistance" to Bashir's regime, according to the ECFR.

Also in 2017, Russian mining firm M Invest gained preferential access to Sudan's gold reserves, according to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Three years later, the US imposed sanctions on Russian oligarch Yevgeny Prigozhin, who has links to M Invest and is believed to own Wagner, for "exploiting Sudan's natural resources for personal gain and spreading malign influence around the globe". The ECFR said Wagner had formed "a triangle of Russian influence linking Sudan, the Central African Republic and Libya", reflecting "Moscow's strategic interest in expanding its Africa footprint". Daglo's RSF has itself been involved in the conflicts in Libya and Yemen.

As for the planned naval base in the strategic city of Port Sudan, "the Russians need to get to warm-water ports, and the Red Sea is an integral part of that ambition," Hussein said. In Dec 2020, Russia announced a 25-year deal with Sudan to build and operate the base, which would host nuclear-powered vessels and up to 300 military and civilian personnel. The same month, Washington removed Khartoum's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism, a listing that had long crippled its economy. — AFP

## Russia squeezes Kyiv, shelling near...

Continued from Page 1

Other cities have already fallen or been surrounded following Russia's invasion of its neighbor on Feb 24, with civilians targeted in what the United Nations warned could amount to war crimes. The southern port city of Mariupol is facing what Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba called "the worst humanitarian catastrophe on the planet", with more than 1,500 civilians dead in 12 days.

Kyiv said yesterday a Mariupol mosque in which about 80 civilians, including Turks, had taken refuge, was shelled by Russia, a claim denied by one of those sheltering at the site. "The mosque of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent and his wife Roxolana (Hurrem Sultan) in Mariupol was shelled by Russian invaders," the ministry wrote on its Twitter account. "More than 80 adults and

children are sheltering there, including Turkish citizens," it added, without specifying when the strike took place.

The strategically-located city has been under a devastating siege for days. However, Ismail Hacıoğlu, president of the Suleiman Mosque Association in Mariupol, who was contacted by Turkish TV channel HaberTurk early yesterday afternoon, said the area was under fire but the mosque itself had not been hit.

"The Russians are bombing the area... which is 2 kilometers from the mosque, and a bomb fell at a distance of 700 meters from the mosque," he said earlier on Instagram. Thirty Turkish civilians are inside the building, "including children", he said, without specifying the number. A total of 86 Turkish citizens are still in the city of Mariupol, whom his association is seeking to gather, Hacıoğlu told Turkish television.

He said his association had already tried four times to evacuate the Turks by forming a convoy "but the Russians did not let us through" roadblocks. "We will try a fifth time," he said. On March 7, the Turkish consulate in Odessa, a major port in southern Ukraine, had called on Twitter for Turkish nationals in Mariupol to "take shelter" in the mosque, "with a view to evacuation to our country". — AFP

## Saudi Arabia executes record...

Continued from Page 1

In 2020, 88 percent of all 483 reported executions took place in just four countries: Iran, with 246, followed by Egypt with 107, Iraq with 45, and then Saudi Arabia, who carried out 27 that year, according to Amnesty International.

The executions yesterday were announced a day after the release of Saudi blogger and human rights activist Raif Badawi, who had been sentenced to 1,000 lashes and 10 years' prison on charges of insulting Islam. But Badawi, who received only 50 lashes before the punishment was halted following global condemnation, is now subject to a 10-year travel ban, officials confirmed to AFP yesterday. It means the 38-year-old is unable to rejoin his wife Ensaf Haidar and their three children in Canada, where they fled following his arrest.

On Friday, Badawi's wife Haidar told AFP: "Raif called me. He is free." It was later confirmed by a Saudi security official, but details of Badawi's

release were not revealed. Every Friday for years, Haidar - who fled to Canada after Badawi's arrest and has since become a Canadian citizen - held a public vigil for him. "I jumped when I found out. I couldn't believe it. I can't wait to see my dad, I'm so excited," one of his daughters, Najwa Badawi, 18, had told AFP.

Raif Badawi's sister, Samar Badawi, as well as activist Nassima Al-Sadah, released in 2021, also remain stranded in the kingdom. Canada's Quebec province has paved the way for Badawi to come to the country if he chooses by placing him on a priority list of potential immigrants for humanitarian reasons. "Finally!" Quebec Premier Francois Legault tweeted Friday about his release, adding: "I keep thinking about the children who will finally see their father!"

Badawi studied economics and ran an institute for teaching English and computer skills prior to his arrest, according to his wife. Known for his writings in support of freedom of expression, the blogger won the 2014 Reporters Without Borders prize in the net-citizen category. He was also awarded the Sakharov Prize for Freedom by the European Parliament in 2015, and in 2015 and 2016, he was among the nominees for the Nobel Peace Prize. — AFP

## Iran says US failed to stop...

Continued from Page 1

"Now you have heard one or two cases, but several other similar cases have occurred, which fortunately were thwarted by the good strength of the armed forces," Owji said.

The minister did not elaborate, but cited an announcement by Iran's Revolutionary Guards that they had stopped an attempt by the US navy to seize a tanker carrying Iranian oil in the Sea of Oman in October. US defense officials rejected that account, and said Iranians themselves had seized a tanker before taking it to Iranian waters.

The latest announcement comes against the backdrop of a pause in negotiations to restore the 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and world powers. The deal gave Iran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program. But the US unilaterally withdrew from the accord in 2018 under then-president Donald Trump and imposed tough economic sanctions on different sectors,

including oil exports.

Owji said however that "oil exports have increased under the toughest sanctions". "Both the Americans and the countries that have subjected us to oppressive sanctions have now come to the conclusion that these sanctions will eventually become ineffective and that their intention to reduce exports to zero will not be possible," he added.

Meanwhile, Britain, France and Germany warned yesterday against moves to "exploit" the Iran nuclear negotiations - a tacit warning to Russia which is accused of delaying an agreement to gain leverage in its invasion of Ukraine. Negotiators in Vienna said Friday they had halted talks despite having almost sealed a deal to revive the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to contain Iran's nuclear activities.

The setback came after Russia said it was demanding guarantees that the Western sanctions imposed on its economy following its invasion of Ukraine would not affect its trade with Iran. "Nobody should seek to exploit JCPOA negotiations to obtain assurances that are separate to the JCPOA," said a statement yesterday from the spokespersons for the British, French and German foreign ministries - the three European parties to the negotiations. — AFP

Local

# Kuwait sets new controls for governorates to accept donations

Govt defends new decision: Protects sovereignty; regulates donations

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah issued a decision setting controls by which Kuwait's governorates can accept gifts and donations from inside or outside the country. The new decision raised questions on the need to allow governorates to collect donations especially from organizations outside Kuwait, while some MPs even raised concern regarding the potential that this practice might leave harmful effect on national security, according to their speculations.

The government released a statement defending its decision, saying that it helps make sure that donors are not entitled to any privileges or securities in exchange of their donations, and ensures that donations are made as per controls protecting Kuwait's unity, sovereignty and stability. Kuwait's governorates have twinning agreements with various cities around the world and the new decision sets clear mechanisms to use donations collected as part of those agreements and make sure that they are spent appropriately. Government

Spokesman Dr Tareq Al-Mezrem further explained in the statement.

The new controls, published in the state's official gazette 'Kuwait Al-Youm' today, allow governorates to accept gifts and donations from individuals, as well as governmental and nongovernmental organizations including those in other countries, in order to set up or improve projects or enhance services presented within the governorate.

The gifts or donations can be in cash or other means, according to the decision, and must meet the following conditions to be accepted: It must not leave harmful effects on Kuwait's unity, sovereignty and social stability; Must have a legitimate goal that does not violate public order or Islamic values; Must not be offered in exchange of any privileges or priorities presented to the donor. Furthermore, the decision prohibits governorates from asking for gifts or donations. It gives governors the authority to give initial approval on a donation request or reject it before submitting it to the Cabinet for final say.



## Donations from inside or outside Kuwait



## Polish official praises KRCS' relief of stricken people

**VIENNA:** The chairman of Polish Red Cross Jerzy Bisek on Friday hailed Kuwait Red Crescent Society's (KRCS) distinctive role in relieving afflicted people, natural and man-made catastrophes worldwide. This came during his meeting with KRCS chief Dr Hilal Al-Sayer on providing Poland with 33.5 tons of aid to Ukrainian refugees. He said that KRCS was the first to respond for the relief call to help those who are fleeing from Ukraine, noting that they still need more relief aid. Meanwhile, Dr Sayer said that during their meeting, they discussed ways to enhance cooperation and joint coordination to help the Ukrainian

refugees as they are in need of more relief. He affirmed the society's readiness to coordinate with humanitarian and social organizations for improving the conditions of those affected by humanitarian crisis. The KRCS delegation which arrived in Poland on Thursday includes Dr Sayer, KRCS General Secretary Maha Al-Barjas, chairman's councilor Musaed Al-Enzi and society's member Abdulrahman Al-Saleh. Under the instructions of His Highness the Amir, the Kuwaiti government decided recently to send assistance to the tune of \$2 million for the Ukrainian refugees and internally displaced people. —KUNA



## Kuwait records lowest COVID-19 daily rate in 2022

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwaiti Ministry of Health (MoH) yesterday said it has recorded 259 new infection cases with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) over the past 24 hours; the lowest daily rate in 2022, raising the tally of the cases to 625,461. MoH Spokesperson Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said that 496 new recovery cases were listed during the same

period, increasing the total number of the cured to 618,690, adding that one death were recorded, thus the death toll climbed to 2,550. There were 16 cases at intensive care units as of yesterday in addition to 110 cases in COVID-19 wards, while total active cases dropped to 4,221. Dr Sanad also reported 6,518 new PCR tests were freshly conducted during the same period, with the whole count of these examinations hitting 7.7 million. Kuwait's Ministry of Health announced that it would stop releasing the daily bulletin for COVID-19 cases on its social media accounts starting from this week. The Ministry will still make daily information related to COVID-19 available on its website, Dr Sanad said.

## Link between stomach bacteria and COVID

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Internist, Gastroenterologist and Hepatologist Dr Wafaa Al-Hashash said there is a close link between the novel coronavirus and the stomach bacteria Helicobacter pylori. Dr Hashash said COVID-19 affects the body and gets linked to ACE2 receptors that are mostly in the digestive system. So when someone with H pylori is infected with COVID-19, they can experience digestive system symptoms like vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, loss of appetite and weight loss.

Dr Hashash said recent studies showed that Helicobacter pylori increases the number of receptors on the digestive system cell walls, so infection by COVID-19 leads to a drop in immunity and increases the activities of H pylori. She said H pylori is widespread in the world with around

4.4 billion people worldwide infected with it. The rate of recovery is up to 80 percent, yet it can infect the same person again even after it is eradicated.

Dr Hashash said the rate of its prevalence in Kuwait matches that of the world, as there are more than 2 million persons infected with it in Kuwait, both citizens and residents. She said H pylori reaches the stomach through food or unclean hands, and can also get there by eating unwashed vegetables and fruits. She said one has to care for personal hygiene and wash hands well when preparing food, while those suffering from gastrointestinal symptoms should be treated to prevent infecting the rest of the family, besides strictly following the treatment plan.



Dr Wafaa Al-Hashash



**KUWAIT:** Commerce and Industry ministry inspectors issued 10 citations during an inspection tour of stores around Kuwait. Nine stores were cited for not placing price tags on products, while one was cited for artificial price hiking.

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## Local

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## News in brief

## Kuwait's Amir congratulates Korean president-designate

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable to the President-designate of the friendly Republic of Korea Yoon Suk-yeol to congratulate him on the presidential election victory. In his cable, His Highness the Amir also wished the new Korean leader everlasting wellbeing and all success in his mission. He wished further progress and improvement for the relations between the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Korea. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent similar congratulatory cables to the Korean leader.

## Kuwait oil price drops to \$113.08 pb

**KUWAIT:** The price of Kuwaiti oil dropped by \$4.81 to \$113.08 per barrel on Friday as opposed to \$117.89 pb the day before, the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation said yesterday. Globally, the Brent crude and the West Texas Intermediate rose by \$3.34 and \$3.31, settling both at \$112.67 pb and \$109.33 pb respectively.

## Kuwait condemns attack on Saudi refinery

**KUWAIT:** The Foreign Ministry on Friday expressed, in the strongest terms, Kuwait's condemnation and denunciation of the terrorist drone assault against Saudi Arabia oil refinery in Riyadh. In a statement, the Ministry stressed this cowardly attack does not only target Saudi Arabia's security and the region's stability, but it also targets global energy supplies and affects economy globally. Therefore, Kuwait renews calls for the international community to double its efforts to deter and end these terrorist attacks, and hold accountable the perpetrators, according to the statement. The Ministry affirmed Kuwait's full support to the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in all steps it takes to preserve its security, stability and sovereignty, it made clear.

## Ooredoo, IOM Kuwait celebrate Int'l Women's Day through arts

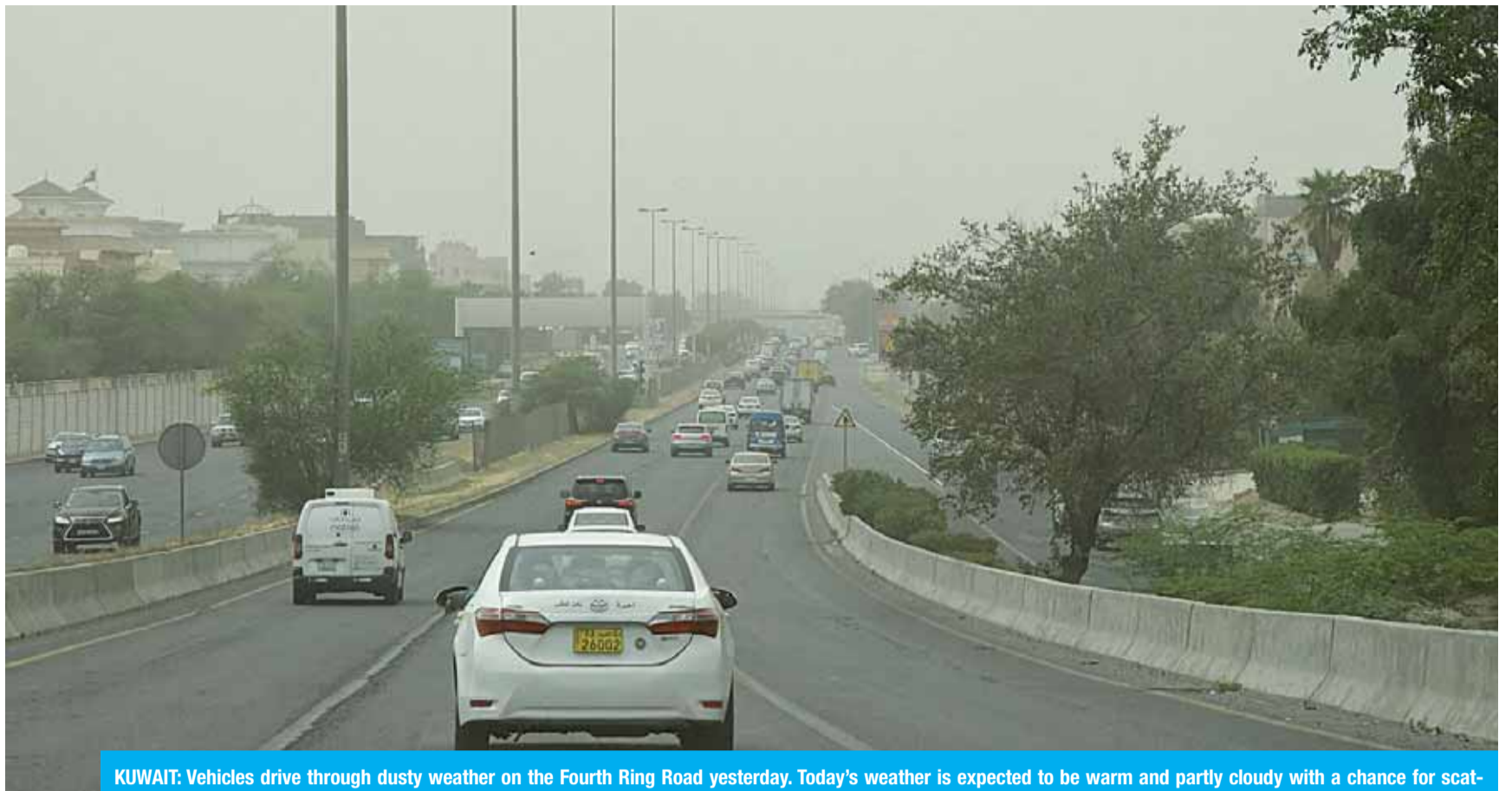
**KUWAIT:** To mark International Women's Day, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN Migration agency in Kuwait, brought together women from different walks of life and organized an art event that allowed them to express themselves through painting, while socializing with others. The event was attended by Mijbil Alayoub, Senior Director, Corporate Communications and Nazem Yousef Al-Ghabra, Senior Manager, Public Relations, Internal Communications, Corporate Social Responsibility and Sponsorships, Ooredoo Kuwait.

The event came in coordination with the Embassy of Sri Lanka in Kuwait and took place at its premises, and was in partnership with Ooredoo telecom, the first to introduce innovative digital services in Kuwait, through a joint agreement signed in November 2020, under the My Ooredoo application. The application allows customers and members of the 'Nojoom' program to donate their points to IOM to support community cohesion activities and support migrant workers.

Mijbil Alayoub, Senior Director, Corporate Communications, Ooredoo Kuwait, said: "Women empowerment is essential for all-round development of societies and nations as a whole. It falls under our responsibility to support women through equipping them with equal opportunities so they realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life. In the State of Kuwait, one can see a long list of women who have great roles in society, as leaders, educators, entrepreneurs and business-women, and that is something we take pride in. At Ooredoo Kuwait, we take serious steps that allows all women to work in a safe and caring environment, which allow them to grow at all levels; professionally, personally, socially, emotionally and physically."

"It is critical to recognize that women, including migrant women, are also powerful agents and lead-

## Photo of the Day



**KUWAIT:** Vehicles drive through dusty weather on the Fourth Ring Road yesterday. Today's weather is expected to be warm and partly cloudy with a chance for scattered light rain, according to the Kuwait Meteorological Department. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

## Kuwait Airways launches flights to Kuala Lumpur

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Airways announced the operation of its scheduled commercial flights to the city of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, via Bangkok, Thailand, commencing on June 2, 2022, with three flights a week on Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

In this regard, Kuwait Airways Chief Executive Officer, Engineer Maen Razouqi stated, "Kuwait Airways is pleased to announce to its customers the operation of its flights to the capital city of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which is one of the most important and new destinations of Kuwait Airways, selected after extensive and systematic research due to its historic and touristic attractions along with its rich, diverse culture. Moreover, Kuala Lumpur also distinguishes itself as a suitable destination for holidays throughout the year and is considered the cultural, financial, and economic center of Malaysia."

Razouqi added, "The launching of Kuala Lumpur as a destination emanates from within the framework of the company's strategy to expand its network to various destinations and locations that will cover most countries of the world, with an excellent reach, and meeting the requirements of the local, regional and global aviation market, especially for the summer season, during which we expect to witness recovery and tremendous demand from passengers, that will significantly encourage tourism and travel around the world in general and the State of Kuwait, in particular for the benefit of the tourism and hospitality sector. Moreover, Kuwait Airways is relentlessly striving to provide diverse and newer options that meet the requirements and aspirations of its customers to travel by providing special promotional offers for those destinations that witness great demand during the holiday season and to acquire major operating shares in the global market."

Razouqi mentioned, "Launching the Kuala Lumpur destination is in response to the requirements and in the interest of customers to enhance travel options, increasing the business, tourism, and economic activity between the two countries. It also contributes to facilitating the movement of passengers to perform the rituals of umrah and Hajj from customers in the region of Southeast Asia,



as well as ensuring that our valued customers enjoy the services provided by Kuwait Airways whether on board or during the completion of travel procedures."

In the same context, Razouqi received the Ambassador of Malaysia to the State of Kuwait, Dato' Mohammad Ali Selamat, in the presence of the First Secretary of the Malaysian Embassy, Ahmad Radzi Mohd Zim, KAC's Director of Distribution and Network Planning - Shorouk Al-Awadi and the Director of Corporate Communication and Public Relations - Wael Al-Hasawi, where the two parties discussed methods to enhance joint cooperation and bilateral relations between the two countries and to seek development in all fields related to the aviation sector.

In this regard, Razouqi said, "We are honored by the visit of Ambassador Dato' Mohammad Ali Selamat to the Kuwait Airways headquarters, where His Excellency was briefed on the history of the Blue Bird, with its important achievements, developments, and events. We also discussed the extent of relations between the State of Kuwait and Malaysia, the convergence of understanding between them in the public interest of both parties in addition to achieving the desired objectives in consolidating and strengthening relations between the two countries."

Meanwhile, Ambassador Dato' Mohammad Ali Selamat commended on the important step taken by Kuwait Airways in launching Kuala Lumpur as a destination and including it in its scheduled flights, thus



making it convenient for passengers to travel to Malaysia and providing a good opportunity to understand its ancient history with its diverse culture, in addition to enjoying a holiday that includes numerous entertainment programs and activities. He also assured that the Malaysian Embassy would provide complete support to the clients, as well as facilitate the completion of procedures as soon as possible and in overcoming any hindrances.

Dato' also pointed out that the launching of Kuala Lumpur as a destination is an important part of the joint cooperation between the State of Kuwait and Malaysia, contributing significantly to consolidating relations between the two countries and in the enhancement of several other fields.

ers in their families and communities, and at national and international levels, providing resources for their families, facilitating migration, and adapting during displacement," said Mazen AbouHosn, IOM Kuwait Chief of Mission. "Utilizing the contributions and ensuring the participation of all genders is key to addressing climate change and disaster impacts and ensuring that any solutions build on the capabilities, knowledge and perspectives of women. It is essential also to share mutual benefits between genders and empower women to be active agents in mitigating climate change and pursuing adaptation responses."

"Expression through arts is an activity that is educational, social and cultural. Art-based activity can have a positive effect on several aspects of the being. We are glad to organize this activity with the Sri Lankan embassy through the Nojoom program of Ooredoo."

The International Women's Day is dedicated by the United Nations (UN) on March 8th of each year to celebrate the effective participation and role that women play in our societies. This year's theme is "Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow", recognizing the contribution of women and girls around the world, who are leading the charge on climate change adaptation, mitigation, and response, to build a more sustainable future for all.

"We are honored to work with and celebrate this very important day with the IOM and the Ooredoo telecom," said Mohammed Jauhar, Ambassador of Sri Lanka. "I am pleased to note that, Sri Lankan women, along with men, have been exercising the universal franchise, since 1931, and access to free education since 1945, which contributed immensely to their empowerment. We, at the Embassy in Kuwait, are very pleased with the contribution of our women in Kuwait as well as in Sri Lanka. We have tirelessly been working with Kuwait authorities and our international partners, in addressing all matters related to women empowerment and we are committed to do more." IOM takes this opportunity to congratulate Kuwaiti women and all women around the world and wishes them a happy International Women's Day.





Chile's millennial president takes office with plans for change

## Well-oiled conspiracy theorists push Ukraine disinfo



MEDYKA, Poland: A Polish soldier helps a family on their way to take a train at the Medyka border crossing after crossing the Ukrainian-Polish border yesterday. —AFP

# East Europe embraces Ukraine refugees

## Well-qualified displaced people seen as potential workers

**SOFIA:** Eastern European countries are embracing the millions of Ukrainians fleeing Russia's invasion as a potential workforce but analysts warn it be challenging to integrate them all. Some 2.5 million people have already fled Ukraine, according to the United Nations, which calls it Europe's fastest-growing refugee crisis since World War II.

More than half are now in Poland but tens of thousands are also staying in Moldova and Bulgaria, which have some of the fastest shrinking populations. "Those who are now arriving in the territory of the EU are well-qualified and meet the demand for labor," said Sieglinde Rosenberger of the University of Vienna, though she warned the welcoming attitude could change.

Other experts asked how eastern European countries, which have a lower GDP than their western counterparts, can handle a huge influx. Acutely aware of the burden, some countries have already called for more assistance.

### 'Intelligent, educated'

In a letter to the government, the association of Bulgarian employers' organizations said they could employ up to 200,000 Ukrainians. They said those who were of Bulgarian origin and able to speak the language would be particularly welcome. Meanwhile, IT, textile, construction and tourism sector representatives also said they were keen to hire tens of thousands of people.

Bulgaria's population has dwindled from almost nine million at the fall of communism to 6.5 million now, owing in part to emigration. The welcome comes from the highest levels. Bulgarian Prime Minister Kiril Petkov described Ukrainian refugees as "intelligent, educated... highly qualified". "These are people who are Europeans, so we and all other countries are ready to accept them," he said.

Some 20,000 Ukrainians are currently in Bulgaria - the EU's poorest member - though their numbers are expected to rise if Russia seizes Odessa on the

Black Sea. Hungary - which touts its restrictive migration policy but also struggles with a labor shortage - has also welcomed Ukrainians. "We are able to spot the difference: who is a migrant, they are coming from the South... and who is a refugee," nationalist premier Viktor Orban said. "Refugees can get all the help," he said last week. Whether Ukrainians will stay is another question as many arriving move on to elsewhere in Europe where they may have relatives or better prospects.

### Integration issues

But countries where a large number of refugees end up staying, such as Poland, could become overburdened since many are children and elderly - thus unable to work. "How will these large numbers be integrated across Europe? This is going to be a problem," Brad Blitz of the University College London told AFP. The "breaking point" was yet to come, he added. Moldova, wedged between Ukraine and Romania

with a population of 2.6 million people, has called for urgent help with about 100,000 refugees. "We will need assistance to deal with this influx, and we need this quickly," Moldovan Prime Minister Natalia Gavrilita told visiting US Secretary of State Antony Blinken last weekend. Gerald Knaus of the think tank European Stability Initiative said the EU should prepare now to move hundreds of thousands of people within the bloc. "It will not work with strict quotas. It will rely on bottom up political support and political leaders saying, 'We step forward,'" he told AFP.

He said the crisis, however, could turn "into one of the great moments of bringing Europeans together around a humanitarian cause". The University of Vienna's Rosenberger said governments that sought to restrict migration had now quickly changed their stance in the face of public sympathy with Ukraine. But that welcome might not last forever when "in a few months, poorer and less qualified people are expected to come," she said. — AFP

## NATO trains to help its own, as war rumbles

**OSLO:** Any resemblance to reality is purely coincidental. As war rages in Ukraine, NATO and its partners will launch exercises in Norway tomorrow aimed at coming to the rescue of one of its own. Some 30,000 troops, 200 aircraft and 50 vessels from 27 nations will take part in the Cold Response 2022 exercise, the largest exercise involving NATO troops this year.

Kicking off on March 14, the maneuvers will enable Western nations to hone their combat skills in Norway's cold climate, including in the Arctic, on the ground, at sea and in the skies. The exercise will be held just a few hundred kilometers from the Russian border, and while it was planned long before Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, it now has added significance because of the war.

"This exercise is extremely important for the security of Norway and its allies. We will practice an allied reinforcement of Norway", Norwegian Defense Minister Odd Roger Enoksen told AFP. "It is not being held because of the Russian authorities' attack on Ukraine, but given the backdrop there is a heightened significance", he said.

The guardian of NATO's northern border in Europe, Norway is keen to test how it would manage Allied reinforcements on its soil, in line with Article 5 of NATO's charter, which requires member states to come to the aid of another member state under attack. Neighboring Sweden and Finland, which are officially military non-aligned but increasingly close partners of NATO, will also participate in Cold Response, which will conclude on April 1.

### Avoid misunderstandings

"I find it totally normal, perhaps now more than ever, to train together to demonstrate our capacity and our willingness to defend our values and our way of life", stressed General



FREDRIKSTAD, Norway: Armored vehicles of NATO's rapid reaction force brigade in Norway for the military exercise Cold Response 22 arrive at Borg Havn on March 10, 2022. —AFP

Yngve Odlo, head of Norway's Joint Headquarters and in charge of Cold Response. On the Russian side of the 196-km Arctic border that separates it from Norway is the Kola Peninsula, home to the Northern Fleet and a large number of nuclear weapons and military installations.

"There is no explicit military threat

against NATO or Norwegian territory", Enoksen said, but "the situation in Europe is more unpredictable than it has been in a long time." To avoid any misunderstandings, Norway has informed Russia of the Cold Response exercise - defined as "purely defensive" - and will keep a respectful distance from Russia. — AFP

## In morgue, corpses pile up in the snow

**MYKOLAIV:** The corpse lies with its hands clasped, as if in prayer. In fact, says the morgue employee, he was throwing Molotov cocktails when the Russians caught him. They tied his hands and executed him. Such are the chilling images from the morgue in Mykolaiv, a city on the shores of the Black Sea that has been under Russian attack for days.

Outside, in the courtyard of the forensic institute where the morgue is located, the snow is constantly falling on corpses wrapped in grey plastic body bags, waiting to be evacuated. In the dilapidated premises, bodies are placed on the floor for lack of space. The insidious smell of death, mixed with disinfectant, is everywhere.

Doctors perform autopsies in ques-

tionable hygienic conditions. Naked bodies lie in the way of the cold store, where the fatalities from a bombardment a few days earlier in nearby Otchakiv are piled up. Vladimir, a morgue employee who gave only his first name, lights cigarette after cigarette. "I've never seen such a thing. We thought the worst thing that could happen to us here was car accidents," he says, shaking his head.

### 'So young'

Crossing the courtyard again, Vladimir opens a door onto a nightmarish spectacle. About 30 corpses are placed on the ground. Two soldiers in fatigues, one disemboweled, are stacked on top of each other. There appear to be civilians, too. "They are so young, younger than my nephew," says Vladimir. At the back of the room, there is also a Russian soldier. "We keep them separated."

An employee gently removes the chain around the neck of a corpse, which will be used for identification. Mykolaiv and its region have seen



MYKOLAIV, Ukraine: Two men carry a corpse in a body bag to lay it next to others in a snow-covered yard in this city on the shores of the Black Sea on Friday. —AFP

heavy fighting, but the Ukrainians are resisting and retook the local airport a few days ago. As the last major town before the great port city of Odessa, it is a vital strategic position.

"Since the beginning of the war, we have received 120 bodies, including 80 soldiers and 30 civilians," says the

director of the forensic institute, Olga Dierugina, wearing a woolen vest over her medical coat and a pom-pom hat on her head to keep off the cold. Among the civilian victims, the youngest was a three-year-old child and the oldest in their seventies, she adds with an exhausted look. — AFP

## Russia curbs Insta over 'death to invaders' post rule

**WASHINGTON:** Russia moved on Friday to block Instagram access and launched a criminal case against its owner Meta, as Moscow fired back at the tech giant for allowing posts calling for violence against Russian forces. This new escalation follows Russia's blocking of Facebook and limiting of Twitter in a confrontation with US social media platforms that has mushroomed since its invasion of Ukraine.

A day after Meta confirmed a temporary easing of its rules to allow calls to violence like "death to the Russian invaders," Russia's media regulator said it would restrict access by Monday to hugely popular Instagram because it contains "calls to commit violent acts". In what appeared to be damage control, Meta's global affairs president Nick Clegg responded by saying the loosened rules would only apply to people posting from inside Ukraine.

"We will not tolerate Russophobia or any kind of discrimination, harassment or violence towards Russians on our platform," he added, echoing the firm's previous statement excluding civilians. But Russia's Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, had already said it was launching an investigation of Meta, and prosecutors pushed for the Silicon Valley giant to be branded "extremist".

Only 7.5 million Russians used Facebook in 2021, or about seven percent of the country's internet users, compared to 51 million for Instagram, according to eMarketer data, with use especially high among young people and smaller businesses. Meta's relaxing of its rules had met with controversy almost immediately and the UN voiced alarm, warning it could spark "hate speech" against Russians.

UN rights office spokeswoman Elizabeth Throssell said that the policy lacked clarity, which "could certainly contribute to hate speech directed at Russians in general". Meta, which boasts billions of users globally across its apps, has previously struggled with what it would allow people to post in moments of upheaval. In July 2021, the firm temporarily allowed posts calling for "death to Khamenei", referring to Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, during protests that rocked the country. — AFP

## International

# COVID to crisis: Well-oiled conspiracy theorists push Ukraine disinformation

## Moscow considered one of the masters of spreading disinfo online

PARIS: As attention fixes on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, so do conspiracy theorists who actively push Kremlin propaganda online after two years of sharing disinformation about the coronavirus. They claim the war is an attempt to divert attention, some even say it is a ploy to get French President Emmanuel Macron elected again next month. Experts say conspiracists are opportunists aiming to cause disruption, following where global attention is to spread their false narratives.

The change is clear on the Facebook, Twitter and Telegram accounts of some of the most prominent conspiracy theorists, including Silvano Trotta in France, Sherri Tenpenny in the United States and Simeon Boikov in Australia. Some of the conspiracies say Ukraine would be the "rear base of an international pedophile network", or would host "secret US laboratories" preparing a new coronavirus for a "new world order".

Tristan Mendes France, a conspiracy theory expert in France, said some who shared rumors about the coronavirus now do so on Ukraine. "It's not a surprise: This world of conspiracies is an

empty shell that aggregates around the news of the moment," he said. The Kremlin itself says the attack on Ukraine is in fact a plan to rescue the Russian-speaking population and to shield them from a "Nazi" regime.

### Opportunism

The subject may have changed but not the conspiracists' targets. The names of Bill Gates and George Soros have popped up, and have been the subject of several disinformation posts debunked by AFP fact-checkers. The two billionaires were accused of masterminding the pandemic, now conspiracists claim they financed biological weapons factories in Ukraine. Some even claim they planned the war to divert attention as they prepare a new virus, and so Russia only inter-



### Names of Gates, Soros have popped up

vened to stop the apparent plan.

"A number of influential anti-vaxxers" who made a name for themselves during the pandemic seek "to exploit the world's attention on the invasion," said Imran Ahmed, chief executive of the Center for Countering Digital Hate, describing them as "opportunists". He was unknown before Covid but today Silvano Trotta has several thousand followers on Facebook, Telegram and VKontakte, a popular Russian social network, where he shares his theories about the "false Ukrainian crisis".

On the other side of the Atlantic, Sherri Tenpenny, an American osteopath who has shared disinformation on COVID, tells her 160,000 Telegram subscribers that Jews are behind the conflict in Ukraine.

### Russia's exploitation

The pro-Russian emphasis in conspiracy theories is nothing new. Moscow is considered one of the masters of spreading disinformation online. In May 2021, when influencers were contacted by a mysterious communications agency to criticize Western vaccines, eyes turned to Russia even though Moscow denied any links.

It's impossible to know for sure whether the move from anti-vax and COVID skepticism to pro-Russian rhetoric on Ukraine was directed by Moscow itself. But disinformation, whether on COVID or Ukraine, "stirs discontent" in Western democracies, destabilizing them and thus serving Moscow's interests, said Julien Nocetti, of the French Institute of International Relations.

Moscow has learnt how to exploit Covid-sceptic and anti-vaccine accounts. But Nocetti said the "mistake" made in Europe and the United States was to view Russian disinformation "through a very specific crisis context". The Kremlin, he added, has "a much more strategic vision" and thinks "long term". — AFP

## 'Get the hell out': Wave of anti-Russian sentiment in Europe

WASRAW: Since Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine last month, "Skamiejka", a popular Russian restaurant in the Polish capital Warsaw has been flooded with hate emails and online posts with gruesome images. Anonymous phone calls have told the staff - most of whom are in fact Ukrainian - to "get the hell out" of Poland.

Tamara Rochminska, its owner, has shown solidarity with Ukraine by posting its flag on the restaurant's Facebook page, imploring users to stop targeting its staff. "Please remember that Russia and Russians are not the same as Putin and his imperialist designs," Rochminska, who has lived in Poland for the last four decades, said in the post. A lot of the vitriol at protests across the world has indeed focused on President Vladimir Putin, who gave the order for Russia's assault. But sometimes ordinary Russians living abroad have become the targets.

In Germany, the windows of a shop selling Russian wares were vandalized, a restaurant refused to serve clients with Russian passports and a doctor refused to treat Russian patients. Social media posts dripping in sarcasm urged Russians to "flee Germany" adding that the "integration of Russians is not possible, except in the Gulag Archipelago", referring to the system of Stalinist-era forced labour camps where millions of prisoners perished.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Friday said there was "a growing atmosphere of hatred against Russians in several Western countries". "It's very dangerous. Our fellow citizens have to be on the alert and vigilant," he said. In the Czech Republic, media have reported cases of Russian pupils being insulted in primary and secondary schools. — AFP

## In Greece, Russia sympathies die hard despite Ukraine war

ATHENS: When Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis took the floor in a parliament debate on Ukraine this month, there was no doubt which side his government was taking in the conflict. "There can be no equal distances. You are either with peace and international law, or against them," he told lawmakers, after announcing a shipment of medicine and lethal aid to Ukraine. "We were always on the right side of history, and we are doing the same now," the PM said.

But for many Greeks, after centuries of existential, religious and cultural ties with Russia, the choice is not as evident. "Greek public opinion has a Russophile dimension, friendly feelings linked to history, a common culture based on Orthodoxy and for some, mistrust towards the West," notes Nikos Marantzidis, professor of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies at the University of Macedonia.

A post-invasion poll in February showed 20 percent of Greeks are "closer" to Russia while 45 percent support Ukraine. Just eight percent said they would boycott Russian products, and two percent said they would avoid contact with Russians. Seventy-five percent of respondents condemned Russian President Vladimir Putin's stance, but over 60 percent were also critical of Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky, the Kappa Research poll showed.

### Putin 'a great leader'

"There is a minority, not an insignificant one, that continues to view Putin positively," Marantzidis said. "Whatever happens, a hard core of (about 10-15 percent of the electorate) will continue to see him as a great leader," he told AFP. Greeks have fought alongside Russia since the 18th century, with the fellow Orthodox state historically seen as a protector and powerful counterweight to regional rival Turkey. In 1827, Russia joined Britain and France in the decisive naval battle of Navarino that effectively decided Greece's independence from the Ottoman Empire. Marantzidis also notes residual anti-Western feelings in Greece over a near-decade of austerity cuts imposed by Germany and other EU states in return for debt rescue bailouts. — AFP

## In Ukraine hospital, war-wounded kids make slow recovery

KHARKIV: A plaster on his eye, eight-year-old Dima Kasyanov lies unconscious on a hospital bed in Ukraine's second city Kharkiv after a Russian missile blasted through his home. He was in his family flat when it hit on Monday, sending shrapnel shooting through his upper jaw and into the base of his neck, his doctor Oleksandre Dukhovskiy says.

"For two days, we pumped ash out of his stomach. He still has cinders in his lungs," says the head of the city's pediatric neurosurgery center. "But he is stable. Slowly we are getting there," says the surgeon, as he emerges from operating on another, a 52-year-old man. Since Russia invaded its pro-Western neighbor on February 24, at least 78 children have been killed and more than 100 wounded, Ukraine's ombudswoman Lyudmyla Denisova says.

The UN children's agency UNICEF has warned the war threatens the lives and well-being of the country's 7.5 million children. More than one million children have fled the country, it says, among more than two million Ukrainians who have crossed into next-door countries to safety. In the eastern city of Kharkiv near the Russian border, a nurse checks Dima's vitals on a screen near his bed.

### 'They shot at our car'

Outside the intensive care unit, his parents Sergei and Olena have managed to bring in medi-

## Clouds over Merkel legacy as invasion lays flaws bare

BERLIN: Up to the final hours before Russia began its invasion of Ukraine, former chancellor Angela Merkel had been touted as the person favored by Germans to try to talk President Vladimir Putin out of the conflict. But as Russian bombs fell on Ukrainian cities, a shadow has fallen on Merkel's 16 years in office, with some observers now questioning if her detente policies with Putin had in fact left Germany, and Europe, vulnerable.

Once hailed as the leader of the free world, the veteran center-right leader has been accused by some of increasing Europe's reliance on Russian energy and neglecting Germany's defense in what appeared to be a devastating miscalculation of Putin's ambitions. Merkel's push for diplomacy and bids to bind regimes to treaties and business contracts now look like "an error", conservative daily Die Welt, long critical of Merkel, charged.

"What Germany and Europe has experienced over the last days is nothing short of a reversal of Merkel's policies of guaranteeing peace and freedom through treaties with despots," it wrote. Over the last decade, Germany's energy reliance on Russia rose

## In Ukraine ghost city, florist stays open to 'cheer people up'

MYKOLAIV, Ukraine: Most business owners have shut up shop and fled Ukraine's Mikolaiv, but florist Angela Kalisnik continues to sell tulips and roses just a short drive away from the frontline. "We didn't know the war was coming," says the 25-year-old. "Flowers continue to bloom in our region and we don't want to throw them away." Snow falls on the wide streets of the deserted city, and only a few people have ventured out in the bitter cold.

Outside the city, soldiers are fighting off invading Russian forces. But inside Kalisnik's shop, multicolored bouquets line the wall. And against all odds, there have been customers. A man steps out the door with a huge bouquet for his mother's birthday. A few days ago, a passer-by dropped in to buy a bunch for a woman who had found and returned his lost wallet.

And many soldiers flocked in to buy flowers for



KHARKIV: A father takes care of his 7-year-old son who was injured by the shelling in a hospital in Ukraine's second-biggest city on March 10, 2022. — AFP

cine, as medical supplies dwindle nationwide. "We live at the hospital. Our flat no longer exists," says Olena. In what remains of the family home, part of the floor has collapsed and the rest is covered in debris. Water seeps through a hole in the ceiling, and bits of concrete dangle dangerously.

Several other apartments in the ten-storey Soviet-era building were also destroyed, an AFP journalist said. Olena says she cannot wait to whisk her son away. "We want to speak to the doctor to

know when we can move him," she says. "Volunteers have suggested taking him to Germany to continue treating him there."

Not far off in the same hospital, seven-year-old Vova has just been moved out of the intensive care unit, his head wrapped in medical gauze. Dukhovskiy, the doctor, says Vova was carried in with a brain lesion and had to be operated on immediately. "It was really bad at first, but now he has started to speak and eat again," he says. — AFP

from 36 percent of its total gas imports in 2014 to 55 percent currently, with the deal for the controversial Nord Stream 2 signed after the Kremlin's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine.

That has left Germany nearly helpless to follow allies like the United States and impose an oil and gas embargo against Russia. And Germany's defense profile had been blunted by successive years of under-investment. That has drawn the ire of the United States and allies which have repeatedly pressed Europe's biggest economy to meet the NATO defense spending target of 2 percent of national output. One of Merkel's closest aides and former defense minister, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, has condemned Germany's "historical failure" to bolster its military over the years. "After Georgia, Crimea, and Donbas, we have not prepared anything that would have really deterred Putin," she tweeted, referring to incursions carried out by Russia while Merkel was in power.

### 'Terrible mistake'

Merkel took power in 2005 after beating Social Democrat Gerhard Schroeder at the polls. Schroeder himself has been pilloried for his friendship with Putin, and his refusal to quit key posts at Russian energy giants Rosneft and Gazprom. But her critics say that while Schroeder had started the ball rolling on Nord Stream 1, a pipeline funneling Russian gas to Germany, Merkel signed off on Nord Stream 2.

The controversial 10-billion-euro (\$11-billion)

their girlfriends for Women's Day on Tuesday, she says. Kalisnik says she closed her shop a week after Russia invaded her country on February 24, but then decided to open back up. "War is war, but people continue to live, to celebrate birthdays," she says. "We need to cheer people up and keep the economy going."

A short walk away, dozens huddle in a queue for an ATM. Some have been waiting for more than two hours. Vitaly is annoyed. "I don't understand, two days ago, everything was normal," he says, without giving his second name. "But now we can only take out 400 hryvnia (\$13) at a time," so have to withdraw several times in a row.

### No flowers for Russia

For several days, the Russians have bombarded Mykolaiv, which lies on the road to the strategic port city of Odessa some 130 km down the Black Sea coastline. But the Ukrainians have managed to repel the Russians at their gates, the region's governor Vitaly Kim says, and "the battle is being won". At a news conference on Friday in front of the city hall, the young politician assures those attending that the Russians have been pushed back to 15-20 km outside the city.



BERLIN: In this file photo taken on Jan 19, 2020, German Chancellor Angela Merkel greets Russian President Vladimir Putin upon his arrival to attend the Peace summit on Libya at the Chancellery. — AFP

pipeline is disputed because it bypasses Ukraine, depriving Kyiv of gas transit fees. It has been put on ice in the wake of the invasion. Merkel "must take her share of the blame with her eagerness to seek close economic ties to Russia" as it led to Germany's dependency on Russian energy, Sueddeutsche daily concluded. "We are now seeing the consequences of that terrible mistake," it said. On the geopolitical front, her government's reluctance in admitting Georgia and Ukraine to the NATO fold in 2008 - despite a push by Washington - was now also under scrutiny. — AFP



MYKOLAIV, Ukraine: A video grab released yesterday shows Ukrainian florist Angela Kalisnik answering questions during an interview in her store. — AFP

"They thought we'd welcome them with flowers, they didn't expect such resistance," says Kim, who admits he did "not know anything about war 15 days ago". Thousands of civilians have fled Mikolaiv in recent days, heading towards Odessa, which has so far been spared the bombardment. The mass exodus has left the city near empty. — AFP

## International

# Chile's millennial president takes office with plans for change

## Boric vows in first official address to 'expand social rights'

SANTIAGO: Leftist ex-student activist Gabriel Boric was sworn in Friday as Chile's youngest-ever president and hailed the country's Marxist former leader Salvador Allende in his inaugural address to the nation. Standing in front of tens of thousands of supporters at La Moneda Palace in the capital Santiago, the 36-year-old said Allende - who killed himself in 1973 after Augusto Pinochet's coup - had foreseen this moment.



"Boric, friend, the people are with you!"

"As Salvador Allende predicted almost 50 years ago, we are again compatriots, opening up great avenues where free men and women will pass to build a better society. We go on! Long live Chile!" he said. "We would not be here without your mobilizations," the new president said to the crowd, who chanted "Boric, friend, the people are with you!"

Boric, who plans to turn Chile into a greener, more egalitarian "welfare state", takes over the reins of a country clamoring for change following mass protests in 2019 - which he supported - against deep-rooted inequality in income, healthcare, education and pensions. The protests, which left dozens

dead and hundreds injured, were the catalyst for a process now under way to rewrite Chile's dictatorship-era constitution.

Boric has vowed to relegate "to the grave" Chile's neoliberal economic model, which dates from the era of military despot Pinochet and is widely seen as sidelining the poor and working classes. One percent of Chile's population owns about a quarter of its wealth. Despite concern over his Frente Amplio (Broad Front)'s political alliance with the Communist Party in a country that traditionally votes for the center, Boric won a surprise runaway election victory last December.

He succeeded in mobilizing women and the youth, with a record voter turnout giving him nearly 56 percent of the vote to beat far-right Pinochet apologist Jose Antonio Kast. The men, polar opposite political outsiders, had polled neck-and-neck ahead of the vote. As the stock exchange dropped on news of Boric's victory, he vowed in his first official address to "expand social rights" in Chile, but to do so with "fiscal responsibility".

### Generational change

Boric took the oath Friday in Valparaiso, the seat of Congress, in a suit but no tie, appearing to hold back tears of emotion as he received the presidential sash from predecessor Sebastian Pineru. He expressed a "great sense of responsibility and duty to the people" of Chile. "We will do our best to rise to the challenges we face as a country," the new president said.

"Hope for the people," read a placard borne by Maritza Lopez, a 62-year-old housewife who made the

trip to Valparaiso from Coronel, hundreds of kilometers away. A lawmaker since 2014, millennial Boric inherits an economy ravaged by the coronavirus pandemic. Much of 2021's GDP growth was fueled by temporary pandemic grants and stop-gap withdrawals allowed from private pension funds. The central bank has been hiking interest rates to curb inflation. Pineru finishes his term with a disapproval rating of 71 percent, the worst recorded by a president since the return of democracy in 1990. Boric has promised to introduce a European-style social democracy to Chile, boosting taxes to pay for social reform, all while putting the brakes on spiraling debt. —AFP



SANTIAGO: Chile's new President Gabriel Boric delivers a speech at La Moneda Palace on Friday. — AFP

said, confirming that she had cast her vote for Berdymukhamedov junior. Officials contacted by AFP were unable to confirm when preliminary results would be announced. An inauguration ceremony has been scheduled for March 19, state media said on Friday.

### 'Most experienced' candidate

Berdymukhamedov senior, 64, benefits from a glitzy leadership cult that includes a golden statue of him on horseback and elicits comparisons to North Korea - a country that has already witnessed two hereditary successions. Turkmen state television pays fawning tribute to his hobbies-horse riding, songwriting and rally car driving to name a few - and the so-called "protector" is a phenomenon on foreign social media, all of which are blocked. The leader, who claims Turkmenistan has not suffered a single case of coronavirus, said last month that he wishes to remain in politics in his parallel role as chairman of the parliament's upper chamber. Much less is known about Serdar Berdymukhamedov, whose government promotions received little public attention until he entered parliament in 2016.

Since then he has been a deputy foreign minister, the head of a province and industry and construction minister. Last year he won a triple promotion, taking up roles as deputy cabinet chair, auditor general and member of the security council. Civil servant Selbi Nepesova, 39, told AFP that Serdar Berdymukhamedov's official biography proves he is "the most experienced" of the candidates, despite being younger than his rivals, most of whom are low-ranking government employees. —AFP

## Turkmenistan votes for father-son transition

ASHGABAT: Voting was underway in Turkmenistan yesterday for a tightly-controlled leadership election that is all but certain to yield ex-Soviet Central Asia's first father-son succession. Nine candidates are in the fray in the republic of six million people, but President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, who tolerates no opposition and has dominated public life since the country's founding president died in 2006, is not among them.

Berdymukhamedov senior signaled his decision to step aside last month and allow "young leaders" to govern. The announcement has seen the role of victor-in-waiting fall to his son, Serdar Berdymukhamedov, 40, who has rapidly risen to the top of government.

A state television announcer confirming the beginning of voting at 7:00 am (0200 GMT) on Saturday said the elections showed "the irreversibility of the process of democratization of modern Turkmen society". Polling stations that will close at 7:00 pm (1400 GMT) were busy on a cloudy day in the capital Ashgabat, with young Turkmen wearing either suits with black ties or embroidered ankle-length red dresses chatting and giggling in the queues.

Gulya Agayeva, 20, told AFP she had been encouraged to vote by her teachers. "They said it is our civic duty, that our future depends on our choice," Agayeva



ASHGABAT: A woman votes at a polling station during the presidential election yesterday. — AFP

## Zambia's Banda dies at 85, presided over boom, graft

LUSAKA: Zambia's former president Rupiah Banda died on Friday at the age of 85 after a long battle with colon cancer, his son Andrew told AFP. "He is gone", Andrew Banda told AFP correspondent in Lusaka. The southern African country's fourth leader since independence from Britain served for three years from 2008 - a term remembered for economic growth and corruption allegations.



Rupiah Banda

Banda was vice-president when his predecessor Levy Mwanawasa unexpectedly succumbed to a stroke, propelling him into the top job. But the veteran diplomat was defeated in 2011 elections, despite overseeing major economic growth during his tenure. Zambia's economy expanded during Banda's brief presidency, mainly on the back of rising copper

prices and a surge in Chinese investment. He pursued a construction spree started under Mwanawasa, building much-needed roads, hospitals and schools. Zambia recorded a 7.6 percent increase in growth for 2011, up from 6.4 percent the previous year, for which Banda took credit. He had hoped the

economic uptick would convince voters to keep him in power.

Most of Zambia's 17.9 million inhabitants, however, did not reap the benefits of mining and construction booms. Wealth accumulated in the hands of a few as corruption allegations surfaced, marring his reputation. In Sept 2011, he was heavily defeated by opposition leader Michael Sata.

Banda was born on Feb 19, 1937 in the small town of Gwanda in neighboring Zimbabwe, then the British colony of Southern Rhodesia. His parents had moved from neighboring Zambia, formerly Northern Rhodesia, to seek work. Banda returned to his country of origin and later pursued his studies in Ethiopia and Sweden, earning a degree in economics.

In the early 1960s, Banda started a diplomatic career in Europe. He was subsequently appointed ambassador to Egypt, the United States and the United Nations. Domestic politics caught up with Banda in 1975, when he briefly served as foreign minister and then mines minister for Zambia's first president Kenneth Kaunda.

A long-time member of Kaunda's United National Independence Party (UNIP), Banda was also a prominent businessman and an ardent football fan. He led several state-run companies under Kaunda and was the owner of KB Davis, a company that supplied mining equipment in Zambia's north-central copper-belt region. He also dabbled in sports and at one time served as vice-president to the Football Association of Zambia.

Despite his achievements, Banda still cast himself as a man of the people. "In addition to my political experience I am also a farmer, I am a man of the land," he told AFP in a 2008 interview. "I know what it is like when the rains are late and when a crop fails." —AFP

## India accidentally fired missile into Pakistan

NEW DELHI: India's military accidentally fired a missile into neighboring Pakistan, New Delhi's defense ministry said on Friday, calling it "deeply regrettable". Hindu-majority India and Muslim Pakistan have fought three wars since independence from British colonial rule in 1947, two of them over the disputed territory of Kashmir. Their shared border has a heavy military presence on both sides, and there have been numerous flare-ups between them, with tensions sometimes raising fears of an atomic exchange.

"In the course of a routine maintenance, a technical malfunction led to the accidental firing of a missile" on Wednesday, India's defense ministry said. It did not specify the type of missile, but said it landed "in an area of Pakistan". The incident was "deeply regrettable", it said, adding that it was "a matter of relief that there has been no loss of life due to the accident".

The defense ministry declined to provide further information to AFP. The statement came hours after Islamabad's foreign ministry condemned what it called an "unprovoked violation of its airspace by an Indian origin 'super-sonic flying object'". India's charge d'affaires in Islamabad had been summoned to the foreign office for a "strong protest", it added. —AFP

## Chinese city locks down as COVID spikes

SHANGHAI: A Chinese city of nine million was ordered into lockdown on Friday and Shanghai shut its schools as authorities scrambled to halt a COVID-19 outbreak that has pushed nationwide cases to their highest levels in two years. Changchun, the capital of northeastern Jilin province and an important industrial base, ordered residents to stay at home, allowing one person out every two days to buy "daily necessities".

The city also halted all public transport, ordered schools and businesses shut and said it would institute mass testing. China's daily coronavirus case count soared past the 1,000 mark this week for the first time since the pandemic's early days in 2020. That is up from fewer than 100 cases just three weeks ago as the highly transmissible Omicron variant challenges China's zero-COVID approach to tackling the pandemic.

COVID-19 was first detected in China in late 2019 but the government has kept its case count extremely low by international standards with a combination of snap lockdowns, mass testing and largely closed borders. There were 1,369 cases across more than a dozen provinces, according to Friday's daily official count. Jilin, which has reported hundreds of cases in recent days, is one of more than a dozen provinces facing upticks along with major cities like Beijing and Shanghai.

Shanghai on Friday ordered its schools to close and



CHANGCHUN, China: Residents queue to undergo nucleic acid tests for COVID-19 on Friday. — AFP

### News in brief

#### Turkey, Armenia vow to normalize ties

ANTALYA: Turkey and Armenia have pledged to pursue the normalization of ties in what the Turkish foreign minister Mevlut Cavusoglu described as a "productive and constructive" meeting yesterday. After talks with his Armenian counterpart, Ararat Mirzoyan, Cavusoglu said that Azerbaijan also "supports the process" of normalization. In December, the two countries appointed special envoys to normalize relations, spurred by support from regional powerbroker Russia and Armenia's arch-foe Azerbaijan. — AFP

#### Harry accused of 'snub' to queen

LONDON: Prince Harry was accused yesterday of snubbing Queen Elizabeth II after announcing he will miss her late husband's memorial service, amid a legal dispute over his security protection in Britain. While a spokesperson confirmed that Harry will skip the service in Westminster Abbey on March 29, he is reportedly set to attend the Invictus Games starting in the Netherlands just two weeks later. After days of front-page coverage about Russia's invasion of Ukraine, The Sun newspaper carried the headline: "Harry's Phil snub." — AFP

#### UK 'hitman' jailed for life

LONDON: A would-be hitman was jailed for life in Britain after being convicted of plotting to kill a prominent exiled Pakistani blogger, prosecutors said on Friday. Muhammed Gohir Khan, 31, was told he would serve at least 13 years in jail for conspiring to murder Ahmad Waqass Goraya last year, the Crown Prosecution Service said. Supermarket worker Khan, who denied the charge, was found guilty by a jury at Kingston-upon-Thames Crown Court in southwest London in January. Goraya, an outspoken blogger and liberal activist who lived in the Netherlands, has accused Pakistan of being the plot to kill him. — AFP

#### Cuban TV presenter heads to US

HAVANA: A popular Cuban television presenter has said he left the communist island nation and is heading for the US, issuing a strong rebuke of the government he previously defended. "My journey began like that of thousands of other Cubans who in recent months... decided to leave to escape from so much rotten shit, from lies and from hopelessness," Yuninho Rodriguez said in a Facebook message posted on Thursday from Mexico. Rodriguez, a young Afro-Cuban, used the stage name Junior Smith on Cuba's national news program. — AFP

shift to online instruction for the foreseeable future after dozens of cases emerged in the eastern economic hub in recent days. And as cases increased, the country's National Health Commission announced Friday that they would introduce the use of rapid antigen tests. The kits will now be available online or at pharmacies for clinics and ordinary citizens to buy for "self-test", the health commission said, although nucleic acid tests will continue to be the main method of testing.

#### Like 'Squid Game'

The government has invested much of its prestige in its ability to control COVID-19, and Friday's measures appeared to pour cold water on hopes China would scrap its disruptive zero-tolerance approach anytime soon. The drawbacks of a zero-COVID approach have been laid bare in Hong Kong, where mixed messages from the local government have fueled hoarding of food supplies and public fears that people will be taken away to isolation.

Mainland China's most recent major lockdown came in December when the city of Xi'an kept its 13 million people home for two weeks due to an outbreak. But in the face of rising pandemic fatigue, top Chinese officials have in recent weeks urged local officials throughout the country to avoid such drastic steps. As cases have climbed since late February, only relatively soft or highly targeted measures have been taken in affected areas.

In Shanghai, however, authorities have increasingly moved to quickly lock down individual schools, businesses, restaurants and malls over close-contact fears. This has given rise to online images of students and teachers in the city confined for up to 48 hours on campuses, and patrons locked in restaurants or malls while awaiting testing. —AFP

# Business

SUNDAY, MARCH 13, 2022

## Zain collaborates with Cisco to accelerate 5G monetization

### Partnership to further 5G ecosystem in Kuwait market

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, selected Cisco to deploy Standalone 5G, delivering high value for B2B services. The announcement was made during Zain's participation at the GSMA Mobile World Congress 2022 in Barcelona, Spain. The agreement was attended by Zain Kuwait CEO Eaman Al-Roudhan, Zain Kuwait Chief Enterprise Business Officer Hamad Al-Marzouq, Zain Group CTO Nawaf Al-Gharabally, Cisco Vice President, Customer Experience, EMEAR Adele Trombetta, Cisco Vice President, Service



**Zain Kuwait's 5G traffic currently accounts for more than 40% of its total wireless traffic, ranking the operator as number one in GCC countries in terms of 5G offload ratio**

Provider, Customer Experience, EMEAR Mario Sebastian Miguel, as well as Cisco SP Managing Director, MEA Region Mohammad Tantawi.

MWC is the GSMA's flagship mobile industry and technology event, and this year focused on a number of themes including 5G Connect, Advancing AI, CloudNet, FinTech, Internet of Everything, Tech Horizon, and more.

Zain Kuwait's 5G traffic currently accounts for more than 40 percent of its total wireless traffic, ranking the operator as number one in GCC countries in terms of 5G offload ratio. Zain Kuwait is one of the leading telecom operators in MENA and has been at the forefront of innovation for years as the first operator to launch commercial 5G services in the Middle East.

Zain Kuwait acknowledged that Standalone (SA) is the future of 5G, allowing it to reach its full potential by increasing coverage and laying a foundation for applications that harness the fast speed and low latency of 5G. Zain's 5G development leads the Kuwait telecom market, and its business success has been a result of its overall strategic objective to provide first-class 5G services for users in Kuwait.

Cisco 5G SA will enable the introduction of a plethora of new Network-as-a-Service (NaaS) offerings, essentially cloud-enabled, usage-based business models that help enable Zain's customers



**BARCELONA:** Zain Kuwait CEO Eaman Al-Roudhan, Zain Kuwait Chief Enterprise Business Officer Hamad Al-Marzouq, Zain Group CTO Nawaf Al-Gharabally, Cisco Vice President, Customer Experience, EMEAR Adele Trombetta, Cisco Vice President, Service Provider, Customer Experience, EMEAR Mario Sebastian Miguel, as well as Cisco SP Managing Director, MEA Region Mohammad Tantawi during the event.



- Zain Kuwait announced several important milestones on its path to deploying 5G
- The announcement focuses on Zain's collaboration with Cisco in Standalone (SA) 5G
- Milestones mark a huge step forward for the entire wireless ecosystem

to acquire and orchestrate network capabilities without creating, owning or maintaining their own network infrastructure. Cisco new 5G SA core capability will allow Zain to monetize the security features tailored as value added security services for the enterprise market.

As a digital platform company, Zain will continue to make efforts to help drive Kuwait's Digital New Deal and ensure customers enjoy the best experiences and opportunities that 5G has to offer.

Eaman Al-Roudhan, Chief Executive Officer, Zain Kuwait said: "We are taking a meaningful step in our 5G journey and look forward to deliv-

ering more transformative experiences to customers and businesses. We strive to help accelerate Kuwait's 5G vision to deliver socio-economic value and enhanced customers experiences across Kuwait and through the advancement of 5G".

Adam Maclhale Vice President, EMEAR Service Provider, Cisco, said: "Cisco is proud to play a role in helping Zain Kuwait with its network technology innovation, offering differentiated 5G B2B and IoT services specifically suited to business's needs. Our proven flexible 5G SA architecture will enable Zain to offer its users 5G services with low latency and high capacity whilst providing secure, trusted solu-

tions and establishing premium value with its customers".

Zain's strategy is centered around digital transformation leadership and empowering the community to enjoy a smarter portable lifestyle, as well as using advanced technology to enable an easier and more flexible life. The company places itself as an active partner to its customers in creating the future of smart life in Kuwait. Today's announcement contributes to proving the company's full potential in triggering the digital community and will enrich its collaborations in Telecom and IT areas with its strategic partners on multiple levels.

## US, allies to end normal trade relations with Russia

**WASHINGTON:** The United States and its allies moved Friday to end normal trade relations with Russia, as President Joe Biden vowed the West would make Vladimir Putin "pay the price" for his invasion of Ukraine. Biden announced the new step, which would enable Western nations to inflict steep tariff hikes on Russian goods, in coordination with NATO allies, the Group of Seven and the European Union.

Washington and Brussels also said they would cut off exports of luxury goods to Russia in what EU chief Ursula von der Leyen described as a "direct blow to the Russian elite."

Biden warned in his speech at the White House that "Putin must pay the price" as the "aggressor" in the war with its ex-Soviet neighbor. US lawmakers-who would have the final say-have already indicated they support stripping Russia of the preferential status that ensures equal treatment between international trade partners.

In a statement issued in Berlin, G7 leaders confirmed they would each "endeavor" to take action to deny Russia favored trade status. "The United States and our allies and partners continue in lockstep to ramp up the economic pressures on Putin and to further isolate Russia on the global stage," Biden said.

Putin "cannot pursue a war that threatens the very foundation of international peace and stability and then ask for help from the international community."

A key principle of the World Trade Organization, the so-called most favored nation status known in the United States as permanent normal trade relations (PNTR), requires countries to guarantee one another equal tariff and regulatory treatment. Stripping Moscow of the designation, granted in December 2012, would allow Biden to impose steep tariffs on Russian goods or restrict imports.

The president also announced a ban on imports of Russian vodka, diamonds and seafood into the United States. Later in the day, the US Treasury announced a raft of new sanctions targeting "elites and business executives who are associates and facilitators of the Russian regime."

These include family members of Putin's spokesmen, board members of sanctioned bank VTB and 12 members of the lower house of the Russian parliament.

The latest trade sanctions cap several rounds of measures intended to sever Russia's economic and financial ties with the rest of the world over its invasion of Ukraine. They have included banning Russian oil imports, seizing the assets of billionaires tied to Putin, and freezing the nation's stockpile of cash.

Together, the moves have already pushed Moscow to the brink of a debt default.

#### Limited impact?

The steps have also caused prices for key commodities, like gasoline and wheat, to soar, harming US consumers already facing the highest inflation in four decades.

Trade experts are however dubious about whether new tariffs will be effective.

"US direct trade with Russia is relatively small, so higher tariffs would not do much damage to them but could raise costs for our manufacturers who rely on them for key raw materials," said William Reinsch of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

"The additional damage this does to the trading system, while not immediate, could be significant," he said in an analysis. The United States imported just under \$30 billion in goods from Russia last year, including \$17.5 billion in crude oil. The IMF said Thursday that war and the sanctions will lead to a "sharp contraction" of the Russian economy, and slower global growth. The Washington-based crisis lender this week approved \$1.4 billion in fast-disbursing aid for Ukraine, and the World Bank also released nearly \$500 million of what is expected to be a \$3 billion financing package to aid the war-racked country. —AFP

## CBK announces scholarship program under Kafaa'a initiative

**KUWAIT:** Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) Governor Dr Mohammad Yusef Al-Hashel, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Institute of Banking Studies, announced the start of receipt of applications for Master's Degree scholarships for Kuwaitis, for the eighth year running, as CBK continues to support projects and initiatives aiming at national capacity building. Higher qualified national cadres would in turn contribute to institutional infrastructure in the State of Kuwait to support the country's development, he stressed.

The Master's Degree Scholarship Program was developed and is running successfully for the eighth consecutive year within the Kafaa'a initiative, launched by the CBK in cooperation with Kuwaiti banks and managed by the Institute of Banking Studies. The program is a manifestation of CBK's keenness on national

capacity building in the banking sector, given how crucial the sector is to development of the national economy.

The governor indicated that the program is one of the most prominent components under the Kafaa'a initiative, offering scholarships to the most prestigious international universities in the fields of finance, economics, accounting, and business administration. So far, 24 scholarships were awarded in these fields. Applications are to be submitted from Sunday, March 13, 2022, until Thursday, June 2, 2022. Kuwaiti university graduates wishing to apply may obtain information on the conditions, controls, and the application process via the official website: <https://kafaakw.org/en/Kafaa/Program/5>



Dr Mohammad Yusef Al-Hashel



فرصة للمشاركة في برنامج ابتعاث الكويتيين للحصول على درجة الماجستير



## Business

# NBK's AGM approves distribution of 30% cash dividends, 5% bonus shares

## AGM approves all BOD's recommendations; AGM held with a 75.46% attendance

**KUWAIT:** National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) held yesterday its annual Ordinary General Meeting (OGM) and Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) for 2021 with an attendance of 75.46 percent. The AGM approved the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute 30 percent cash dividends to shareholders (30 fils per share) in addition to 5 percent bonus shares (5 shares for every 100 shares owned). The general assembly also elected eleven members of the bank's board of directors for the next 3-year term.

In his speech at the AGM, Nasser M Al-Sayer, NBK Group Chairman mentioned that during last year, NBK remained committed to achieving its strategic objectives and goals, namely, to become broadly recognized as the trusted bank of choice in Kuwait, building on its core values, people, and expertise to deliver world-class products and the highest service quality to the customers, whilst also attracting top Kuwaiti talent.

### Strategic course

We also were committed to maintaining our strategic course by accelerating investment in the innovation and digital transformation, we seek to grow our business in corporate, consumer and private banking. We also strive to strengthen our geography, products, and services - whilst also leveraging our expanding product portfolio to attract high-net-worth private banking clients, Al-Sayer noted.

### Leading position

Al-Sayer continued: "In achieving our goals, we were helped by the improved operating environment in view of easing the restrictions imposed to contain the spread of



NBK management team

the COVID-19 pandemic, the state's improving fiscal standing on the back of rebounding oil prices and increasing consumer spending, supported by loan payment deferrals, stable employment ratios among Kuwaiti nationals as well as reduced overseas travel. This was complemented by the continued support provided by the Central Bank of Kuwait to the banking sector by taking proactive measures that strengthened liquidity levels & capital ratios."

### Supporting national economy

Al-Sayer explained: "Beside its superior financial and operational performance, NBK is committed to supporting the Government of Kuwait's development plans. In particular, the bank is advancing the nation's strategic agenda in terms of driving economic growth through the private sector to achieve increasing economic diversification. This includes our contribution to developing and expanding the nation's financing infrastructure to enable growth in the SME sector and beyond, as well as our role

as a key finance facilitator for the establishment of public-private partnerships (PPPs). We are also actively involved in the process of digitizing Kuwait's economy, as a key partner in the government's drive to expand the country's digital innovation."

### Exceeding expectations

On his part, Isam J Al-Sager, NBK Group CEO, said in his speech: "During the past year, we achieved all our goals and exceeded expectations, despite the slowdown in the operating environment and the continued impacts of the pandemic, reflecting our robust business model and strategic focus on diversification." The year 2021 was another year of strong growth for our balance sheet, as assets grew by 11.9 percent year-on-year to reach KD 33.3 billion, whereas shareholders' equity reached KD 3.3 billion and total loans and advances boosted by 12.7 percent to KD 19.7 billion, and customer deposits increased by 6.9 percent to KD 18.3 billion, he added.

### Solid base

Al-Sager indicated that this performance places NBK on solid base making it well positioned for growth in the medium and long term: especially as we look to the future and focus on delivering sustainable and long-term returns to our shareholders. In 2021, we established our Global Wealth Management (GWM) division through which we aim to grow our market share in asset management and expand our existing client base in regional markets including Saudi Arabia. In 2021, The Group's assets under management exceeded \$17.7 billion, leveraging our strong brand that is trusted by HNWI's across Kuwait and beyond, he added.

### Digital agenda

On the sidelines of the AGM, Shaikha Al-Bahar, NBK Group Deputy CEO, said: "We continued to invest heavily in implementing the Group's digital transformation roadmap, despite the impact of the pandemic on our business. We had no doubts about our vision for digital transformation and preparing proactively for the next generation of digital banking services to maintain our leadership despite the operational challenges." "The digital agenda has become a key pillar in all our strategies, and we started bearing the fruits of our efforts in building

a digital culture and mindset at Group level," she added.

### The bank of the future

Giving his take, Salah Y Al-Fulaij, CEO of NBK-Kuwait, announced after the meeting: "2021 was a year of special success for NBK, during which it achieved significant progress in its digital transformation plans and agenda. It also successfully launched "Weyay", as the first digital bank in Kuwait, which represents a leap in the bank's efforts to become the bank of the future."

### Regaining momentum

Al-Fulaij noted that during the past year, the operating environment in Kuwait witnessed more signs of rebound that was characterized by higher consumer spending, improvement in business activity and volumes as well as gradual recovery in government spending and project awarding, which reached KD 1.5 billion in 2021.

### Shareholders: Generous dividends

During the AGM, NBK shareholders expressed their gratitude to the Board of Directors and the Executive Management for providing generous distribution of cash dividends and bonus shares for 2021, despite the hard times and challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. They mentioned that these distributions are a testament to the bank's solid capital base, and give a positive image for the resilience of the Kuwaiti banking sector in the face of crises and increase confidence in the Kuwaiti economy and its ability to recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

### Distribution due date

Cash dividends and bonus shares will be distributed as of Tuesday dated 05.4.2022, for the shareholders registered in the bank's shareholders' records as at the end of the due date set to Thursday dated 31.03.2022.

### Election of the board of directors

The AGM elected 11 members of the bank's board of directors for the next 3-year term, including 7 ordinary members and 4 independent members, in accordance with the law and the bank's articles of association as well as the rules and instructions of the regulatory authorities.

#### Ordinary board members

- \* Isam J Al-Sager
- \* Muthana Al-Hamad
- \* Hamad Al-Bahar
- \* Emad Al-Bahar
- \* Haitham Al-Khaled
- \* Yacoub Al-Fulaij
- \* Huda Al-Refaie

#### Independent board members

- \* Farouk Bastaki
- \* Abdulwahab Al-Bader
- \* Dr Nasser Al-Saidi
- \* Dr Robert Maroun Eid

## Al-Sayer... A journey full of giving

**KUWAIT:** Nasser Al-Sayer, Group Chairman of National Bank of Kuwait announced during the AGM that he is not running for the board elections for the new term, thus concluding a long journey of giving exceeding 40 years in NBK's history. During this journey, he was a major supporter and contributor to the Bank's success in overcoming many historical crises to emerge even stronger than before. He truly represented a continuation of the values of the founders in carrying on the efforts to build a reputable banking institution with international prominence and recognition. It is well-known for everyone that he made a clear impact in enriching the banking business in Kuwait and played a prominent role in serving and developing the Kuwaiti society.

Nasser Al-Sayer has been a Board Member of NBK since 1980 and was appointed as the Board Vice-Chairman in 1993 and Chairman since August

2014. He also served as the Chairman of the Board Corporate Governance Committee.



of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) from 1994 to 2000. Al-Sayer enjoys extensive professional experience in banking, investment, strategic planning and governance in both private and public sectors, and holds a BA in Economics from Oklahoma State University, USA.

Al-Sayer held a number of key public positions including the Chairman of the Board of Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) from 1999 to 2000, member of the Supreme Council for Planning & Development, and Deputy Director-General and board member

## Russian oligarch slams move to seize assets

**MOSCOW:** Vladimir Potanin, one of Russia's richest oligarchs and a Kremlin confidant, has criticized plans to confiscate assets of foreign enterprises leaving the country, likening them to the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.

Potanin, who heads the Nor Nickel mining company, drew the parallel as President Vladimir Putin's government scrambles to respond to massive Western sanctions on Moscow for its military campaign in Ukraine. The confiscations have not been announced, but have been floated as an idea to hit back at the West.

"I would call for a very cautious approach to the issue of confiscations from the enterprises that have announced they are leaving Russia," Potanin said in a statement published by his Nor Nickel mining company on Telegram. "This would take us a hundred years back, to the year 1917, and the consequences of such a step would be the global distrust of Russia from investors, it would be felt for many decades."

A flurry of Western companies—from H&M, to McDonald's and Ikea—have suspended their work in Russia since Moscow launched its Ukraine incursion. Potanin predicted that Western firms would come back, saying they decided to leave during "unprecedented pressure on them because of public opinion abroad".

"Personally, I would keep this opportunity for them," he added. Faced with a barrage of sanctions which have sent the ruble tumbling and accelerated already high inflation, Russia has taken measures to stem the flight of foreign currency and capital as much as possible.

Without saying the word "nationalization", Putin said Thursday that foreign companies leaving Russia should be given to "those who want to make them work". He also said that Russia is still open for business, calling for the remaining foreign investors in the country to be "protected".

Putin's ruling United Russia party told the Kremlin chief that it had prepared a draft bill that would be "the first step towards the nationalization of assets of foreign companies leaving the Russian market." It said the bill aims to "save jobs." Potanin, 61, regularly features at the top of Forbes list of Russia's richest people. He is close to Putin, with whom he has been seen playing hockey. Other Russian oligarchs have criticized Russia's economic policies since Putin sent in troops to Ukraine—stopping short at criticizing the president himself. —AFP



LOS ANGELES: A pedestrian walks past signage offering cash for valuables outside of a pawn shop in downtown Los Angeles, California. — AFP

## War, inflation threaten world economy

**PARIS:** The world economy's fragile recovery from the COVID-induced crisis is now threatened by Russia's war in Ukraine and soaring commodity prices. Here are four questions regarding the risks to global GDP:

### Will growth stall?

"The war happened right at a time when Europe and the US had a recovery that was going really well. Projections in Europe were among the highest ... (in) the last 20 years," said Jacob Kirkegaard, resident senior fellow with the German Marshall Fund of the United States in their Brussels office.

In just two weeks, the war has had a "material impact" on the economy, European Central Bank chief Christine Lagarde said Thursday, revising the growth outlook for the eurozone to 3.7 percent for 2022, from 4.2 percent forecast in December. The war and sanctions, which include a US ban on Russian oil imports, are raising prices of energy and other key commodities like wheat, fertilisers and metals to surge, International Monetary Fund chief Kristalina Georgieva said.

That comes "on top of already high inflation," Georgieva said. "We got through a crisis like no other with the pandemic. We are now in an even more shocking territory." Credit rating agency S&P has cut its projection for global growth this year to 3.4 percent—a decline of 0.7 percentage points over its earlier forecast due to the expected slump in Russia's sanctions-hit economy and rising energy costs.

Moreover, the cost of hosting Ukrainian refugees and budgetary aid will cost the European Union 175 billion euros (\$192 billion), economist Jean-Pisani Ferry from the Paris-based Bruegel Institute think-tank said.

"I don't think that global economy will go into a recession," said Kirkegaard. But he warned of the threat from stagflation—persistently high inflation combined with high unemployment and stagnant demand.

### Why are prices soaring?

Inflation has been rising worldwide for a year—due to COVID-linked disruptions in supply chains, leading to a spurt in the prices of raw materials which have raised production costs.

The war has sent oil and gas prices soaring, threatening to worsen inflationary pressure. Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell told the US Congress that every \$10 hike in oil prices would impact growth by 0.1 percentage points and add 0.2 percentage points to inflation. The United States recorded 7.9 percent inflation in February—a new 40-year high.

"We are facing an oil shock, a gas shock and an electricity shock. This has never happened together," said Thomas Pellerin-Carlin, director of the Jacques Delors energy institute. Apart from oil and gas, other key commodities have been affected, with prices of aluminum, nickel and wheat skyrocketing.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday warned of inflationary pressures worldwide as a result of the Western sanctions on his country. Several key industries have already been hit, with several steel plants in Spain shutting down due to high energy prices. Millions of households are finding it more expensive to travel, heat their homes and bring food to the table. "The price of bread went up enormously" since the war began, said Omar Azzam, a Cairo resident, referring to a 50 percent hike in a country which is the world's top wheat importer.

French President Emmanuel Macron warned Friday that Russia's attack on Ukraine will "deeply destabilize" food supplies in Europe and Africa as some of the world's most fertile agricultural land goes unplanted. If production strategies in other countries aren't adjusted "several African countries will be affected by famines within 12 to 18 months precisely because of the war," he warned.—AFP

## Russia squeezes foreign firms leaving

**MOSCOW:** Russia is piling huge pressure on foreign companies fleeing the country following Moscow's decision to send troops to Ukraine even as some tycoons warn that the seizure of assets would take the country "back to 1917".

On Thursday, Russian President Vladimir Putin approved a plan to nationalize foreign-owned companies, and on Friday parliament's lower house was set to discuss the initiative. Russian prosecutors on Friday warned they would be closely monitoring the departing foreign companies, including their adherence to labor laws and procedures for salary payments.

The General Prosecutor's Office said every company leaving will be audited for "fraudulent or deliberate" bankruptcy and warned against one-sided refusals to fulfil obligations. On Wednesday, Russia's ruling United Russia party told Putin that it had prepared a bill that would be "the first step towards the nationalization of assets of foreign companies leaving the Russian market."

During a meeting with government officials Thursday, the Russian president endorsed that plan, saying the country must "introduce external management and then transfer these enterprises to those who want to work." The latest government measures are a sign of a huge economic distress engulfing Russia.

On February 24, Putin ordered Russian troops to pour into pro-Western Ukraine, triggering unprecedented Western sanctions against Russia and sparking an exodus of foreign corporations including H&M, McDonald's and Ikea. Washington and Brussels' coordinated response to Moscow's incursion into Ukraine has made Russia the most sanctioned country in the world, sending the ruble into free-fall, accelerating already spiraling inflation and sparking fears of debt default.

Putin has however said Russia will emerge stronger from the crisis. "I am sure that we will get through these difficulties and become more competent and have more opportunities to feel independent and self-reliant," Putin told Belarusian strongman Alexander Lukashenko during a meeting on Friday. Officials in Moscow have sought to downplay the gravity of the Western sanctions, promising that Russia will adapt and taking steps to stop the flight of foreign currency and capital.

Former prime minister and president Dmitry Medvedev criticized foreign firms seeking to leave Russia and said they were doing so under pressure from Western capitals. Washington and Brussels, he said on Facebook, "are ridiculous. They want to drag private companies into this parade of idiotic limitations. Truly pitiful." He warned that coming back to Russia "will not be easy". Some officials assured Russians that their favorite brands would have domestic alternatives. Moscow's mayor Sergei Sobyanin said this week that it would be possible to replace the city's McDonald's restaurants with domestic fast-food chains within six months.—AFP

## Business

# Italy's Draghi walks sanctions tightrope over Russian energy

## Italy seeks Qatar's help to obtain increased LNG deliveries

ROME: Even as Italy's Mario Draghi voices firm opposition to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the country's dependence on Russian gas puts the prime minister in a tight spot. Italy was criticized by some European allies for dragging its feet before agreeing to impose tough sanctions on Russia, but is now firmly on Moscow's blacklist for supporting them along with other EU neighbors. This week Draghi told lawmakers Italy was "perfectly in line with other EU countries" and was "ready to take new restrictive measures, if necessary".

But diplomatic sources believe that like Germany, the other major European economy reluctant to turn off the Russian gas spigot overnight, Italy would not look favorably on a European embargo of Russian gas and oil, similar to that announced Tuesday by the US. Italy imports 95 percent of the gas it consumes, about 45 percent of which comes from Russia. For Germany, 55 percent of gas purchases are supplied by Moscow.

But while gas represents 42 percent of Italy's energy consumption, it only represents a quarter for Germany. All that means that Rome's stated objective is to reduce its dependence on Russian gas "as quickly as possible".

"It is not an obvious task, but it must be done," Draghi told parliament Wednesday. "Our security and our freedom are at stake." Italy, which exited

nuclear power more than 30 years ago, plans to boost its production of natural gas from 3.34 billion to 5 billion cubic meters annually and increase imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the United States.

Meanwhile, Rome is conducting an all-out diplomatic offensive to free itself from energy dependence on Russia. Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio went to Algeria, Italy's second largest gas supplier, at the end of February to arrange increased deliveries.

### War economy

Other producers from unstable states could also be increasingly tapped by Italy, such as Azerbaijan, Tunisia and Libya. Draghi has spoken by telephone with the Amir of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, to obtain increased deliveries of LNG. But those are "not enough to compensate for a possible cut in gas from Russia," Roberto Bianchini, director of the Observatory of Climate Finance at Milan Polytechnic, told AFP.

Italy's undersecretary for foreign affairs, Manlio Di Stefano, said Italy was "preparing for a war economy, hoping not to get there." "If the gas supply were cut off, we would have two weeks of full autonomy, two weeks without industry, and then total darkness," he said.

Others see this as exaggerated. Simone Tagliapietra, professor of energy at the Catholic

University of Milan, told AFP that Italy's gas reserves are one of the largest in Europe, filled to 30 percent of capacity. "It can import more LNG and reactivate coal-fired power plants to avoid this scenario, so there will be no blackout," Tagliapietra said. But for Milan Polytechnic's Bianchini, an interruption in Russian deliveries "could lead to the need to temporarily suspend certain companies' consumption". There are other reasons, too, to reduce dependence on Russian gas and oil, such as its currently soaring prices. According to Tagliapietra's calculations, the EU would pay, beginning in April, 1 billion euros per day to Moscow for its energy needs.

### Return of coal?

Italy's environment minister, Roberto Cingolani, admitted that ending dependence on Russian gas would not happen overnight. Out of the 29 billion cubic meters of gas imported by Italy from Russia each year, 15 billion will arrive from other countries in late spring.

"It will take us 24 to 30 months to become totally independent," Cingolani said. And while Draghi is betting on increasing renewable energy, he has not ruled out reviving the half-dozen coal-fired power plants still in operation but due to close in 2025. "To avoid a blackout, the only alternative is to use the capacity of coal-fired power plants," despite their harmful impact on the envi-



MOSCIW: This combination of pictures shows Italy's Prime Minister Mario Draghi (left) and Russian President Vladimir Putin. —AFP

ronment and climate, Bianchini said. As it tries to establish a cohesive response on sanctions, Italy's government ministers have sometimes appeared to be working at cross purposes.

While Di Maio was pressing Brussels last month to exclude Russia from the SWIFT banking messaging network, Economy Minister Daniele Franco was cautioning Italy's Western allies that "some countries, including Italy, continue to pay for Russian natural gas". —AFP

## Burgan Bank launches Kanz draw account with KD 1,500,000 prize

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank has launched its new Kanz draw account with exciting prizes exceeding KD 2,300,000 in the monthly, quarterly, semi-annual, and annual draws. Burgan Bank's Yawmi draw account has been upgraded to Kanz account, which reflects better the Bank's keenness to optimize its offering and reward its customers with life-changing opportunities and greater chances to win bigger prizes. Designed with five draws, Kanz account grants one lucky winner the grand annual prize of KD 1,500,000. The semi-annual draw winners will get KD 350,000. The quarterly draw will offer a KD 25,000 prize for four lucky winners, and 20 winners will each get KD 1,000 cash-prize in the monthly draw. Kanz account also optimizes customers' chances to win valuable cash prizes through the first of its kind branch specific draw that allows each branch to reward one customer annually with a 5,000 KD prize. With that, the total number of winners will exceed 275 lucky winners annually.



Raed Abdullah Al-Haqhaq

The unique Kanz quarterly draw is designed for loyal customers who maintain a balance higher than KD 5,000, including Premier and Private Banking customers. It aims at optimizing their banking experience with more rewards and

chances of winning great prizes. Kanz Account is accessible to any individual and can be opened in Kuwaiti Dinar or in any other major currencies i.e., USD, EURO, and GDP with a minimum balance of KD 200, or equivalent. Customers' chances of winning one of the prizes increase the more deposits they make in their Kanz account.

Commenting on the launch of Kanz, Raed Abdullah Al-Haqhaq, Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer & CEO - Kuwait at Burgan Bank said "At Burgan Bank, we are constantly working on enhancing our customers' experience, not only by offering great banking and financial services and products, but also by designing comprehensive solutions that add greater benefits and advantages. It is with the objective of optimizing our offering with unique benefits that we have introduced the Kanz draw account, which maximizes customers' chances to win higher prizes that can change their lives. We also recognize the importance of fostering the culture of saving money in Kuwait and Kanz account serves this vision by offering our customers a chance to save more and to be rewarded for their savings."

Commenting on the same, Naser Mohammad Al-Qaisi, Chief Retail Banking Officer at Burgan Bank said "We are at a very exciting stage in the Retail Banking business at Burgan Bank. This launch is the first of many bold and innovative products and services that we are working on. We have taken a customer first approach and I am certain that our products and services will enhance the banking experience of our customers." Burgan Bank is diligently working on upgrading its customers' overall banking experience following a strategic roadmap focused on innovation and development across the Bank's offering.

## KFH wins 5 coveted awards from EMEA Finance

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House "KFH" received 5 reputable prizes from EMEA Finance in its 14th banking sector awards distribution ceremony in the Middle East for the year 2021. It's a new accomplishment that affirms KFH distinction and pioneering position in adopting the best and latest digital technologies. KFH won the prizes "Best Islamic Bank in the Middle East", "Best Bank in Kuwait", "Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait", "Corporate Social Responsibility in the Middle East" and "Best Islamic Bank in Bahrain".

EMEA Finance awards are among the most significant awards in the banking sector in the Middle East region to honor banking institutions based on their financial performance, service quality and distinction in the banking sector. The awards of this reputable financial magazine are based on fundamental calibers to select the best banks. Calibers include the bank's market share, products growth in the market, profitability, innovation in services and products and the quality of its business strategy. In a comment on the awards, Acting Group CEO at KFH, AbdulWahab Essa Al-Rushood said that the awards which KFH received recently are an addition to the series of awards and honors which the bank



AbdulWahab Essa Al-Rushood

affirmed its global pioneering position, thus referring to the success of the digitalization strategy.

Al-Rushood added that KFH has adapted well with the market and technology variations in the post COVID-19 economy and the socially responsible investment strategies. It enhanced its returns during the unprecedented economic crises caused by the pandemic. KFH achieved speedy qualitative bounds in the execution of the digitalization strategy by adopting the most modern FinTech innovations. KFH has also achieved a pioneering position in the Islamic Sukuks and Financial Services Market. He indicated that accomplishments, appreciations, and wining of global awards would not have been achieved without KFH shareholders and customers trust and the employees' dedicated efforts and professionalism. He emphasized that the awards are not just an accomplishment and appre-

## Seara brings the joy of cooking to Kuwait

KUWAIT: Seara, a food brand that is completely committed to high quality products, is bringing the joy of cooking to homes and kitchens across Kuwait with the launch of its high-quality range of frozen foods. The brand with presence in over 150 countries is part of JBS the global leader in protein-based food and is presenting an extensive complete halal portfolio of Seara frozen whole chickens, chicken parts, breaded chicken, chicken burgers and beef burgers, minced meats, sausages, meat balls, frozen vegetables, frozen seafood and frozen fruits, among others.

As part of this launch, Seara also announces its collaboration with Kuwaiti chef and influencer "Chef Daddy" Yousef Rashid as Seara brand ambassador. Yousef, a regionally-renowned chef, rose to fame on social media and has legion of followers. Taking his inspiration from Seara's

wide offerings, Yousef will celebrate the joy of cooking by creating Kuwaiti-inspired signature dishes which highlight the country's rich culture and heritage while also intriguing the palate with exceptional flavors that heighten the taste and thrill the senses. "I'm very happy to welcome Seara Brand to Kuwait and join in celebrating the joy of taste," said Chef Yousef Rashid. "Along with great taste and nutrition, Seara's wide range of products offers great convenience, making cooking an enjoyable experience for everyone - whether chefs or home-cookers. People are increasingly recognizing the value and benefits of frozen food while discovering new, creative ways to include them in their diet and local culinary journeys. With Seara, while noticing the ease of preparation Kuwaitis can experience the true joys of cooking and create the most delicious meals for a wholesome and healthy lifestyle."

He added "What is really special about Seara products, is the unique quality it offers whether in the breaded items which are crunchy from outside & tender from inside or the unbreaded items with its amazing taste



& unique blend of flavors. You can easily distinguish its quality from other products in the market." Fresh, fast and delicious are a few key benefits to frozen food. In addition, frozen foods are free from preservatives, have longer shelf lives, less wastage which in turn leads to cost savings and most importantly are great for nutrition. At Seara, we apply the "Freshly Frozen" technique while freezing foods, which in turn locks in freshness and avoids the loss of vitamins and nutrients dur-

ing transportation from farm to kitchen & from plant to retail.

In this launch, Seara brand will present to Kuwaitis a new portfolio of over 120 products produced with the highest quality, taking into account the importance of Middle Eastern culture and cuisine. All the new products are now available across leading modern trade outlets, hyper markets and major coops across Kuwait, strengthening the strategy of Seara of offering the country and the region innovative, high-quality products.

## Wall St falters as Ukraine war drags on

NEW YORK: Wall Street ended a downbeat week with further losses Friday as traders braced for continued economic fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine as well as looming Federal Reserve rate hikes, though European indices saw gains. Oil also rose on Iran supply fears, but remained well below the 14-year peak of near \$140 hit Monday brought on by worries of disruptions to supply from Russia, a major producer. The pound and yen hit multi-year dollar

lows before regaining some ground, as traders prepared for the Federal Reserve to most likely hike interest rates next week for the first time since the pandemic, in the first of several moves this year to fight inflation.

While equities rose after Putin said his negotiators had reported "certain positive shifts" in talks with Ukraine, the enthusiasm petered out in New York trading as Washington and Brussels announced new sanctions against Russia and fighting continued. The Nasdaq closed more than two percent lower and the S&P 500 fell more than one percent. "This gullible market-or some indubitable algorithms-seems willing to take Putin's words as the makings perhaps of an exit path," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare. In Europe, London ended with a gain of 0.8 percent, Paris

rose by 0.9 percent and Frankfurt climbed 1.4 percent to post their first weekly rise since the war. Sentiment there was also brightened by data showing the UK economy rebounded 0.8 percent in January after a 0.2-percent decline in December, as Omicron coronavirus curbs were lifted.

Markets have been rocked ever since Russia shocked the world by invading its neighbor on February 24. Michael Hewson, chief market analyst at CMC Markets UK warned that "any deterioration in sentiment over the weekend could see these gains reversed in a heartbeat if Russia chooses to escalate further, as well as potentially crossing the red line of chemical, or biological weapons use."

Oil jumped Friday after the European Union revealed talks it is chairing about the revival of the 2015

nuclear accord with crude producer Iran must be paused, days after fresh demands from Russia complicated negotiations. Oil has been extremely volatile ever since Moscow's invasion, with traders still fretting over Western moves to ban Russian crude.

"It's been a rollercoaster ride for oil this week, and for some, the weekend cannot come quick enough," said Stephen Innes, Managing Partner at SPI Asset Management.

Crude prices have pulled back from nearly \$140 at the peak on Monday to around \$110 on Friday as hopes rose that other producers will step up production. "This optimism needs to be tempered by the fact that any increase in output from OPEC would not be enough to offset the loss of Russian supply," said Hewson at CMC Markets. —AFP



Hussam Al-Rushaid, Abdelaziz Al-Anjari, Sheikh Jaber Al-Faisal Al-Sabah and Yousuf Al-Ghusain.



Canadian Ambassador with Yarub Burhama and his wife and Hussam Al-Rushaid and his daughter.



Hussam Al-Rushaid with Tunisian and Jordanian Ambassadors.

# Reconnaissance and Becarre welcome 14 ambassadors, diplomats to cultural event

## From history to modernity

Reconnaissance Research held an exclusive cultural event, attended by ambassadors and diplomats at Becarre Exhibition. Attendees explored Kuwait's history through Becarre's modern designs, touring the exhibition that displayed a number of modern Kuwaiti interior designs and decor.

Reconnaissance Research was keen on introducing ambassadors and diplomats to Kuwait through designs that show its cultural and intellectual heritage, and unique aesthetic creatives. In a press statement, Sheikh Jaber Al-Faisal Al-Sabah, co-founder and director at Becarre Exhibition Organizing Company, praised the efforts of Reconnaissance Research in providing various events that project Kuwait, its culture and views.

Sheikh Jaber said: "Becarre aims to show aspects of our Kuwaiti culture and heritage, then presenting it in a new innovative context for the modern generation, in addition to show-



Abdelaziz Al-Anjari and Hussam Al-Rushaid.

ing Kuwaiti talents who created the creative, quality, and elegant works, which allowed the Kuwaiti products to be capable of competing with international counterparts".

He added: "We would love to see Becarre's name spread everywhere, be it in international hotels or museums. The Kuwaiti heritage is almost identical in many aspects with the Gulf heritage, where we offer products that reflect what we witnessed and experienced when we were young, and present them in a beautiful and innovative way."

For his part, Abdelaziz Al-Anjari, Founder and CEO of Reconnaissance Research, praised the work of Becarre, stressing that the tour of the exhibition caught the eye of the ambassadors of Oman, France, Iraq, Korea, Jordan, Australia, Tunisia, India, Sudan, Italy, and Canada. In addition to the Charge d'Affaires of the Chinese ambassador, the Charge d'Affaires of Uzbekistan and the Egyptian embassy delegation.

Speaking about the evening, Al-Anjari said: "Cultural events have a major role in deepening

friendship between people and introducing them to positive aspects in Kuwait that deserve more attention. They also contribute to the consolidation of relations with diplomatic missions by opening wider areas for cooperation, so we get out of the stagnation and limited horizons of political files into a broader space. Art is the face of any country, and it must be taken care of and highlighted as a societal necessity."

He continued: "Let us build more positive bridges of communication with the ambassadors of the countries with whom Kuwait has diplomatic relations, as part of our efforts to enhance the mutual cultural movement, and I can only thank the organizers of the Becarre exhibition, Sheikh Jaber Al-Faisal and Hussam Al-Rushaid for the high-level organization and quality of the evening's content in all its details." In turn, the Becarre company's designer, Hussam Al-Rushaid, stressed the importance Becarre has on simplicity,



quality, and luxury in its products. He said that his designs came from his love for creativity and keenness to visit the annual exhibitions in Europe so that our designs are up-to-date on what the latest style and trends are in the world of decoration, then mix the current modernity with history of Kuwait.

"I cooperate with Sheikh Jaber Al-Faisal Al-Sabah. We have a workshop to make our collection. I personally supervise creating and displaying our products in several international and regional exhibitions in Paris, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Saudi Arabia. Since

the first exhibition, we have found a great turnout and we aspire to expand further internationally," Al-Rushaid concluded.

The cultural evening included a display of paintings and innovative pieces of furniture, deeply embracing the authentic Kuwaiti heritage, made locally in Kuwaiti workshops and inspired by the ideas of the designer of Becarre Exhibition Hussam Al-Rushaid.



Korean Ambassador's wife.



Sheikh Jaber Al-Faisal Al-Sabah, Hussam Al-Rushaid, Egyptian Embassy's delegation with the Egyptian Ambassador's wife.



Iraqi Ambassador with Hussam Al-Rushaid and Sudanese Ambassador.



Hussam Al-Rushaid and Australian Ambassador.



Omani and Jordanian Ambassadors.



Lulua Al-Rushaid, Korean Ambassador's wife and Korean Ambassador.



Sheikh Jaber Al-Faisal Al-Sabah and Indian Ambassador.



Sheikh Jaber Al-Faisal Al-Sabah and Deputy Chinese Ambassador.



Hussam Al-Rushaid, Italian Ambassador, French Ambassador and Sheikh Jaber Al-Faisal Al-Sabah.



Canadian Ambassador.



## BURBERRY GETS 'BACK TO REALITY' WITH LIVE LONDON SHOW



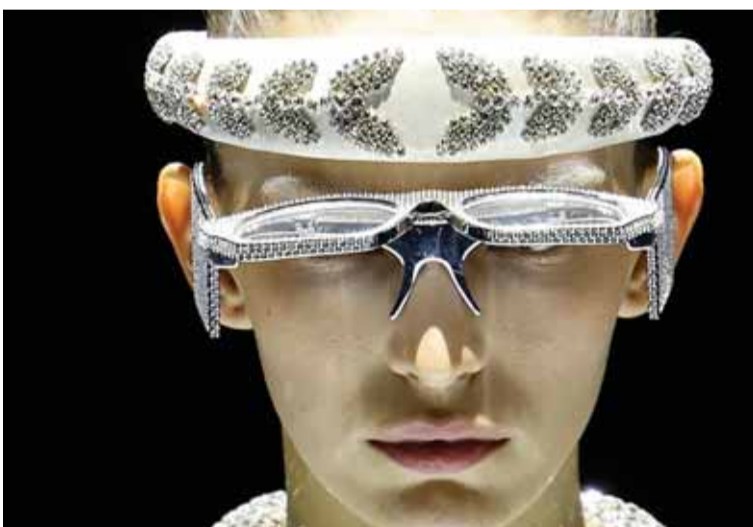
**B**urberry returned to live fashion shows after two years of pandemic-induced absence on Friday with Italy's Riccardo Tisci taking over a church in central London outside of fashion week for a celebration of Britishness. The fashion house behind the famous check pattern took over the imposing edifice of Central Hall Westminster with models showing off the Autumn-Winter 2022 collection to the sounds of the London Contemporary Orchestra and around 100 choristers.

"I think people should be showing when they're ready to show," artistic director Tisci told journalists, explaining why Burberry skipped last month's London Fashion Week. Tisci said that he "got COVID three, four times," and that the company had undergone a lot of changes with the departure of CEO Marco Gobbetti, his replacement by Jonathan Akeroyd and a "lot of COVID".

With the audience standing in the dark, the models came down stairs and

walked among those attending before climbing onto tables specially laid with crockery and cutlery for the occasion. "The collection embodies an intangible essence that is Britishness, a unique fusion of honoring the beauty of the past, whilst also remaining focused on the future with thankfulness, hope and love."

Celebrities including Kate Moss, Naomi Campbell and Adam Driver were in attendance to watch the fashion house's iconic trench coat augmented with chains, worn as a dress or printed with trompe l'oeil images. "It was important for me to explore what it means to belong, how our roots influence our identity and how the power of community and togetherness is what truly brings meaning to the world," Tisci said. "It feels good" to be back to reality, back to emotions, he said. — AFP



## Lifestyle | Features

## Chinese artist unveils painting for Ukraine, 'which has already won'

China has so far refused to condemn its ally Russia's war, but Chinese painter Huang Rui is convinced that Ukraine has already won. The artist told AFP he paused his other projects to dedicate himself to a work about Ukraine after hearing the news of its invasion on February 24. "Absence of Black Moon" was finished three days later and presented at an event organized by the Ukrainian and Polish embassies in Beijing on Friday.

The event, called "Together for Peace", was attended by multiple diplomats in a country where the authorities refuse to use the word "invasion" to describe the events in Ukraine. Huang was one of the pioneers of the Chinese avant-garde movement in the 1980s and a member of the same

loose collective as artist Ai Weiwei. His latest work depicts the yellow and blue Ukrainian flag sliced into quarters by lines of red and white, meant to represent Russia. At the canvas' centre is a dark circle, a reference to the "I Ching" or Book of Changes—an ancient Chinese text.

Huang said he had applied the principles of the "I Ching" to the military situation and concluded that victory for Kyiv was inevitable. "It's black, but in fact there's already hope. When one sees it, they know that even at the most sombre moment, Ukraine has already won," the artist told AFP. "At the moment, Ukraine is in the depths of night. But it is on its own soil; it can work, think, dream." Many Western embassies in Beijing have displayed

Ukrainian colors over the past few weeks in a gesture of solidarity. But a poster outside the Canadian embassy with the country's flag and a message of support on it was vandalized with anti-NATO slogans.

China has repeatedly blamed NATO's "eastward expansion" for worsening tensions between Russia and Ukraine, echoing the Kremlin's prime security grievance, while refusing to criticise Moscow's decision to send troops across the border. President Xi Jinping urged "maximum restraint" to avoid a "humanitarian crisis" during a Tuesday video summit with France's Emmanuel Macron and Germany's Olaf Scholz. —AFP



This photo shows Chinese artist Huang Rui posing with his artwork "Absence of Black Moon" during a "Together for Peace" event at the Poland embassy in Beijing. — AFP photos



Ukrainian musicians (from left to right) Olesia Kliepak, Marharyta Serdiuk, Nadia Safina and Kseniia Kucherova pose in Stevns, Denmark. — AFP photos

## 'All we have is our talent': Ukraine violinists find peace in Denmark

With three friends, all violinists like her, Nadia Safina fled the invasion of Ukraine to find peace at a music school in Denmark, a horrific ordeal that took 10 days. Now, "all we have is our talent. Not boots. Not clothes, not jewelry. Only our talent and our instruments," the 24-year-old says, a weary look of despair in her eyes. Safe but with her "heart in pain", she arrived this week in Stevns, an hour outside Copenhagen, far from the bombs falling on her hometown of Kharkiv in eastern Ukraine which she fled on the first day of the war.

The four women are now at the Scandinavian Cello School, which fre-



Nadia Safina, a 24-year-old musician from Kharkiv in Ukraine, plays her instrument in Stevns, Denmark.



Jacob Shaw, director of the Scandinavian Cello School that is welcoming several musicians from Ukraine, poses in Stevns, Denmark.

quently welcomes artists from around the world but is now focusing exclusively on bringing over Ukrainian musicians. "We support them with exactly the same conditions as everybody else. We give them a place to study and to stay for free, and food," the school's director Jacob Shaw says. Thanks to his professional network, he was able to arrange for the four women's exodus on the first day of Russia's invasion on February 24.

The school is now hosting six Ukrainian musicians who have fled the war, and three more are expected in the coming days. Nadia and her fiance Misha, both alto violinists, and his sister Ksenia

Olesia Kliepak, a 23-year-old musician from Kharkiv in Ukraine, poses with her instrument in Stevns, Denmark.

Kusherova, also a 24-year-old violinist, had already planned to come to the school before the war broke out. "On February 24th, we woke up to the sound of bombs. It was scary. Really scary. Panic broke out everywhere in our dormitory, and we just packed up our stuff," says Nadia, still shaken by the events.

Their first stop was her mother's place in Donets, a village in the nearby countryside. Then the women went to Lviv, where they picked up Ksenia's family, and left for Poland. They travelled by car, train and bus to reach Warsaw. "In Lviv, we waited eight hours on the platform in zero degrees and we couldn't get on a train." Like all

able-bodied men aged 18 to 60, Misha was not allowed to leave Ukraine. He returned to his hometown of Kriviy Rig in central Ukraine. Since then, Nadia has worried for his safety. The two are in constant contact. "We send messages, we speak every day, every hour."

## 'Just want to return home'

Nadia thinks back on her life before the war. "I had three jobs, my studies, my students, my colleagues. I had everything I needed. And I had very big plans for my life." The conservatory and university in Kharkiv have since been bombed, the instruments destroyed. Her professor is still there, in a shelter, caring for his disabled mother. "We can't imagine what the future holds because they don't stop bombing us. We can't plan anything," she says despairingly. "I just want to return home, I want God to save our friends and our families. That is my plan now," she says. "But Putin is crazy. He won't stop anytime soon."

In Stevns, a pastoral oasis nestled between the sea and countryside, she has a tidy room under the rafters. She practices her alto violin, either in her room or in the music hall in another building on the grounds, formerly a farm. With their friends Olesia Kliepak and Marharyta Serdiuk, who had to hide for several days in Kharkiv before joining the others in Poland, Nadia and Ksenia now appreciate the tranquility in Stevns, though they are still sick with worry. A few hundred meters away, the beach provides some solace.

Denmark is known for its ultra-restrictive asylum and refugee policy, but it has welcomed Ukrainians with open arms, making exemptions to its strict curbs to facilitate their entry to the labor market, among other things. The Scandinavian country of 5.8 million has said it is ready to take in up to 20,000 Ukrainians. Since the start of the conflict to March 8, around 850 Ukrainians had sought asylum or applied for a work permit. —AFP

leave them behind," she told AFP as Keks sniffed around curiously, while Lea cautiously followed him.

"They were scared crazy for sure, because they don't understand what's happening and why it is happening to us," said Zatssepa, one of more than two million refugees who have left Ukraine. At the Medyka border crossing, Zatssepa said she, Lea and Keks were planning to rest in Poland a bit before pondering their future. Tatiana Tymchuk, who lives near Kyiv, arrived with her mother and little brother, as well as a turtle named Cherep and a Snowshoe tomcat called Simon.

"We couldn't leave them behind so we took them with us. We also have dogs, but they stayed at home with grandpa," she told AFP. "We lived 10 kilometers (six miles) from Kyiv, they were free in a happy house there," Tymchuk said.

A grey cat carefully watching the world outside her blue and white cage, Mara came from Kyiv with Liana Getman and her two daughters. "She was really scared

## Baldwin wanted to finish 'Rust' after fatal shooting: Legal filing

Actor Alec Baldwin wanted to finish filming "Rust" in the weeks after the fatal on-set shooting of a cinematographer, new legal documents showed Friday. Baldwin was holding a Colt gun during a rehearsal for the low-budget Western in New Mexico in October when it discharged a live round, killing Halyna Hutchins and wounding director Joel Souza. The movie was abandoned amid recriminations over who was to blame for the tragedy, with allegations of unsafe practices and claims of corner-cutting.

But an arbitration filing Friday in Los Angeles showed Baldwin had sought to resurrect the stalled project. "Baldwin made an exhaustive effort to contact the 'Rust' cast in the hope of acquiring their support to finish the film," said the filing by Baldwin's attorney to an arbitration service. "He did so both with the intent of honoring Halyna's legacy by completing her last work and of compensating Hutchins and his son from the film's profits. "Depending on the success of 'Rust' upon its completion and release, this additional component of the settlement would likely have equaled millions of dollars."



In this file photo actor Alec Baldwin attends the 'Exploring the Arts' 20th anniversary Gala at Hammerstein Ballroom in New York City. — AFP

A series of lawsuits have been filed since the shooting, including by Hutchins' husband, in which he claimed "substantial" damages against Baldwin and other producers. It was this lawsuit, Friday's filing says, that derailed the scheme to finish the film. The arbitration document seeks chiefly to insulate Baldwin and his production company-producers on the movie from the effect of lawsuits, arguing that the former "30 Rock" star had no responsibility for the business side of the film. It cites a clause in the contract he had with "Rust LLC," the company formed to make the movie, saying he is "entitled to immediate indemnification from Respondents arising out of or connected to the Rust litigations."

In December, Baldwin told ABC that he does not feel guilty for Hutchins' death, and believed the weapon he was handling to be safe. "I feel that someone is responsible for what happened and I can't say who that is. But I know it's not me," said Baldwin. Law enforcement in New Mexico is conducting a criminal investigation into the incident, including into how live ammunition could have found its way onto the set. —AFP



Handout picture shows a 'Chelonoidis chathamensis' turtle at the San Cristobal island, Galapagos islands, Ecuador. — AFP

## New giant tortoise species found in Galapagos after DNA study

A new species of giant tortoise has been discovered in the Galapagos after DNA testing found animals living on one island had not yet been recorded, Ecuador's environment ministry said. Researchers compared the genetic material of tortoises currently living on San Cristobal with bones and shells collected in 1906 from a cave in the island's highlands and found them to be different. The 20th-century explorers never reached the lowlands northeast of the island, where the animals live today, and as a result, almost 8,000 tortoises correspond to a different lineage to what was previously thought.

"The species of giant tortoise that inhabits San Cristobal Island, until now known scientifically as *Chelonoidis chathamensis*, genetically matches a different species," the ministry said Thursday on Twitter. Galapagos Conservancy said in a newsletter that the *Chelonoidis chathamensis* species is "almost certainly extinct" and that the island had in fact been home to two different varieties of tortoise, one living in the highlands and another in the lowlands. Located in the Pacific about 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) off the coast of Ecuador, the Galapagos Islands are a protected wildlife area and home to unique species of flora and fauna.

The archipelago was made famous by British geologist and naturalist Charles Darwin's observations on evolution there. There were originally 15 species of giant tortoise on the islands, three of which became extinct centuries ago, according to the Galapagos National Park. In 2019, a specimen of *Chelonoidis phantastica* was found on Fernandina Island more than 100 years after the species was considered extinct. The study by researchers from Newcastle University in Britain, Yale in the United States, the American NGO Galapagos Conservancy and other institutions was published in the scientific journal *Heredity*. They will continue to recover more DNA from the bones and shells to determine whether the tortoises living on San Cristobal, which is 557 kilometers long, should be given a new name. —AFP



Lera, a young refugee from Ukraine holds her cat outside the temporary shelter and relocation center near Przemysl, south-eastern Poland. — AFP

## 'We couldn't leave them': Ukraine refugees flee with pets in tow

Lea and Keks are among the latest refugees arriving in Poland from war-torn Ukraine, both jumping at their master's feet and visibly relieved after crossing the border. The two Yorkshire terriers are a part of a large contingent of dogs, cats and parrots fleeing Ukraine following the Russian invasion. "At home, they live on the pillow, they are small and their body and health are not really fit for this trip," said their owner, Anna Zatssepa. "But they're like children and you just can't

and I guess now she understands all the disasters happening and she supports us as she can," Getman said. "She was crying while we were evacuated from Kyiv, she was crying half of our trip, but then she understood that she's OK, she's with us and now she's calm."

## 'Tired and scared'

Many women crossing the border from Ukraine to Poland at Medyka carry or lead animals besides their sometimes bulky suitcases, but there are also more efficient ways of taking cats and dogs into safety. At an animal shelter on the outskirts of the nearby city of Przemysl, Joanna Puchalska-Tracz welcomed 38 dogs and 32 cats from Ukraine on Wednesday, taken from Kyiv by the German organization White Paw in several cars. "They are tired and scared and they don't want to eat yet, they must rest and look around and maybe get better here," she told AFP over the barking and miaowing of the canine and feline refugees.

Melanie Vogeley from White Paw is evacuating not only animals from Ukrainian shelters, but also the organization's Ukrainian volunteers to the west. "They used the chance to flee and they took all the animals," Vogeley told AFP at the sprawling shelter. "We have a little sanctuary in Germany and we'll bring all our Ukrainian people and all their animals there," Vogeley said.

The Przemysl shelter will soon increase its capacity, said Puchalska-Tracz, adding that she had also established a 24/7 animal help point next to a large refugee centre in central Przemysl. "Many owners travel with their dogs and cats and they don't have anything for them. They are leaving home so fast. So after work here I go to the centre to bring some food to those animals," she said. — AFP

## Sports

# India reignite World Cup bid with victory over West Indies

## Win gives India a huge morale boost

### News in brief

#### Atletico edge out Cadiz 2-1

**MADRID:** Atletico Madrid edged out Cadiz 2-1 on Friday to move into third place in La Liga and earn a timely morale-boost ahead of their Champions League trip to Manchester United next week. Diego Simeone's team are three points ahead of Barcelona who host Osasuna on Sunday but 12 points back from leaders Real Madrid who also have a game in hand. On Tuesday, Atletico go to Old Trafford for a Champions League last 16 tie which is delicately poised at 1-1 after the first leg in Spain last month. Joao Felix gave Atletico the perfect start when he opened the scoring in just the third minute from a pass by Mario Ledesma. — AFP

#### France beat Wales 13-9

**CARDIFF:** France kept their bid for a first Six Nations Grand Slam since 2010 on track after edging Wales 13-9 in a thoroughly absorbing Test in Cardiff on Friday. Fabien Galthie's side arrived in the Welsh capital on the back of three convincing wins over Italy (37-10), Ireland (30-24) and Scotland (36-17) and now have a tilt at the Grand Slam when they play England in Paris on March 19. Wales did well to close down their play-making captain Antoine Dupont and posed a threat right to the end of an often-frantic encounter at a Principality Stadium 11,000 supporters short of its full 74,500 capacity. France led 10-9 at half-time, Anthony Jelouch scoring the only try, full-back Melvyn Jaminet kicking the conversion and penalty, while Dan Biggar kicked three penalties for the home side. — AFP

#### Madsen leads LPGA Thailand

**BANGKOK:** Nanna Koerstz Madsen led the field after the third round of the LPGA Thailand on Saturday as the Danish player gunned for her maiden LPGA victory. The 27-year-old, who scored six birdies to finish six-under-par at 63, was closely tailed by China's Lin Xiyu (66) and Celine Boutier (66) of France. Play was briefly disrupted by lightning at the Siam Country Club in the beach resort of Pattaya, but Madsen put her head down to finish top of the board for the first time. "It's exciting," she said, carding her first two birdies straight out of the gate on pins one and two. The player-who represented Denmark at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro added: "It would be amazing winning a first LPGA event. That's what I play for, so that would be just awesome." — AFP

#### Neymar returns for Brazil

**BRASILIA:** Neymar will rejoin Brazil for its final two World Cup qualifiers, after missing the national team's first two matches of the year due to injury, coach Tite said Friday, announcing his squad. The Paris Saint-Germain star, back from an ankle injury, will be looking to exorcise PSG's humiliating Champions League exit Wednesday at Real Madrid as he returns to the Selecao. The five-time world champions, who qualified for Qatar back in November, play Chile in Rio de Janeiro's Maracana stadium on March 24 and Bolivia on March 29 in La Paz. Tite, who recently announced he plans to leave the post after the World Cup, said Neymar had "played well in the first half" against Real Madrid, before "collapsing, like the entire team." — AFP

#### Vlhova wins in Sweden

**ARE:** Olympic slalom champion Petra Vlhova clinched victory in the World Cup giant slalom event at Are on Friday to keep her hopes of the overall title alive. The Slovak enjoyed a 1.24sec win over Italy's Marta Bassino while American star Mikaela Shiffrin was 1.70sec off the pace after the second run. Olympic giant slalom champion Sara Hector failed to finish the second run. Vlhova is now 77 points behind Shiffrin in the general classification ahead of a World Cup slalom at the same venue on Saturday. Shiffrin, who was down in sixth spot after the first run, is bidding for a fourth overall World Cup triumph after winning in successive seasons from 2017-2019. "Big fight tonight in difficult conditions... congrats @BassinoMarta and Petra Vlhova with skiing on another level," tweeted Shiffrin who now has 118 World Cup podium places. — AFP

#### Magnussen fastest in F1 testing

**SAKHIR:** Kevin Magnussen made an eye-catching return to Formula One on Friday when he topped the times in pre-season testing in Bahrain, just 48 hours after replacing Nikita Mazepin at Haas. Magnussen, dropped by Haas last season, signed a multi-year contract to take over from the Russian driver who was sacked following the invasion of Ukraine. And the 29-year-old Dane showed no signs of ring rustiness as he set the fastest lap in the more favorable cooler conditions of early evening at the Sakhir circuit. As the other teams were bedding their cars down for the night with Ferrari's Carlos Sainz setting the quickest time Haas were allowed an extra hour due to freight delays which saw them miss Thursday's first session. — AFP

**HAMILTON:** India unleashed a powerhouse batting performance to crush the West Indies by 155 runs in Hamilton yesterday and revive their Women's Cricket World Cup campaign. Centuries for Smriti Mandhana and Harmanpreet Kaur anchored a record-breaking innings of 317-8 before India's spinners skittled the West Indies for 162.

The total was India's highest at a Women's World Cup and the best by any team so far at this year's tournament, surpassing the 310 posted by Australia against England. Mandhana and Kaur's 184-run partnership was also a record for India at a Women's World Cup. Mandhana made 123 off 119 balls, while Kaur scored 109 from 107. The win gives India a huge morale boost and keeps them in the running for a semi-final spot after a lacklustre loss to New Zealand last Thursday.

It also continues India's dominant record against the West Indies at World Cups, giving them a 7-0 record over the Caribbean team at the one-day showcase. But the West Indies entered the match as the surprise package of this year's tournament, with upset wins over hosts New Zealand and defending champions England. India won the toss and elected to bat, starting aggressively and clearly intent on avoiding the slow scoring that cost them dearly against New Zealand.

"We realized we hadn't made a good start in the last game and we really wanted to come out on a positive note," Mandhana said. "It's all about momentum and we discussed keeping the momentum high from the first over." Yastika Bhatia smashed 19 runs off the first two overs and was given a life on 20 when Aaliyah Alleyne missed a catch.

## Barguil claims the stage as Pogacar maintains lead

**FERMO:** Warren Barguil won Friday's fifth stage of the Tirreno-Adriatico after a late burst into the final kilometres of a climb-packed day, as Tadej Pogacar held onto the overall lead despite taking a wrong turn just as he mounted an attack of his own. Arkea-Samsic rider Barguil had been part of a break which separated from the peloton 65 kilometres into the short but tough 155km stage between Sefro and Fermo, the first time the seven-day race touched Italy's Adriatic coast.

He crossed the line ahead of Xandro Meurisse, home hope Simone Velasco and Nelson Oliveira, who had tried and failed to catch the Frenchman in the final few hundred meters. "It's amazing, I was planning to make the finish because it was a good race, a good finish for me. I had the feeling today would be a good day for the break," Barguil said.

"I had good legs on the climb... I was waiting for the good moment, at one point the speed was going down and then I made the move from the back." Little changed at the top of the general classification as the main peloton led by Pogacar and pretender Remco Evenepoel came in just under a minute behind. Both went into a poorly taped off road when they were mounting an attempt to take the breakaway at the last.

"There was a small arrow pointing right, but we



HAMILTON: India's Sneha Rana (right) and Deepti Sharma celebrate the victory during the 2022 Women's Cricket World Cup match between West Indies and India at Seddon Park in Hamilton yesterday. — AFP

Shakera Selman made no mistake when she caught and bowled Bhatia for 20, helping slow the run rate. India were 125-3 at the mid-way point in the innings when Mandhana and Kaur stepped up the run rate.

Mandhana's second ODI century included 13 fours and two sixes, while Kaur's fourth ODI ton included 10 fours and two sixes. The West Indies took a flurry

of wickets late in the innings but by then the damage had been done. They made a promising start to the run chase, racing to 81 without loss after 10 overs. But after openers Deandra Dottin and Hayley Matthews were dismissed for 62 and 43, India managed to take wickets regularly and reduced the West Indies to 6-140 after 25 overs. — AFP



FERMO: Team Arkea - Samsic's Warren Barguil of France (front left) rides with the leading group in the last kilometers of the 5th stage of the Tirreno Adriatico cycling race, 155 km from Sefro to Fermo yesterday. — AFP

just missed it, everybody, and yeah, we tried to come back but it was too far for the stage win," said Pogacar. "I'm a bit disappointed because we missed the turn and it could have ended differently, but in the end the main goal was to keep the leader's jersey." Evenepoel is nine seconds behind Pogacar heading into the crucial sixth stage, a hard 215km between Apecchio and Carpegna which features steep climbs. Friday's stage was short with some serious gradients testing out the peloton, in particular as the stage wound to its end.

Going into the final 20km of an undulating stage a breakaway group which had already been out in front for the best part of 40km was whittled down to seven with Cofidis' Benjamin Thomas out in front

alongside Barguil. The peloton containing all of the biggest names was over two minutes behind with a punishing terrain, including a 21-percent, 750-metre "wall" climb right before the finish, lying ahead of them and seemingly few opportunities to attack.

Regardless Evenepoel attacked to go and was immediately followed by Pogacar and two others, but just as the gap to the race leaders was closed to a minute with 6.5km to go they briefly went off at a fork in the road, costing them their attack. Barguil then made his own push for the stage win and looked unflustered as he took the plaudits for an impressive win, his first major international victory since claiming two jerseys at the 2017 Tour de France. — AFP



KUWAIT: Gulf University Basketball defeated Fatayat Al-Oyoun 67-10 in their match in the first round of the Women's Basketball League. In the second match, Qurain defeated Salwa Al-Sabah team 87-32.



**KUWAIT:** President of Kuwait and Arab Tennis Federations Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received in his office at Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International complex former Qadisiya Club and Kuwait National Tennis team member Ahmad Taqi Dashti on the occasion of his victories at Bahrain International Tennis Federation (ITF) Seniors Tennis Championship. He won the doubles gold along with Saudi Jamil Al-Ashban and the Singles' silver. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber lauded this outstanding achievement. He said KTF will continue to support seniors tennis along with other age groups. Ahmad Dashti thanked Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber for honoring him and lauded his role in promoting the game in Kuwait.

## Gymnastics legend Uchimura bows out

**TOKYO:** Japanese gymnastics legend Kohei Uchimura brought the curtain down on his career yesterday at an exhibition event in Tokyo to send one of the sport's all-time greats into retirement. The 33-year-old performed on all six apparatus to give the crowd one last glimpse of the sublime talent that made him a triple Olympic gold medalist and a six-time all-around world champion. He appeared alongside a group of Japanese gymnasts, including his fellow gold medal-winning teammates from the Rio Games and reigning all-around Olympic champion Daiki Hashimoto.

Uchimura looked calm and relaxed as the event began, but soon began to

frown in deep concentration as his perfectionist streak took hold. "The ideal I aim for is that you have to make it like a work of art," he said. "You have to go beyond the confines of gymnastics and make the audience think it's like they're looking at a painting or something." Uchimura won back-to-back all-around Olympic titles in 2012 and 2016, and reigned as world champion for eight years starting from 2009.

His body began to show signs of wear and tear in recent years, and he dropped the defense of his all-around title at last year's Tokyo Olympics to focus on the horizontal bar. He failed to reach the final, falling in qualifying. The physical strain was apparent yesterday, with Uchimura saying he was "reminded just how brutal it is to compete in all six events". "My whole body was sore right from the moment I landed after the final apparatus," he said. "It made me think it's a good thing I'm retiring." — AFP

Sports

# Chelsea gripped by uncertainty as Abramovich's sanctions bite

LONDON: Thomas Tuchel admits Chelsea face an uncertain future as doubts swirl over how the European champions will even pay their wage bill after Russian owner Roman Abramovich was hit with UK sanctions. The Premier League club put a brave face on events as they returned to action on Thursday, just hours after the billionaire's assets were frozen. Chelsea fans chanted Abramovich's name during their 3-1 victory at relegation-threatened Norwich as they tightened their grip on third spot in the English top-flight.

England midfielder Mason Mount posted a picture of himself on Instagram with the message "For the fans!" while fellow goalscorer Trevoh Chalobah dedicated the win to "every Chelsea fan across the globe!" But the upbeat words hide deep unease over what will unfold in the coming weeks. Abramovich was one of seven oligarchs targeted by Britain on Thursday in action taken in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, all of whom were described as part of Russian President Vladimir Putin's inner circle.

The 55-year-old had already announced his intention to sell Chelsea, with a host of potential buyers declaring their interest in a club that have won 19 major trophies since he bought the side in 2003. The government is still open to a sale but would have to approve a new licence, on the proviso no profit would go to the Russian, who has bankrolled the club to the tune of around £1.5 billion (\$2 billion).

In the meantime the London club will have to operate under the stringent new rules, which prohibit the sale of tickets and effectively place them

under a transfer ban. Senior defenders Cesar Azpilicueta, Antonio Rudiger and Andreas Christensen are all out of contract this summer, with their futures up in the air as the club cannot agree new contracts. Tuchel said he was happy still to be at Stamford Bridge but admitted the future was shrouded in uncertainty as he tries to focus on events on the pitch.

"The situation will not go away-maybe tomorrow it will change again, but it will not go away," said the German, who arrived at Chelsea in January last year. "I am still happy to be here and still happy to be manager of a strong team. I know there is a lot of noise around." Chelsea's women's team were also in action on Thursday, winning 4-1 at West Ham despite the distractions. "There's no denying it's a difficult day, but I think it's important that we give it time," manager Emma Hayes told Sky Sports News.

### Sponsor uncertainty

The club are already feeling the impact of the sanctions, with shirt sponsor Three suspending its deal and reports suggesting global sportswear giant Nike are considering walking away from their huge kit agreement. But the club's official training wear partner Trivago said Friday that it was sticking with Chelsea despite the "challenging" situation. "We are looking forward to a transition of ownership as soon as possible and want to support the club in this process," it said in a statement. "We will provide any update to our business relationship if and when appropriate."

Football finance expert Kieran Maguire, who said Chelsea's wage bill was around £28 million a month,



TIVAT: Superyacht Solaris, owned by the Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich, which is under UK sanctions, sails towards the luxury yacht marina Porto Montenegro. The owner of the London football club 'Chelsea' is among the Russian oligarchs against whom Great Britain imposed sanctions as part of the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

claimed in the short-term it would be business as usual but there could be problems further down the line. "The concern might be what happens if Chelsea's cash reserves are insufficient to pay their wage bill-but presumably the government and Premier League, who have been working on this, will have been looking at it to try to minimize disruption on a club level," Maguire said.

Former Chelsea winger Pat Nevin told the BBC

World Football Podcast that the club were in "uncharted water". "It's minute-to-minute and I can promise you now, that club doesn't know what is going to happen today, tomorrow or in a couple of days' time," he said. "Once you start digging down into what this could do-yes, they can play their games but will they even be able? "It's not hyperbole to say the future of the club is in serious danger." — AFP

## 'Uninspired' Lille draw blank at home before Chelsea clash

LILLE: Lille were held to a goalless draw at home against a resurgent Saint-Etienne on Friday just days before attempting to overturn a 2-0 deficit against holders Chelsea in the last 16 of the Champions League. The reigning French champions also suffered a blow with the exit of Portugal midfielder Renato Sanches with a left thigh injury midway through the first half. Lacking ideas and inspiration the northerners never managed to worry Saint

Etienne goalkeeper Paul Bernardoni at their Pierre-Mauroy Stadium where they host Chelsea in the last 16, second leg next Wednesday.

"We didn't manage to take the game in hand and get the crowd behind us," said Lille coach Jocelyn Gourvennec. "We weren't very inspired. They were well organized and we did things badly. We didn't win the game even if we have two big chances. But it's too little for a home game." Gourvennec conceded he was worried about the possible absence of Sanches against Chelsea.

"We missed him tonight, he's a player who sets the pace, who is able to organize the game, to direct it. We'll do tests tomorrow (Saturday). I hope it's not too serious. "It seems compromised for Wednesday but I'm waiting for the results." Lille missed the chance to move up to fifth and

into the European berths, and are sixth, just one point ahead of Nantes who traveled to Troyes yesterday. Saint Etienne, meanwhile, grabbed a precious point in their fight against relegation, moving into 16th place, two points ahead of Lorient, who travel to Clermont on Sunday.

Lille striker Hatem Ben Arfa failed to fire for the hosts as Pascal Dupraz's players posed problems for the defense. The hosts proved wasteful with Mehmet Celik hitting the post before the break. Amadou Onana, who replaced Sanches, failed to make the most of a scoring chance after the interval after Jonathan David launched a quick counter-attack with the Belgian midfielder missing a header off a perfect Gabriel Gudmundsson cross. Lille had only two shots on target throughout the game, enough to worry Gourvennec before next week's clash against Chelsea.— AFP

## Paralympians fear for future; climate change takes hold

ZHANGJIAKOU: As Winter Paralympians prepare to return home from Beijing, many fear the effects of climate change in their countries and how a lack of snowfall could inhibit training for the Milano-Cortina Games in 2026. When she should have been skiing during Norway's traditional snow season last winter, Birgit Skarstein was still rowing a scull boat on lakes that usually freeze over.

The Paralympian, who rows at summer games and skis at the winter edition, says she is on the frontline of observing the effects of climate change in Norway. "This year I wasn't able to ski on really good tracks until the end of January," Skarstein told AFP, adding that normally the natural snowfall comes in November.

"I was hunting mountain tops. Over November, December, January I was moving from mountain top to mountain top to find snow and it was only artificial snow." With temperatures rising globally, the 33-year-old cautions about the future of snow sports.

"Everybody who loves snow and everybody who loves winter sports should care about climate change," she said.

"We were rowing until New Year's... it was crazy," she says, pointing out that venues for winter-sport training are becoming increasingly scarce. Both natural snowfall and the amount of water available for artificial snow are diminishing around the world, said Climate Council of Australia research director Dr Martin Rice. "In fact, of the 21 venues used for the Winter Olympic Games since 1924 and Paralympic Games since 1976, only 10 will have the 'climate suitability' and natural snowfall levels to host an event by 2050," he told AFP.

### Athletes in T-shirts

At the Beijing Winter Paralympics, Nordic and alpine skiing events have taken place on slopes using only artificial snow. Some athletes even wore T-shirts as they ploughed through the slushy snow as temperatures reached up to six degrees above freezing at Wednesday's cross-country skiing event at Zhangjiakou.

"You pull and you feel like you're stuck in glue," said Skarstein, who raced in short sleeves. Paralympians recalled they had endured similar warm conditions at PyeongChang 2018 and Sochi 2014

International Paralympic Committee President Andrew Parsons said organizers were aware of the growing impact of climate change-particularly increased heat and issues with snow quality.

"How this impacts on the Paralympic Winter Games is something that we have to monitor," he told AFP. "We need to offer the best conditions for the athletes and the best experience," he said. The Olympic and Paralympic movements are conscious of their carbon footprints. The International Olympic Committee announced it will cut its direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions by 50 per cent by 2030. It will also require Games to be "climate positive" from 2030.

### Preparation impact

Canadian Brian McKeever, 42 - who has been competing in visually impaired cross-country skiing at Paralympic level since Salt Lake City in 2002 - has noticed the changes in snow patterns. "We've definitely seen the snow being slightly different. March-April used to be some of our biggest snowfall periods but it doesn't do that as much anymore," McKeever told AFP, adding "roof rattling" winds at Canmore, a town in Alberta's Rocky Mountains have stepped up in the past five years. Raging wildfires last year also affected training.—AFP

## Kuwait Women Futsal



By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Women Futsal National Team will return tonight from their training camp in Zagreb, Croatia where they played 4 friendly matches. The team is preparing for the third

Gulf Games to be hosted by Kuwait May 15th and West Asia Championship to be held in Saudi Arabia in June. Team Coach Shahrazad Mudhafar lauded the commitment by all players and the high spirit they displayed during their friendlies.

# Classifieds

## Hospitals & Clinics

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

## Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144

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I, TASNEEM DAWOOD CURRENTLY HOLDER OF INDIAN PASSPORT N0093609, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM TASNEEM DAWOOD TO TASNEEM

BADRI & NOW I WOULD BE KNOWN AS TASNEEM BADRI, ADDRESS BOHRA COLONY GALIYAKOT, DUNGARPUR, PIN 314026, RAJASTHAN, INDIA. (C# 1425)

I, SYED AHAMED BASHA (Old Name), S/o Shaik Khader Basha, D.No. 29/10-C, Alimabad Street, Rayachoty, Kadapa Dist, A.P., Hereby declare that I have changed my name as SHAIK AHAMED BASHA (New Name). (C# 1426) 10-3-2022

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EMERGENCY  
112



ZHANGJIAKOU: Canada's Brian McKeever (center) races towards the finish line during the men's middle distance free technique vision impaired para cross-country skiing event yesterday at the Zhangjiakou National Biathlon Centre. — AFP

## McKeever races into history books

### Canadian skier grabs his 16th Paralympic gold medal

ZHANGJIAKOU: Canada's Brian McKeever raced into the history books and grabbed his 16th Paralympic gold medal in cross-country skiing at the Beijing Winter Games yesterday. McKeever won the middle distance race, and in doing so equaled the gold-medal haul of German former para alpine skier Gerd Schonfelder—the most decorated men's Paralympian.

Norwegian cross-country skier Ragnhild Myklebust holds the record as the most successful Winter Paralympian overall - 22 golds and 27 total medals over five games from 1988 to 2002. McKeever had already bagged two titles in the visually impaired sprint and long-distance events this week at Zhangjiakou. The 42-year-old made his Paralympic debut at Salt Lake City in 2002 and Beijing will be his last Games. He played down the fuss over reaching Schonfelder's record.

"To be perfectly honest, it doesn't mean a damn thing," McKeever said, laughing. "If the records happen to come, great. But that was never the focus." He said he loves having adventures with his

guides and is proud of being able to demonstrate the level that Paralympic athletes can reach. "The hard work is done in the offseason, we enjoy it. We love it. We love getting lost in the mountains and sometimes dragging our butts home after 10 hours," McKeever said.

McKeever has a chance to win a 17th medal in the relay event today. Sweden's Zebastian Modin, 27, placed second and Ukraine's Dmytro Suiarko won bronze. Modin hailed McKeever's achievement. "He has meant so much for this sport," he told AFP. "He has been working at the front for 20 years and shown what para-athletes can do, and how fast para-athletes can ski." Modin said it was his best race this season and he was looking forward to going home to rest. "We have to calm down a bit," Modin said.

#### 'Proud of my country'

Ukraine's team yesterday surpassed its previous best-ever Paralympic result - 25 medals including seven gold at the 2006 Turin Games. The team-reeling from the trauma of Russia's invasion of Ukraine-has managed 28 podium finish-

es in Beijing, with further medals up for grabs today in the relay events. Oleksandra Kononova, 31, won gold in the women's middle distance standing cross-country race, sharing the podium with teammate Iryna Bui, 26, who came in third behind Canada's Natalie Wilkie, 21. "I felt really proud of myself, about my country who raised me and gave me everything to perform here at such a high level. I thought about my family," Kononova said.

#### 3 sisters on the podium

In Yanqing, there were three Austrian sisters on the podium in the women's visually impaired slalom alpine skiing event. Veronika Aigner, 19, achieved a second Paralympic title in two days guided by her sister Elisabeth, 23. Younger sister Barbara, 16, claimed silver. Their brother Johannes, 16, has also won four medals at the Games-including two gold. The three siblings have the same congenital cataract condition as their mother. China's wheelchair curling team, the defending champions, retained gold in an 8-3 match against Sweden

yesterday afternoon.

The team had a disappointing start to their competition, blaming losing their first couple of matches on nerves and pressure to perform in front of a home crowd. But they bounced back and were able to deny Canada a spot in the gold medal match at Friday's semi-final. Head coach Yue Qingshuang has taken to singing folk songs to her team before they play. "I wanted the team to be able to relax and create some kind of atmosphere before the game, and help them perform their best," she said.

On Friday night, Canada beat Slovakia 8-3 in the bronze medal match. The Canadians haven't missed out on a medal since the 2006 Turin Games, and at PyeongChang they also claimed bronze. "Just to be bringing home some hardware, it's so special," skip Mark Ideson said. "The heart's just pounding... just breathless," teammate Ina Forrest said. In para ice hockey, China played South Korea in the bronze medal match yesterday night, and today Canada will square off against the US for gold. —AFP

## LeBron lifts Lakers as 'Pop' sets NBA win mark

LOS ANGELES: LeBron James unleashed his second 50-point performance in a week to spark the Los Angeles Lakers over Washington 122-109 on Friday but missed a historic NBA milestone. James scored 50 points on 18-of-25 shooting, including 6-of-9 from 3-point range, and was 8-of-8 from the free throw line while contributing seven rebounds and six assists to power a Lakers team that had lost nine of its prior 11 games.

"We missed a lot of chippies, but we kept fighting, we kept defending, and I was able to hit a hot streak at one point," James said. The 37-year-old forward, a four-time NBA champion and four-time NBA Most Valuable Player, scored 56 points last Saturday in a home win over Golden State. James had the first back-to-back 50-or-more Laker totals at home since the late Kobe Bryant in 2007.

James was in a "zone" after hitting 17 in the first half, scoring 12 points in a row for the Lakers at one stage in the third quarter. "I just try to stay in that zone as long as possible," James said. "I was able to hit a couple." It was the 14th career 50-point game for James, tying him for sixth on the all-time list. But James finished two assists shy of becoming the first player in NBA history with 30,000 career points, 10,000 career rebounds and 10,000 career assists.

James was pleased to get a hug during the game at one stage from his mother Gloria. "The fact she was here tonight was a treat for me," James said. "She's my biggest supporter, my biggest inspiration and my biggest love." San Antonio's Gregg Popovich won his NBA record 1,336th regular-season coaching victory, with Dejounte Murray scoring 27 points to lift the Spurs over visiting Utah 104-102.

Popovich, 73, has guided the Spurs to five NBA titles and was coach of the US Olympic squad of NBA stars that won a gold medal last year in Tokyo. He thanked former players, coaches, mentors and those who have backed the club during his tenure. "It's just a testament to a whole lot of people. Something like this does not belong to one individual," Popovich said. "All of us share in this record. It's not mine. It's ours." The Spurs made 6-of-8 free throws in the final 14.2 seconds to hold off the Jazz (41-25). San Antonio improved to 26-41, one game behind New Orleans for the last play-in spot for the playoffs.

#### Suns fall, Heat win

Toronto's Gary Trent Jr. scored 42 points and Pascal Siakam added 25 points, 10 assists and seven rebounds to lead the Raptors to a 117-112 victory at Phoenix, dropping the NBA overall leaders to 53-14 on the season. Cameron Payne led the Suns with 24 points while Devin Booker added 22 for Phoenix, who still lead the Western Conference by 7 1/2 games over Memphis. Bam Adebayo scored 30 points and grabbed 17 rebounds while Jimmy Butler added 24 points to spark the Eastern Conference-leading Miami Heat over visiting Cleveland 117-105.

The Heat improved to 45-23, stretching Miami's lead in the East to 2 1/2 games over idle defending champion Milwaukee. Ja Morant scored 37 points and dished out eight assists to rally the Memphis Grizzlies from a 15-point second-half deficit to defeat visiting New York 118-114. Morant delivered his 24th 30-point game of the season and scored 15 in the last 12 minutes for his 12th double-digit fourth quarter of the campaign. Slovenia's Luka Doncic had 30 points and 14 rebounds to lead the Dallas Mavericks to a 113-110 victory at Houston.

Boston's Jayson Tatum had 31 points, eight rebounds and six assists to spark the Celtics over visiting Detroit 114-103. Jaylen Brown returned



LOS ANGELES: LeBron James #6 of the Los Angeles Lakers takes a shot against Kyle Kuzma #33 of the Washington Wizards in the third quarter at Crypto.com Arena on March 11, 2022. —AFP

from a right ankle sprain to score 22 points for Boston (41-27). Trae Young had game highs of 27 points and 11 assists to spark Atlanta over the visiting Los Angeles Clippers 112-106. Miles Bridges scored 26 points and Terry Rozier added 25 to lead Charlotte in a 142-120 triumph at New Orleans. Orlando's Mo Bamba scored 27 points and grabbed 12 rebounds to spark the Magic over host Minnesota 118-110. —AFP

## Liverpool sink Brighton 2-0

BRIGHTON: Liverpool closed the gap on Premier League leaders Manchester City to three points as Luis Diaz and Mohamed Salah sealed a 2-0 win against Brighton yesterday. Diaz opened the scoring in the first half and Salah netted with a penalty after the interval at the Amex Stadium. Jurgen Klopp's side have won their last eight league games, keeping the pressure on City, with the champions playing at Crystal Palace tomorrow. While City are in fine form, Liverpool's hot streak is equally impressive.

The Reds have scored 21 goals and conceded just twice in their winning run, while also keeping a third successive league clean sheet for the first time this term. When Salah converted from the spot, it made Liverpool only the second club to score 2,000 goals in the Premier League, emulating Manchester United. Salah has reached 20 goals in a Premier League season for the fourth time, with his latest strike coming at just the right time amid his tense contract negotiations.

Klopp said on Friday it is up to Salah whether he signs a new deal, a claim that was followed by the Egypt forward's agent tweeting a series of laughing emojis just minutes later. Salah's current deal runs until the end of next season and he has previously said his future is in Liverpool's hands and he is not asking for "crazy stuff". His long-term value to Liverpool is immense, but of more immediate concern to Klopp will be the knock that saw him replaced by Diogo Jota soon after his first goal in four games.

With a testing trip to Arsenal looming on Wednesday followed by an FA Cup quarter-final at Nottingham Forest, Klopp will hope his star makes a quick recovery. Liverpool, chasing an unprecedented quadruple, suffered only their third defeat this season against Inter Milan in the Champions League last-16 second leg in midweek. But Klopp insisted his players are such bad losers that they were certain to mount an immediate response to the Inter loss, which didn't stop them progressing to the quarter-finals on aggregate in any case.

#### Incisive Salah

The German's assessment proved correct, after a lively Brighton start that saw Neal Maupay drill his strike just wide and Leandro Trossard curl his shot straight at Alisson Becker. Liverpool responded emphatically and Salah picked out Sadio Mane, whose close-range effort was pushed away by Brighton goalkeeper Robert Sanchez. Klopp's team took the lead in the 19th minute when Diaz sprinted onto Joel Matip's perfectly-weighted pass and bravely headed into the empty net as Sanchez rushed off his line, pole-axing the Colombian with a dangerous high challenge in the process.

Diaz was unable to celebrate as he was writhing on the turf after being caught in the chest by Sanchez's leg, but the keeper surprisingly escaped a red card following a VAR check. Diaz's second goal since signing from Porto in January was almost followed by one for Salah, whose incisive burst ended with a low drive that forced Sanchez to save at his near post. —AFP