

3 Alarm in Kuwaiti society over string of gruesome crimes



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Iran fires missile barrage on 'Zionist sites' in Iraq's Arbil

No date set for further dialogue between Iran and Saudi Arabia

News in brief

Full return to school urged

KUWAIT: Health Minister Khaled Al-Saeed yesterday urged the full return to schools, pointing out that this will be done in cooperation with the ministry of education. The coronavirus pandemic has not ended yet, but it is declining, the minister said during a ceremony held by Kuwaiti-Saudi Pharmaceutical (KPS) to inaugurate the first line to produce 26 pharmaceutical products by Abbott Laboratories. — KUNA (See Page 4)



Khaled Al-Saeed

CBK implements Afaq system

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) joined yesterday the Arabian Gulf system for automated quick payment transfer (Afaq), which was set up in December last year. Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel said in a press statement that the move comes as part of CBK's ongoing efforts to develop cross-border payment systems in Kuwait and adopting the latest technologies into retail payment systems. — KUNA (See Page 8)



Mohammad Al-Hashel



A staff member arranges baked goods at an unsubsidized bakery in Tunisia on March 11, 2022. — AFP

Rising food prices shake N Africa

TUNIS: Households across North Africa are rushing to stock up on flour, semolina and other staples as food prices rise following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, both key wheat exporters to the region. The scramble is worse coming just weeks before the start of the holy month of Ramadan. Tunisia, Morocco and Libya, along with several other Arab countries, import much of their wheat from Ukraine and Russia. — AFP (See Page 8)

Fans rush for Kohli selfie

BANGALORE: Three fans breached security at Bangalore's M Chinnaswamy Stadium yesterday to take a selfie with India's superstar cricketer Virat Kohli and one returned successful. Kohli was at first slip in the final session of the second day of the pink ball Test against Sri Lanka when three young men ran on the field and attempted to embrace the player. Kohli was taken aback by the sudden intrusion but obliged the fans' request although he still signaled to them not to come too close due to the bubble protocols. — AFP

ARBIL, Iraq: Iran claimed responsibility for a missile strike yesterday on the northern Iraqi city of Arbil, saying it targeted a Zionist "strategic center" and warning of more attacks. Authorities in Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region said 12 ballistic missiles rained down on Arbil in a pre-dawn cross-border attack targeting US interests that slightly wounded two civilians and caused material damage.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards confirmed they fired the projectiles, claiming they were targeting sites used by the Zionist entity, a top ally of the US. A "strategic center for conspiracy and mischiefs of the Zionists was targeted by powerful precision missiles fired by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps", the Guards said in a statement.

There was no immediate reaction from the Zionist entity. Kurdish authorities insisted that the Zionist entity has no sites in or anywhere near Arbil, and accused Iran of repeatedly targeting the autonomous region without international censure. Iran holds considerable influence over the federal government in Baghdad, and Iraq is home to a dwindling number of US troops who lead a coalition against the Islamic State group.

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ARBIL, Iraq: A picture taken yesterday shows a view of a damaged building after an overnight attack in the capital of the northern Iraqi Kurdish autonomous region. — AFP

Russia strikes base near Polish border

LVIV: Russia widened its targets in Ukraine yesterday with strikes on a military base near the Polish border, as Kyiv said the toll from one of its most besieged cities had topped 2,000. Russian air strikes killed 35 people at a military base outside the western city of Lviv overnight, dangerously close to the frontier with EU and NATO member Poland, local officials said.

And in the capital Kyiv, fighting raged in the suburbs, leaving a US journalist dead - the first foreign

reporter killed since Russia's invasion of its neighbor on Feb 24. Meanwhile efforts continued to get help to the strategic southern port city of Mariupol, which aid agencies say is facing a humanitarian catastrophe. A total of 2,187 residents have died in days of relentless Russian bombardment, the city council said yesterday, raising the toll by almost 1,000 since Wednesday.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had earlier said he hoped a humanitarian convoy accompanied by Orthodox priests would finally make it to Mariupol. He has accused Moscow of both blocking and attacking humanitarian convoys, although he said yesterday that another 125,000 people had been evacuated that way across Ukraine.

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IRPIN, Ukraine: Ukrainian servicemen evacuate an elderly woman on a stretcher yesterday as Russian forces advanced closer to the capital from the north, west and northeast. — AFP

Saudi women drive for cash as costs climb

RIYADH: Like other Saudi women, Fahda Fahd couldn't legally drive until 2018, but her lime-green Kia is now a route to extra cash as living costs rise in the conservative kingdom. When she's not working full time at a healthcare call center, the 54-year-old picks up fares in the capital Riyadh from a ride-hailing app exclusively for women.

Fahd said her family was supportive of her second job, on two conditions: No long trips or men as passengers. "I decided to work as a taxi driver to earn extra income," said Fahd, wearing a black head covering and an anti-coronavirus facemask. "My salary is not enough for my three children, and especially for my daughter who has special needs," she told AFP.

Sweeping social reforms, including lifting the infamous ban on women driving, have transformed life for many Saudis, but rising costs are increasingly problematic. Fahd says her salary of 4,000 Saudi riyals (\$1,066) a month from her regular job is not enough - but driving brings in another 2,500 riyals. She usually hits the road before her shift starts at 2 pm, sometimes accepting passengers on her way home at 10 pm, and says she appreciates the flexible hours. "It has allowed me to help my retired husband pay monthly bills and for my children's school needs," she said, checking her phone for the latest fare.

Costs are creeping up in Saudi Arabia, which is on



RIYADH: Saudi taxi driver Fahda Fahd gets into her car on Feb 8, 2022. — AFP

a drive to reduce its economic reliance on oil and in July 2020 hiked value added tax to 15 percent. Last December, transport costs were up 7.2 percent year-on-year, part of a 1.2 percent rise in consumer prices. At the same time, millions of Saudi women are finding jobs as female employment gains acceptance in the deeply patriarchal society.

Women made up more than a third of the workforce last year for the first time, government figures showed. They are among the Saudis now commonly seen serving customers in restaurants, cafes and shoe stores, filling jobs formerly done by foreigners as the government pursues its "Saudiization" plan for the economy.

Traditionally, Saudi women were forbidden from mixing with men outside their extended family.

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Millions locked down as China wrestles COVID

BEIJING: China placed all 17 million residents in one of its biggest cities under lockdown yesterday, as virus cases doubled nationwide to nearly 3,400 and anxiety mounted over the resilience of its 'zero-COVID' approach in the face of the worst outbreak in two years. The southern tech hub of Shenzhen told all residents to stay at home as the city struggles to eradicate an Omicron flare-up linked to neighboring virus-ravaged Hong Kong.

The lockdown and a suspension of public transport will last until March 20, a city government notice said, adding that it would launch three rounds of mass testing. The move extends an earlier lockdown imposed on the city's central business district. Shenzhen reported 66 new infections yesterday - a fraction of the 32,430 confirmed the same day in Hong Kong.

"If prevention and control is not strengthened in a timely and decisive manner, it could easily become large-scale community transmission," Shenzhen health official Lin Hancheng said at a briefing. The surge in infections across China has also prompted authorities to close schools in Shanghai and lock down multiple northeastern cities, as 18 provinces battle clusters of the Omicron and Delta variants.

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Local

Kuwait's Amir receives senior state officials

Crown Prince receives Egyptian parliament's speaker



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



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



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Chairman of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council and the Cassation Court Ahmad Musaed Al-Ajeel.



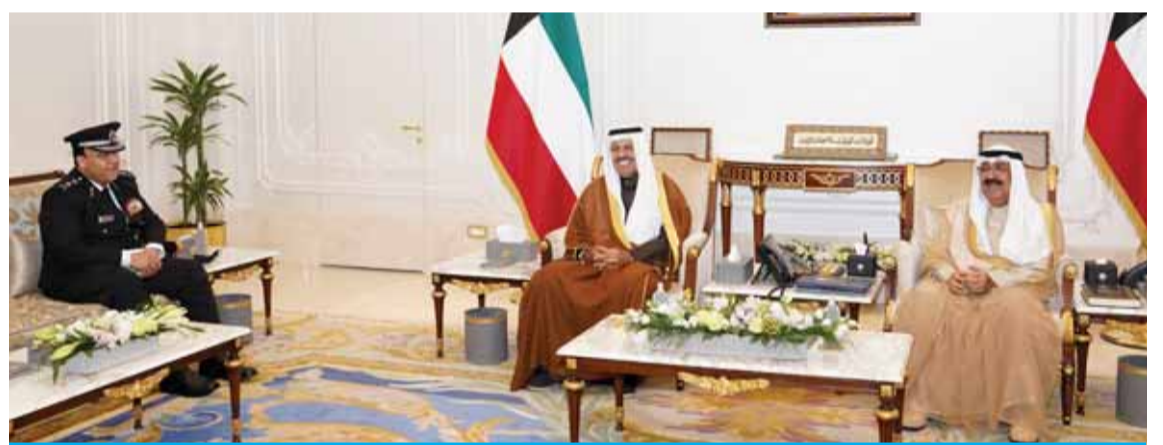
His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Egyptian Speaker of the House of Representatives Dr Hanafi Jabali.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Dar Al-Yamama His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received Speaker of the Kuwaiti National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem. Furthermore, he received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, with the attendance of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Moreover, His Highness the Amir hosted Chairman of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) and the Cassation Court Ahmad Musaed Al-Ajeel.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meanwhile received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem at Bayan Palace yesterday. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal, separately, received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah

Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. He also hosted Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

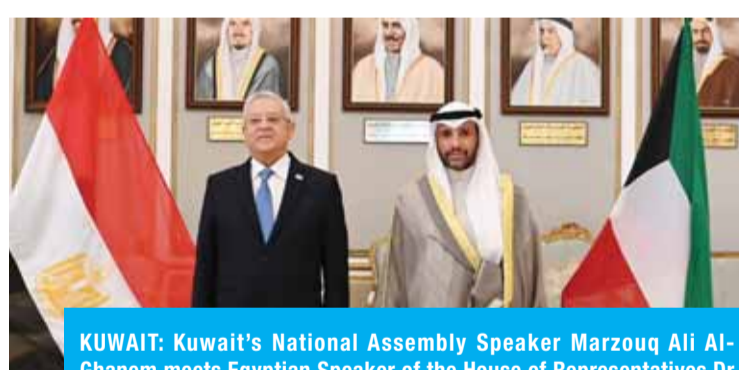
In the meantime, His Highness the Crown Prince received Speaker Ghanem and the visiting Speaker of Egypt's House of Representatives Dr Hanafi Jabali, along with his accompanying delegation. The meeting was attended by member of the accompanying mission of honor MP Dr Khaled Ayed Al-Enezi, Director of His Highness the Crown Prince Office retired General Jamal Mohammad Al-Thyab, and Foreign Affairs Undersecretary at His Highness the Crown Prince Diwan Mazen Essa Al-Essa. His Highness the Crown Prince also received First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior retired Lieutenant General Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, who presented to His Highness the Crown Prince General Anwar Abdullatif Al-Barjas, on the occasion of appointing him as undersecretary at the Ministry of Interior. — KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and the Interior Ministry's Undersecretary General Anwar Abdullatif Al-Barjas.

Kuwait, Egypt parliaments' speakers discuss topics of common interests

KUWAIT: Kuwait parliament Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem discussed yesterday topics of common interest with Egyptian Speaker of the House of Representatives Dr Hanafi Jabali on the occasion of his official visit to Kuwait. During the meeting, both sides discussed the deep bilateral ties between the two countries and ways of strengthening the relations between Kuwait and Egypt. Furthermore, the meeting tackled parliamentary subjects of common interests, several issues around the world, and the latest regional and international developments. Speaker Jabali arrived in the country on Saturday on an official visit for six days. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem meets Egyptian Speaker of the House of Representatives Dr Hanafi Jabali. — KUNA photos



Egyptian Speaker of the House of Representatives Dr Hanafi Jabali is taken on a tour at Kuwait's National Assembly.

Iran fires missile barrage on...

Continued from Page 1

Washington has routinely blamed rocket and drone attacks on its interests in Iraq - including sites in Kurdistan - on pro-Iran groups who demand the departure of the remaining troops. But cross-border missile fire is rare. An AFP correspondent in Arbil said he heard three explosions before dawn. Taxi driver Ziryan Wazir said he was in his car when the missiles struck. "I saw a lot of dust, then I heard a very loud noise. The windows of my car exploded and I was injured in the face," he said, his head swathed in white gauze and a bloodied scar running the length of his cheek.

Yesterday's missile assault comes nearly a week after the Guards - Iran's ideological army - vowed to avenge the death of two of their officers killed in a rocket attack in Syria they blamed on the Zionist entity. Iran backs the government in Syria's civil war. The Zionist entity, the Guards said at the time, "will pay for this crime". The

Kurdistan Regional Government accused Iran of "targeting (the) Kurdistan Region multiple times" in a statement on Twitter. "Silence" on the part of the international community would only motivate "future attacks", it added.

The interior ministry in Arbil said a "new building" housing the US consulate in a residential suburb of the city was the target of the attack. Kurdistan24 television channel, located near the US consulate, posted images on social networks of its damaged offices, with collapsed sections of false ceiling and broken glass. Washington said there was "no damage or casualties at any US government facility". "We condemn this outrageous attack and display of violence," a State Department spokesperson said.

Meanwhile, Iranian state media reported yesterday that no date has yet been set for further dialogue between Tehran and Riyadh, after other media reports said talks have been "temporarily suspended". Relations between the regional rivals have been severed since early 2016. The two countries have held four rounds of talks in Iraq since April aimed at restoring ties.

"No date has been set so far for a new round of talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia," IRNA news agency reported. "Some news sources claimed that the talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia were temporarily suspended," IRNA noted. — AFP

my late husband's car to drive women and children in the neighborhood to schools or shopping centers. My work as a driver has given me a new chance at life."

Since 2018, more than 200,000 women have obtained driving licenses, with car sales rising five percent last year, according to media reports. Egyptian passenger Aya Diab, 29, said she was "more comfortable dealing with women", and a Saudi customer who spoke on condition of anonymity expressed a similar sentiment. "I feel like I'm with my sister," she said, sitting in the front seat next to Fahd as they drove off. — AFP

Saudi women drive for cash as...

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Insaf, a 30-year-old mother of three, said she turned to driving after her husband died suddenly. "He didn't leave us a fortune, so I had to work to support my children," she told AFP, preferring to use a pseudonym for privacy reasons. "I am using

Russia strikes base near...

Continued from Page 1

"The key question today is Mariupol," he said, saying "we will do everything to break the resistance of the occupiers".

Talks between the two sides have yet to yield a ceasefire but Russia said yesterday that negotiators were making headway at talks in neighboring Belarus. "If we compare the positions of both delegations at the start of the talks and now, we see significant progress," Leonid Slutsky, a senior member of Russia's negotiating team, told state-run television network RT.

Zelensky had also said on Saturday that Russia had adopted a "fundamentally different approach" in the

latest talks to end the conflict. He told reporters it was in contrast to earlier talks at which Moscow only "issued ultimatums" and that he was "happy to have a signal from Russia".

For the first two weeks of the war, Russia's forces had focused on eastern and southern areas of Ukraine, but in recent days they have moved to the center, striking the city of Dnipro. The Lutsk and Ivano-Frankivsk military airfields in western Ukraine were hit on Friday, while overnight Saturday-Sunday, missiles struck a military training ground in Yavoriv near Lviv, about 20 km from Poland.

Regional governor Maxim Kozitsky said 35 people were killed and 134 injured in the attack on the base, which had been a training center for Ukrainian forces with foreign instructors, although the US said the Americans had left. Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told ABC News that Russia was "clearly, at least from an air strike perspective... broadening their target sets". — AFP

Millions locked down as China...

Continued from Page 1

China, where the virus was first detected in late 2019, has maintained a strict 'zero-COVID' policy enforced with swift lockdowns, travel restrictions and mass testing when clusters have emerged. But the latest flare-up, driven by the highly transmissible Omicron variant and a spike in asymptomatic cases, is testing that approach.

Shanghai has so far been spared a citywide order to stay home, but individual housing compounds were being locked down as the megacity ramped up efforts to con-

tain infections and test suspected close contacts. Jilin - the city at the center of the outbreak in the northeast - was partially locked down Saturday, while residents of Yanji, an urban area of nearly 700,000 bordering North Korea, were also confined to their homes yesterday.

Zhang Yan, a Jilin health commission official, said the response from local authorities had been lacking. "There is insufficient understanding of the characteristics of the Omicron variant... and judgment has been inaccurate," he said at yesterday's press briefing. The neighboring city of Changchun - an industrial base of nine million people - was locked down Friday, while at least three other small cities have been locked down since March 1. The mayor of Jilin and the head of the Changchun health commission were dismissed from their jobs Saturday, state media reported, in a sign of the pressure placed on local authorities to contain virus clusters. — AFP

Local

String of crimes sounds alarm in Kuwaiti society

Spread of drugs, sharp objects, 'wasta' among leading causes

By Sahar Moussa

KUWAIT: A string of gruesome crimes took place in Kuwait in the past couple of weeks, shaking the Kuwaiti society to its core. News about the crimes sparked debate regarding the causes of this sudden spike, with opinions varying between the spread of drugs, influence of social media, effects of the coronavirus and a lack of religious deterrent, among many others.

Last week, a Kuwaiti family was killed inside their home in Ardiya. The suspect stabbed to death the three victims - a couple and their daughter, before stealing valuables and escaping. A few days ago, two sisters stabbed their mother to death and beheaded her inside their home in Doha.

In another incident, a man allegedly stabbed his wife to death then turned himself in to Ardiya police. Detectives headed to the crime scene and found the victim's body with stab wounds and beating marks, according to a security source. The crime came 24 hours after another suspected murder case was filed after police reportedly arrested a man who allegedly shot his mother-in-law dead in Wafra following a family dispute.

Meanwhile, police recently arrested a young man who assaulted his father by hitting him on the head with a sharp object in Doha. The suspect reportedly fled the scene and damaged several vehicles while being chased by police. On the same day, it was reported that a man was hospitalized in critical condition after he was brutally assaulted by a group of youngsters on Kabd Road. The suspects reportedly abducted the victim, then ran him over before escaping.

Spread of drugs

Is Kuwait witnessing a rise in crimes lately? A Kuwait Times survey on social media revealed 78 percent of respon-

dents agreed the crime rate in Kuwait is on the rise. Some commenters blamed it on the spread of drugs and the easy access to narcotics in Kuwait. In the same vein, official sources have raised a red flag over rising rates of violence and crimes due to the use of drugs and psychoactive substances, especially since there are new types of drugs that are cheap and of bad quality, which cause destructive health and mental complications.

"There is a vast spread of drugs in society and the easy access and availability of drugs has made it easy to be consumed by young people. The abundance of wealth has also made it easy to buy drugs, and no one is stopping this phenomenon," one commenter wrote. "I believe that drugs are spreading a lot amongst people, especially amongst the youth and adolescents. They are using

strong substances such as shabu and Lyrica, and nowadays even teen girls are using drugs. Honestly, I believe that today's generation is very scary which is causing violence and needs a strong law to stop them from committing crimes," said Sarah, a Kuwaiti woman.

Worship places closure hurt religious awareness



is rising," said Kuwaiti lawyer Omar Bader Al-Hamdan. "According to official figures, if you compare statistics of crimes 20 years ago and today, they are more or less the same and vary slightly. Nowadays, social media are looking for news to get more hits, and this kind of news helps them get more hits. I don't deny that the coronavirus pandemic has affected people, but not to an extent that leads them to commit murder."

One of the commenters on social media also doesn't agree that the crime rate has increased. "I don't think that the rate of crime has increased; I just think the rate of social media stories telling us about it has increased," he argued.

Friday prayers

On the other hand, many still believe that crime is indeed on the rise, listing several reasons they say are behind this surge, including abandonment of religious values, absence of parental guidance, spread of and easy access to sharp objects, violent video games, wasta (connections) and mental instability.

"The crime rates are definitely getting higher, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic," said Kuwaiti lawyer and women's rights activist Nivine Maarafi. "The rates of murder and violence are not normal for the Kuwaiti society, and it is a new thing. There were over 30 homicides within 14 months, and the reasons behind these phenomenon are drugs, domestic violence, lack of religious deterrent and social media."

Maarafi also suggested that the prolonged closing of worship places during the pandemic has been a factor in making society more violent. "I hope there will be more social awareness in society. Nowadays we are too involved in materialistic appearances that we have forgotten to stress on religion. I believe that Friday prayers are so important to help



people be more aware, especially for young people. Because mosques were closed for two years, this has caused a lack in religious awareness amongst people," added Maarafi.

Law and order

Many people think that the law and order situation has declined in Kuwait, and wasta is what makes people fearless. Furthermore, some people blame the government for ignoring the importance of mental health, which they say may lead to an increase in violence in the society.

"There is neither strong punishment nor religious deterrent, and parents have to play a bigger role in society," said Aziza, a Kuwaiti woman. "And I also believe that lack of entertainment in Kuwait may cause stress and anxiety among teens that may lead them to release their energy in the wrong direction. Lately, we have seen scary scenes of young people carrying sharp objects in the streets and no one is stopping them. This must be illegal, and a law should be devised to stop them," she added.

Psychologist Dr Mohammed Al-Khaldi believes that the recent cases of violence are not normal for the Kuwaiti society, but they are still considered within average. "It is still a small number (of crimes) compared to our population," he told Kuwait Times. According to him, religious morals became weak as the world opened up. "When I teach my children something, they see a different thing applied in reality. Due to these open horizons, we live in a global village," added Khaldi.

"The importance of mental well-being should not be underestimated," said one commenter. "The health ministry should run a strong comprehensive campaign to promote mental wellness and invest in more professional structures that can deal with mental health disorders instead of considering this condition a taboo."

"Wasta makes certain people feel invincible and think that the law doesn't apply to them. Give equal judgments for expats and Kuwaiti - an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Whoever murders an innocent soul must be prosecuted, quickly handed the death penalty and promptly executed," another commenter added.

Local spotlight

'We are all one'



By Nejouad Al-Yagout

There has been a lot of talk about refugee inequality in the world. And though we should not compare refugees, and though we should celebrate anyone that is being helped-regardless of skin color, nationality, religion, or ethnicity-we cannot ignore the fact that there are some refugees that continue to be ostracized. But, before we criticize the world for discrimination, let us take an uncomfortable look at ourselves.

Kuwaitis know what it means to be a refugee. And though we were privileged refugees, we were still refugees. Only a few families were able to live abroad comfortably. The rest of us relied on government assistance and the generosity of neighboring countries. The whole world stood by us in our times of uncertainty. All doors were open to us, remember? What, then, today, of a Palestinian? Or an Afghan, Yemeni, Uyghur, Rohingya, Somali, South Sudanese, or Syrian? A refugee is a refugee, regardless of where s/he comes from. A refugee is meant to be given refuge. It is part of the human tradition to take care of one another. Why do we only send clothing or money to others and not let them into our land? Why pray for others when we do not act on our prayer? A closed border is a closed heart. By depriving a refugee of the right to live with us as neighbors and friends and colleagues, and even future relatives, we keep them in refugee camps. We deprive them of the opportunity to become immigrants or citizens of our country. We keep alive the narrative of us vs them.

There are two main factors which divide man: fear and greed. We fear that if we welcome others, they will be a threat to our security. But we cannot live with that kind of fear. When we let go of fear, we create harmonious societies free from suspicion. Fear results in oppressive rules. Fear results in censorship. Fear results in strict border control.

Fear results in preserving-or rather, enforcing-ideology on others. And fear results in rigidity. The same fear that keeps refugees out is the fear that imprisons its very own citizens in an antiquated matrix begging to dissolve into some semblance of modernity. It is the same fear which makes foreigners feel unwelcome or intimidated by us. It is the same fear that restricts freedom of worship. It is all connected, but we do not realize it.

As for greed, it leads to nationalism and further divisiveness. It creates pride and war and expansionism. Although Kuwait is, thankfully, not a belligerent nation, we still suffer from the illusion of privilege, and disdain for foreigners, all in the name of protecting our resources and our country. But as history, past and modern, has shown: No country is ever safe. So that refugee who we see as the "other" is us, was us or will be us. And we will learn the hard way that we are meant to share with others, not hoard our wealth.

Let us learn from Europe and the way they have welcomed their Ukrainian brothers and sisters with open arms. And let us not criticize Europeans for closing their doors to Arabs or Muslims. People in glass houses shouldn't throw stones, as the saying goes. We have closed the doors to the same refugees-refugees who share our culture and even our heritage, in some instances. Oh, the irony! And, as a matter of fact, many European countries have not closed their doors. Many European countries are teeming with refugees from Arab, African and Muslim countries. It is easy for us to point the finger outward because we do not want to remind ourselves of our neglect. But the proof is in the society. If you travel to many European countries, you will find immigrants (previously refugees) of every color and religion, some who have assimilated into the culture and who have been given citizenship. In any case, if some European countries choose to only take care of their neighbors, then, let us, in turn, be inspired and take care of our neighbors. We should celebrate any country who helps another person in need, even if their help is limited to those like them. We should also consider that if all asylum seekers and refugees are headed West, there would be additional pressure on them. We can create equilibrium by opening our doors. There are many reasons to choose love over fear.

Baby steps can take us a long way. Eventually, the entire world-the "West" and the "East"-will learn that we are all one, but that's a whole other article. Until then, let's focus on our community and ensure we dissolve the fear of refugees and create a haven for the so-called other. Now is not the time to admonish anyone but ourselves.

attendees a glimpse into the Gulf region's rich heritage. "In the middle of this digital age, its incumbent upon researchers to salvage what's left of our heritage," said Talal Al-Rumaidhi, a Kuwaiti writer, while his compatriot Baza Al-Batni is displaying one of her literary works on her country's civilization. Photographer Ahmad Al-Khamis is also among the Kuwaiti participants, putting forth an amalgam of pictures depicting Kuwaiti heritage and culture, he said. The gala in the UAE emirate of Sharjah runs until March 28, with participation from across the wider Gulf Arab region, focusing on the fine line between the past and the future. —KUNA

UAE cultural gala sparks up nostalgia with wide Kuwaiti participation

SHARJAH: A large number of Kuwaitis joined the festivities yesterday as a UAE-based cultural show conjured longing emotions for the past, offering

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News in brief

KJA urges subscribers to pay fees

KUWAIT: Kuwait Journalists Association reminded subscribers to pay their subscription fees for 2022 before the end of March. To renew their subscriptions, subscribers are urged to visit the KJA secretariate during official hours; from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, on the following address Industrial Shuwaikh, Main Journalism Road, Al-Balagh Magazine Building, Second Floor. Payments are accepted in cash or K-Net.

Kuwait denounces missile attack on Irbil

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry yesterday expressed terse condemnation of the missile attack that targeted the city of Irbil in Iraq's Kurdistan Region, inflicting "material and human losses." The ministry, in a statement, expressed solidarity of the State of Kuwait with the brotherly Republic of Iraq, supporting measures it may take to safeguard its security and stability.

GCC condemns Irbil attack

RIYADH: GCC Secretary General Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf condemned the "terrorist missile attack on Irbil," the capital of Kurdistan's Region in northern Iraq. In a statement yesterday, Hajraf affirmed the GCC's support for Iraq in fighting terrorism and protecting its peace and stability. Earlier yesterday, Kurdistan's Region Interior Ministry announced that Irbil was attacked with missiles, adding that there were some damages without casualties.



KUWAIT: A rare bird seen at a park in Yarmouk. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: State departments welcomed staff in full force yesterday as the government restored workforce in the public sector back to 100 percent; the latest of measures to ease COVID-19 restrictions in Kuwait. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Health Minister encourages full return to schools in Kuwait

Kuwait operates country's first Abbott production line



KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Khaled Al-Saeed (center left) inaugurates the new Abbott production line in Kuwait. — KUNA photos



Minister of Commerce and Industry Fahad Al-Shuraian (left) participates in the inauguration ceremony.

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Minister of Health Dr Khaled Al-Saeed encouraged the full return of students to schools, pointing out that this will be done in cooperation with the ministry of education. The coronavirus pandemic did not end yet, but it is declining, the minister said yesterday, stressing that the decision for students' full return to schools was in hands of the ministry of education. Coronavirus cases have continued steep decline in Kuwait over the last two weeks.

Meanwhile, Dr Saeed said that health security is an integral part of national security, underlining that countries' reliance on their local capabilities and resources in case of emergency is extremely vital. This came in his speech during a ceremony held by the Kuwait Saudi Pharmaceutical (KSP) on the inauguration of the first line to produce 26 pharmaceutical products owned by Abbott Laboratories, in implementation of the agreement to localize the

manufacture of these products.

One of the most vital goals of the ministry is to start the first step to manufacture important medicines in Kuwait to meet local and possibly regional needs in the near future, Dr Saeed stressed. This stage is being started with the US company Abbott, which has initiated cooperation with KSP to accomplish this project, while there is more partnership with other companies to achieve the desired goal that will be announced soon, he added. The success of localizing the manufacture of pharmaceutical products from a leading international company reflects the capabilities of local private companies operating in this sector, as it gives Kuwait a guaranteed stock of these products, Dr Saeed said.

In the meantime, Minister of Commerce and Industry Fahad Al-Shuraian said in his speech during the ceremony that this is the first foreign investment in Kuwait of this size in the health sector, and

it is also the first time that an international company in this sector has localized manufacturing in Kuwait. It will also be the first time that products that are used around the world bear the "Made in Kuwait" label, he pointed out, noting that it is an achievement for the Kuwaiti economy as it pushes its industry and local capabilities internationally.

Charge d'Affaires at the US Embassy James Holtsnider highlighted in his speech the importance of this investment in the context of bilateral economic ties between both sides, explaining the role of the US Chamber of Commerce in facilitating this partnership and strengthening economic ties between them. In the meantime, Chairman and Managing Director at KSP Dr Rashed Khazal said that they have worked hard during the past eight months to prepare for this day and launch the manufacturing line of Abbott Laboratories products bearing the "Made in Kuwait" label. — KUNA

Al-Sayer Holding supports specialized educational campaign

KUWAIT: Reinforcing its CSR efforts Al-Sayer Holding celebrated Kuwait National and Liberation Day partnering with "Play and Think" a specialized educational and counseling center for the children with intellectual disabilities. "Play and Think" center, with certified staff and rehabilitation services offers an early, ongoing interventions to improve lifestyle functioning of these children, and develop them to be independent.

The spirit of the event was to encourage human rights-based approach to ensure more than 20,000 persons with intellectual disability and special needs have equal opportunities for development, learning, social inclusiveness, and welfare. Such initiatives motivate everyone to support Kuwait Vision 2035 (New Kuwait) and UN Sustainability Development Goals 3 - Good Health and Well-Being, 4 - Quality Education, 5 - Equality, and 17 - Partnerships for The Goals.

Dr Awathif Al-Rubaian, Founder of Play and Think informed, they trained around 100 children to identify their skills and enhance it to empower their gifted talents gradu-

ally and scientifically. This shall be achieved with the support of all including parents, society, authorities, and companies who value it as their responsibility to care.

Event celebrations at Kuwait Sea Club was attended by more than 250 communities including 50 special need children with their families, volunteers, and key delegates to view the creative activities and fun-

filled games for the children to make it memorable for them.

According to Nehad Al Haj Ali, Group Manager, Corporate Excellence "Al-Sayer welcomes every opportunity to build a social partnership to empower differently abled individuals. Our aim is to integrate children with special needs and raise awareness about their potential to lead productive and dignified lives. So, we encourage private sectors and voluntary groups to adopt such initiatives to build a change to bring quality human values."





The lonely envoy: Moscow's man at UN 'on defensive'

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BERLIN: An elevated view shows people taking part in a demonstration against Russia's invasion of Ukraine yesterday in Berlin. — AFP

Pro-Moscow 'people's republic'?

Amsterdam's Orthodox clergy split from Moscow Patriarch

KYIV: Ukrainian officials have accused Russia of planning a fake referendum on creating a pro-Moscow "people's republic" in the southern Black Sea city of Kherson. Russian forces seized the port city, which has a population of 290,000 people, on March 3 following a three-day siege. It was the first major city to fall following Moscow's invasion.

"Russians now desperately try to organize a sham 'referendum' for a fake 'people's republic' in Kherson," Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba tweeted. Due to "zero popular support", such a referendum "will be fully staged", he added. "Severe sanctions against Russia must follow if they proceed. Kherson is & will always be Ukraine," the minister added. Kuleba drew a parallel with Russia's annexation of the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea in 2014, when it held a referendum on joining Russia after deploying troops there. The Kherson plan was following a "2014 playbook", Kuleba said. Ukraine's ombudsman Lyudmyla Denisova wrote on Telegram that Russian occupying forces were phoning lawmakers

from the local legislature, asking them to vote for the plan. Denisova said such a referendum would be illegal on the occupied territory, since under



Ukraine accuses Russia of a fake referendum plot

Ukrainian law any issues over territory can only be resolved by a nationwide referendum.

Orthodox clergy split

In another development, the clergy of the

last few weeks have been an embarrassment for the UK in terms of refugees," Labor leader Keir Starmer told Sky, adding he is ready to take in Ukrainians himself. Gove said on BBC television that he was "exploring what I can do" himself to welcome Ukrainians to his own home.

He added that to house Ukrainians, he was looking also at seizing the luxury UK properties of sanctioned Russian oligarchs—an idea backed by London mayor Sadiq Khan among others. "There's quite a high legal bar to cross and we're not talking about permanent confiscation," Gove said. "But we are saying: you're sanctioned, you're supporting (Russian President Vladimir) Putin, this home is here, you have no right to use or profit from it... if we can use it in order to help others, let's do that."

The government is already examining an exclusive London flat bought for cash by a woman connected to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, under a new sanctions regime coming into force this week. The Economic Crime Bill—which is being accelerated into law after Russia's invasion—will lower the bar for the government to slap "unexplained wealth orders" on people with no discernible valid income.

Britain's smaller neighbor Ireland has meanwhile taken in some 5,500 refugees from Ukraine, under the EU's no-strings approach. The UK and Ireland share a common travel area, and London has reportedly raised security concerns with Dublin over the fear that Russian infiltrators could be among the Ukrainians entering the Republic. Irish premier Micheal Martin told the BBC that "we keep channels open with our UK counterparts" on the security aspect. But he stressed: "The humanitarian response trumps anything, as far as we're concerned." — AFP

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Russian Orthodox Church in the Dutch city of Amsterdam, announced Saturday it was splitting from the Moscow church because of threats to them over Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In a statement posted to its website it said that after a meeting, "the clergy unanimously announced that it is no longer possible for them to function within the Moscow Patriarchate and provide a spiritually safe environment for our faithful". It was "with a heavy heart" that the four priests of Saint Nicholas of Myra in Amsterdam had reached their decision, they said.

They had asked Archbishop Elisey, of the Russian Orthodox Church in The Hague, to grant them canonical dismissal and had applied to join the Constantinople Orthodox Church, the statement added. In an early statement, the church clergy said that they would no longer mention the name of the Patriarch Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, in their liturgy because of his backing for the invasion of Ukraine.

In a February 27 sermon, the Patriarch described Moscow's opponents in Ukraine as "evil forces" fighting against the "unity of Russia". That early Amsterdam church decision led to an unscheduled visit from Archbishop Elisey during mass, who told them that Moscow was watching their actions closely, they said. The Amsterdam clergy said they felt that they were being pressured by both the archbishop and the Russian state to go back on their stance.

The Amsterdam branch of the Russian Orthodox Church is not the only one to object to the position taken by the church's leader. In Ukraine, some Russian Orthodox priests have denounced the Moscow church since the start of the invasion. And the Paris-based Metropolitan Jean de Douvna, who heads up some sixty parishes following the Russian tradition across western Europe, expressed his support for Ukraine in an open letter published on Wednesday. He also appealed to the Patriarch Kirill to intervene to stop the "bloodbath". — AFP

Britons urged to open homes for Ukrainians

LONDON: Stung by criticism of its lacklustre approach to refugees fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the UK yesterday unveiled a new scheme to allow them to stay with Britons for up to three years. The "Homes for Ukraine" program will allow "tens of thousands" to gain access to work, healthcare and education, cabinet secretary Michael Gove said.

Some 3,000 have already been given visas to join Ukrainian relatives living in Britain under an existing family scheme, he told Sky News, rejecting comparisons to much bigger numbers taken in by EU members. With the new scheme, the government wanted to try to ensure that "every available home" is opened up "to those who are fleeing persecution", said Gove, whose portfolio includes housing. "There are a large number of people in this country, generous hearted and in a position to provide homes, and businesses and charities as well."

Hosts will be given £350 (\$457, 418 euros) a month and must commit to a minimum stay of six months—potentially a stumbling block when Britons are grappling with the worst cost-of-living crisis in a generation. They must sponsor a named Ukrainian—who Gove said could be someone Britons have met on social media, or with churches and charities playing an intermediary role. Britons will need to undergo security vetting, especially to protect vulnerable women and children from Ukraine.

The refugees themselves will still require a visa, although the government has simplified the process after a deluge of attacks last week over the complications it had thrown up to fleeing Ukrainians. Gove said that a website for individual Britons to register as sponsors would launch on Monday, with the first arrivals possible in a week. The devolved governments of Scotland and Wales said they were ready to act as "super sponsors" to bring in as many Ukrainians as possible, and urged London to slash visa red tape.

The opposition Labor party welcomed the scheme, but said the government still had to clarify key details and compared it unfavorably with the EU's visa-free welcome for Ukrainian refugees to stay for three years. "Frankly

Ethiopian forces burned Tigrayan man alive: EHRC

NAIROBI: The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) said yesterday that government forces were responsible for burning a Tigrayan man to death, a barbaric act circulated in a widely-shared video that sparked outrage on social media. Ethiopia's government on Saturday vowed to investigate and take action against anyone involved in "the extremely savage act" depicted in the video, which shows an unarmed

man being set on fire as a group of people, including some wearing army uniforms, taunt him. Yesterday, the EHRC said the victim was a Tigrayan man who was "burnt alive... with the participation of government security forces and other people".

The atrocity occurred on March 3 in the northwestern region of Benishangul Gumuz, which borders Sudan and South Sudan. It followed an attack a day earlier that left at least 20 people dead, the state-affiliated independent rights body said. Security officials later captured and shot dead eight Tigrayans suspected of involvement in that assault, it added. "The bodies of the deceased were taken by security forces to a nearby forest and burned," the EHRC said in a statement, citing eyewitness testimony. — AFP

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International

The lonely envoy: Moscow's man at UN finds himself on defensive

Russia invasion sends shock waves around the world

UNITED NATIONS: It was the middle of an emergency session of the UN Security Council, late on the evening of February 23, and Vassily Nebenzia looked shaken—his face pale, his shoulders sagging. Russia, the country he represents at the United Nations, had just invaded Ukraine, sending shock waves around the world that continue to reverberate today.

At 60, Nebenzia—a bald man, massively built, who wears thin-framed glasses and often fiddles with his watch—was chairing the Council. It was a shocking first for the UN: The man presiding over the august body dedicated to defending global peace was also the representative of a nuclear power now waging war against a democracy...

Did he know, when he opened the session and sat listening as his colleagues delivered impassioned pleas for Moscow to pull back the armed forces surrounding much of Ukraine—that they had already invaded? More generally, does he believe the words in the speeches he reads? "I don't know, but I believe not," one UN official told AFP, speaking on grounds of anonymity. Several ambassadors said they shared that impression. The Ukrainian ambassador, Sergiy Kyslytsya, regularly asks Nebenzia if he is actually in touch with Moscow.

British envoy Barbara Woodward, a specialist in Russian and Chinese affairs, reminded Nebenzia that "the great

Russian writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote: 'Man is given not only one life, but also one conscience.'" "I know that you've spoken under instructions today, but I ask you to report faithfully back to Moscow what you have heard today—the urgency of this Council's calls for peace." Nebenzia did not respond to an AFP request for an interview.

He has, in resigned tones, followed his government's line at emergency meetings of the Council since war broke out, and



Nebenzia known for deep mastery of the issues

further sessions are expected this week. Under the exasperated eyes of his foreign colleagues, he has read speeches denying media reports of the destruction of civilian sites. In impromptu replies, he has on occasion used the word "war"—a word banned by Moscow in regard to Ukraine. But each time he has been careful to note that the word was first used by his boss, Foreign Secretary Sergei Lavrov.

"The Russian system has never been

as centralized," said one Western ambassador, speaking anonymously. Russian diplomats "are excellent professionals, but they are not in a position to interact with power, they are simply there to execute government dictates, whether involved in preparing them or not—and usually not."

Two things at once

At the UN, Nebenzia is known for his deep mastery of the issues. His career has taken him to Bangkok and Geneva, with a specialty in international organizations. He is fluent in the arcana of multilateral maneuvering and uses his deep understanding of procedure to his country's benefit. Outside the sometimes theatrical jousting in the hallowed halls of the Security Council, his relations with colleagues are cordial and polite—and have remained so since the invasion, according to several sources. The ambassador is a man of culture with a sense of humor.

"I can do two things at the same time," he told AFP with a smile, after displaying the surprising ability to deliver a speech in Russian while listening to its English translation simultaneously on his headphones. Russians are trained in this multi-tasking, his aides say. That allows them to ensure that their addresses are rendered as precisely as possible in the language in which most will hear them-



NEW YORK: Russia Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia waits for a UN Security Council emergency meeting in New York. — AFP

and to correct any errors on the spot, diplomats say.

At diplomatic receptions Nebenzia shows a convivial side. His favorite cocktail? "Half vodka, half Champagne," he once told two French journalists. Married and father of a son, the ambassador likes to take off on weekends on his European motorbike—a solitary hobby that goes well with the newly solitary status thrust on him by the Ukraine crisis.

But he is never far from the drama these days. On February 28, during a

news conference marking the end of his month leading Russia's rotating presidency of the Security Council, he abruptly interrupted the proceedings to answer his cell phone. After listening for a moment without speaking, he hung up and announced—adopting a tone of victimhood—that the United States was expelling 12 members of his diplomatic mission. Sources in Washington have said the 12 are spies—with no connection to the war. Diplomats later told AFP the 12 are members of the military. — AFP

Guns, not diplomacy, will determine Ukraine war outcome: Experts

PARIS: Russia entered negotiations with Ukraine only days after invading the country but experts say the ongoing talks are unlikely to yield progress until one side feels it has momentum on the battlefield. The latest attempts at finding a negotiated end to the bloodshed saw the Russian and Ukrainian foreign ministers sit down for talks on Thursday in the Turkish resort city of Antalya.

Although there was no breakthrough, Ukrainian President Zelensky said on Saturday there had been a "fundamentally different approach" from the Russians in the latest discussions, while Putin claimed there were "some positive shifts" in the dialogue. Experts say Russia's approach has so far entailed making ultimatums, insisting that Ukraine agree to de-militarize, renounce its ambitions to join NATO, and recognise Russian territorial claims in eastern Ukraine.

Ukraine rejects these demands and there appears to be little incentive for anyone to compromise until one side builds a dominant military position. "It's a kind of deadlock or standstill because Russia still hopes that Ukraine will accept its demands," said Oleg Ignatov, a Russia specialist at the International Crisis Group (ICG), a think-tank. "Both sides consider the military scenario as the main scenario: Ukraine is not losing this war and Russia is not winning this war."

Natia Seskuria, a Russia expert at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), a British think-tank, said it was hard to imagine a diplomatic solution when the two sides are struggling to agree on humanitarian corridors or even temporary local ceasefires. "I think that at this point Russia is trying to achieve its maximalist goals in Ukraine, and if they're able to force the Ukrainians at the diplomatic table to accept these terms, then of course Russia will get what it wants," she said. "But if they are unable to do so, then the war will continue"

Window-dressing?

Michel Duclos, a veteran French ambassador now at the Montaigne Institute, a Paris-based think-tank, agreed that the diplomatic track was of secondary importance at present relative to what happens on the ground. Russian troops are believed to have sustained heavy material losses and casualties, with Zelensky claiming Saturday that more than 12,000 had been killed—three times the upper estimate from the United States. But the Russians are continuing to grind forward in the south, east and around the capital Kyiv. "(Moscow has) a conception of diplomacy which amounts to making the other side give in. It's a sort of diplomacy of ultimatums," Duclos said.

"We're at a stage where the Russians are blowing hot and cold but are sticking by this approach of making ultimatums," he added. The discussions in Turkey last week were aimed at "creating some confusion both for the outside world and for the Ukrainians", he said. Seskuria from RUSI said the talks also served the Kremlin domestically by appearing to reinforce Putin's justification for the war—that Moscow had no alternative because of the threat posed by Ukraine.

"Russia also wants a pretext to say that they tried diplomacy, and that diplomacy failed because Ukraine was unwilling to accept their demands, and that's why they had to continue with the military option," she said. But the talks also enable both sides to scope out the negotiating positions of the other. "The Ukrainians need to know exactly where the Russians are," Duclos said. He believes Moscow might suggest a new format for discussions modeled on the so-called Astana process, which attempted to bring an end to Syria's civil war. — AFP

Ukraine border town sees refugee influx, Hungarian exodus

BEREHOVE: Russia's invasion of Ukraine has led to an influx of refugees into the border town of Berehove in the Transcarpathia region, and an exodus of its ethnic-Hungarian population fleeing conscription. Around half of Berehove's population of 22,000 is ethnic-Hungarian, the bilingual street signs, architecture and historical plaques testifying to its Magyar heritage.

But despite its location beside the Hungarian border and far from the fighting, the war has upended life in the town. Its hotels, private boarding houses, and even schools now host refugees, some of the two million Ukrainians internally displaced by the war so far.

"We're fully booked, they've reserved rooms for weeks, some for months," said Konstantyn Popovych, 34, owner of the Hotel "Olesja" in Berehove's downtown. According to deputy mayor Istvan Vincze, "4,000-

5,000 refugees are currently in Berehove while much of the ethnic-Hungarian population" has fled across the border. Now mostly Ukrainian is heard on the streets, while a screen on the main square plays an army promotional video on loop.

Fled to 'motherland'

"As soon as the war broke out and the government introduced conscription, many Hungarians quickly left, most to join relatives or friends in the motherland," Vincze, 51 said. Speaking outside the town hall where both Ukrainian and Hungarian flags are flown, Vincze said he worries about the long-term impact of the war on the town. "I understand why people left, the economic prospects are better, particularly now that there is war, but obviously we hope everyone comes back soon," he said. Transcarpathia, cut off from the rest



BEREHOVE: Local residents cross a bridge in Berehove, western Ukraine. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has led to an influx of refugees into the border town of Berehove in the Transcarpathia region, and an exodus of its ethnic-Hungarian population fleeing conscription. — AFP

of Ukraine by the Carpathian mountains, was governed by Budapest until after World War I.

It then changed hands several times, falling under Soviet rule after World War II when thousands of Ukrainians and Russians were settled in the region. Around 1,000 kilome-

ters from Kyiv and bordering Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania, it finally became part of independent Ukraine in 1991. Some 1.2 million people live there, with Hungarians the largest-numbering around 150,000 — in a patchwork of ethnic minorities alongside Ukrainians. — AFP

Unease and stoicism on Finland's Russian border

IMATRA: In her wooden, snow-covered house 20 minutes from Russia, Maija Poyhia wears a traditional blue headscarf that her mother carried with her when fleeing the Soviet invasion of Finland during World War II. In Finland, Russia's assault on Ukraine has stirred up some painful associations with the 1939 Winter War, when Red Army troops attacked the Nordic country across their shared border, which now runs to 1,340 kilometers.

As in Ukraine, the smaller Finnish army back then put up strong resistance and inflicted heavy losses on the Soviets. But Finland ended up ceding a huge stretch of its eastern Karelia province, driving almost half a million Finns — 12 percent of the entire population—from their homes. "My dad's childhood home is still on the Finnish side," Poyhia tells AFP, although her mother's family farm is now in Russia. "But back then, no one really understood how the border went."

A second war against the USSR fol-

lowed, from 1941 to 1944, this time with Finland in a de facto alliance with Nazi Germany. In spite of the area's history, Poyhia and her husband, Seppo Laaksovirta, "are not scared at all" of living so close to the Russian border, and the threat of another invasion feels distant. "I don't know anyone around here who's been saying we need to be on our toes," Laaksovirta says.

Russia's shock invasion of Ukraine on February 24 led to a spike in Finnish support for joining NATO as a defense against possible aggression from the east, with polls showing record levels in favour of membership. Laaksovirta supports joining the military alliance, a move he believes "would be of more use than harm." "Nowadays, we've got arms from America and the West here," he adds, "rather than what we had in the 1960s, which was from Russia."

In the 80 years since the Soviet invasion, Finns along the border have re-developed strong cultural and economic ties with their eastern neighbors. "The younger generations have



IMATRA: People walk in the city center in Imatra, southeastern Finland. In Finland, Russia's assault on Ukraine has stirred up some painful associations with the 1939 Winter War, when Red Army troops attacked the Nordic country across their shared border which now runs to 1,340 kilometers. — AFP

learned to live, and want to live, in a Western, international society," says Anna Helminen, city council chair in Imatra, a town just five kilometers from the border. A thousand of Imatra's 26,000 residents are Russian citizens, and the town "was founded on Russian

purchasing power," Helminen tells AFP. Imatra's businesses had been desperate for Russian tourists to begin visiting the shops, hotels and spas again as the COVID pandemic waned. "Now, of course, the same situation will continue," Helminen says. — AFP

On Kyiv's eastern front, Ukrainians hold off Russians

SKYBYN: Firing a constant barrage of artillery at the Russians, a troop of Ukrainian soldiers are keeping up morale: their shelling has so far stopped Moscow's tanks entering Kyiv from the east. And they hope that the enemy forces, which have struggled to take large cities, will eventually get bogged down. Wearing camouflage uniform and carrying a Kalashnikov, a soldier nicknamed Topaz watches the motorway running north from Kyiv's eastern suburbs. With his companions, he is keeping up a barrage of artillery from behind the front line, as regu-

lar explosions of heavy weaponry echo across the plain and an icy wind blows.

"Today the troops' morale is at its highest," said the muscular man in his 40s, radioing messages via a headset. "The day before yesterday, we pushed back the Russian tanks" by a few hundred metres, he says, smiling, in a pause between two exchanges of fire. A video of the feat, captured by a Ukrainian military drone and posted on social media, shows a column of about 20 Russian vehicles, many of them tanks, moving southwards along the motorway.

A sudden hail of shells and rockets hits the Russian convoy, blowing up first the lead tank and then one at the rear. "We shot at them with tanks and rocket launchers," Topaz says. The Russian convoy makes a sudden half-turn and gets out of the village as quickly as it can. "They went to hide in the nearby villages," says Topaz. The attack took place close to the village of Skybyn in the Kyiv region, a

few kilometers from the road into Brovary, the eastern gateway into the capital.

According to several Ukrainian soldiers, at least two Russian vehicles, one of them a tank, were destroyed—which the video appears to support—and a Russian tank commander was killed. On the Ukrainian side, "we had five wounded, one of whom is in a critical condition", after the Russian side opened fire in response, says one soldier, Ilya Berezenko, 27.

Since the invasion began on March 24, the Russian troops have seized numerous pockets of strategically important territory, particularly along the southern coast and to the east and north and are now positioned at Kyiv's northwestern and eastern edges. But they seem to have run into difficulties in winning large cities such as Chernigiv or Kharkiv and in the northeastern Kyiv suburbs of Bucha and Irpin, as well as in the east. — AFP

International

Afghan embassy in US to close over lack of funds and support

Diplomats now have a month to apply for US visas

WASHINGTON: The Afghan embassy in Washington, under severe financial pressure and cut off from the new Taliban government in Kabul, will close down in the coming week, a senior State Department official confirmed Saturday. Its diplomats, holdovers from the old government, now have a month to apply for US visas before being deported—though not back to Afghanistan, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Around 100 diplomats currently work at the embassy in Washington or at Afghan consulates in Los Angeles and in New York, according to The New York Times. Roughly one-fourth have yet to apply to remain in the US, the American official said. “The



KABUL: Men queue to apply for a visa outside the Iranian embassy in Kabul. — AFP

tions in a way that would protect and preserve all diplomatic mission property in the United States until operations are able to resume.” The Taliban, who seized power in Kabul last August, are not recognized by the international community and they have not fully gained control of diplomatic missions set up under the previous government. Many of the diplomats remain loyal to the old pro-Western government.

Meantime, Afghan diplomats no longer have access to several hundred thousand dollars in funding after banks—not the US government—froze their accounts, the US official said. The accrediting of Taliban-appointed diplomats, were it to happen, is “something that would happen much further down

the road, if we were moving toward recognition of them officially as the government of Afghanistan,” the official said.

He said the US side had had no discussions with the Taliban about the decision to close the embassy. In January, the Afghan ambassador in Beijing resigned after months without any financing from Kabul. In early February, following the visit of a Taliban delegation to Norway for talks with several Western diplomats, Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi told AFP that his government was getting closer to achieving recognition, saying, “This is our right.” He said the international community wanted to interact with his government. — AFP

al-Assad. Jari and his wife—whom he met while he was studying medicine in Ukraine—fled the Syrian capital “to find peace” in Mykolaiv. But the war followed them.

‘War is war’

“Syria and Ukraine are in the same situation now,” he said. “War is war, whether it’s over there, here or somewhere else, and it’s the worst thing you can imagine.” But he would not be drawn on political matters. “The Russians? Their government? I don’t want to talk about it.” Jari went upstairs to check on a few patients. Among them was a 14-year-old boy called Timur, watched over by his mother Natalia Malichka. In the first days of the war, Timur got a splinter in his eye while cutting wood with his grandfather. Unable to get to hospital immediately because no buses were running, the teenager’s eye got worse.

Timur remains silent as his mother, shaking, says she is also worried about her two other sons, aged 10 and 20, at home. “When I’m here with Timur, I know that my baby is at home, and I don’t know if I’ll see him again. I’m torn,” Malichka says. She and the two other boys were at home when the neighborhood was shelled. “I was reassured because I knew that Timur was in the basement of the hospital with the doctors. But despite that, he called me, he was terrified.”

“Everything was shaking,” said the hospital’s



MYKOLAIV: Syrian doctor Ossama Jari (left) examines a patient in a hospital in Mykolaiv. Jari is a Syrian doctor who fled from war from Damascus to Ukraine, now caught by another war. — AFP

director Krasimira Rilkoova, who looked as exhausted as Jari. “We didn’t know if we would find the hospital still standing when we came back up from the basement.” Mykolaiv, a city of around 500,000, stands in the way of Russia’s campaign to take the Black Sea port of Odessa. For several days now, Ukrainian forces have managed to hold off the besieging Russian troops. — AFP

Embassy under severe financial pressure

Afghan Embassy and consulates are under severe financial pressure. Their bank accounts are not available to them,” the official said. He added, “We have no intention of accrediting diplomats who are appointed by the Taliban at this time.” The group will retain its current diplomatic status for 30 days.

The official said the State Department had “now made arrangements in cooperation with the Afghan Embassy to facilitate an orderly shutdown of opera-

Syria doctor fleeing one war is caught by another

MYKOLAIV: Syrian doctor Ossama Jari fled Damascus in 2014 to find peace with his Ukrainian wife in the Black Sea port of Mykolaiv. But now war, and Russian bombs, have caught up with him. In an ophthalmology clinic in the northeast Ingulski district of the city, Jari huddled for safety with other staff and patients in a basement filled with mattresses and jerry cans of water during the merciless bombardment in the night from Friday to Saturday.

While no deaths were reported, windows were blown out, the ground was pockmarked with shell and the neighborhood boiler room was hit. “I couldn’t believe it,” said Jari. “We were living peacefully here. What are the Russians doing? From what are they trying to save us? From themselves?”

Not really dressed for work—kitted out in a shirt printed with nautical motifs—Jari was still trying to treat patients, his eyes weary behind his glasses. It is a particularly cruel twist of fate for the doctor who had been forced to flee his war-torn homeland during the civil war there, where Russia intervened in 2015 to prop up the regime of President Bashar

2 held over murders of polio vaccinators

KUNDUZ: Two suspects have been arrested in Afghanistan in connection with the killing of seven polio vaccinators last month, police said Saturday, putting the blame on a group opposed to Taliban rule. The health workers were killed in separate attacks in the northern province of Kunduz while working in a house-to-house campaign to eradicate the crippling virus.

“The arrested men have confessed to their crime and said they shot the polio vaccinators after receiving orders from their leaders from the Resistance Front in the province,” Kunduz police spokesman Qari Obaidullah Abedi said. The National Resistance Front (NRF) is led by the son of legendary late anti-Taliban commander Ahmad Shah Massoud.

The group’s fighters were the last to hold out against the Taliban takeover last year, retreating to the Panjshir Valley, which eventually fell in

September, weeks after the former government forces capitulated. The scenic Panjshir Valley is famed as the site of resistance to Soviet forces in the 1980s and the Taliban in the late 1990s, during the hardliners’ first stint in power. Its most revered figure is Massoud, known as the “Lion of Panjshir”, who was assassinated by Al-Qaeda in 2001, two days before the September 11 attacks.

His son Ahmad Massoud has since picked up the mantle, and reports have surfaced of his apparent efforts to organize a resistance with other exiled Afghan leaders. The Kunduz police spokesman said the two arrested men had also confessed that “they were paid” for murdering the vaccinators. On February 24, a total of eight polio vaccinators had been killed—seven in Kunduz and one in the neighboring province of Takhar. The National Resistance Front was not available for immediate comment on



KANDAHAR: Women and children sit on the backside of a vehicle along a road in Kandahar. — AFP

the police statement.

Polio teams in Afghanistan had been frequently targeted by insurgent groups until the Taliban’s takeover of the country in August. Since then, the hardline Islamists have said they want to work with the United Nations to stamp out the disease. In the past, polio

vaccination campaigns in Afghanistan and neighboring Pakistan—were accused of being fronts for spying, while some clerics said the vaccine was a conspiracy to sterilize Muslims. Afghanistan and Pakistan are the only two countries in the world where polio has not been eradicated. — AFP

now find themselves without a return ticket.

Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) official Chaltan Kunjara Na Ayudhya said 3,100 Russians were stuck in Phuket, while just over 2,000 were in Samui, and smaller numbers were in Krabi, Phang Nga and Bangkok. The ministry was working on helping those who wanted to return home, he said, including “discussion on return flights which could be regular or special flights”.

Russian tourist and mother-of-three Evgenia Gozorskaia said her family discovered their return Aeroflot tickets had been cancelled. “We are very nervous because the children are very small, we don’t have enough money to live here,” said the 41-year-old psychologist who arrived from Moscow with her husband and children—aged seven, four and two—on February 27. “We want to go tomorrow to the airport, but I don’t know what the situation will be,” she said from Phuket, adding that they were

supposed to fly home March 28.

She said while some people had their tickets replaced others—including her family—had not been so lucky. “They say that they cannot do it and put the phone off,” she said. While Thailand has not banned Russian flights, international airspace restrictions have seen some firms—such as Russia’s flagship Aeroflot—cancelling services, leaving tourists to seek alternative routes, such as through the Middle East with different carriers.

Many tourists have also been hit by Visa and Mastercard suspending operations. “We have seen instances of difficulty in card payments by Russians in Phuket due to how Mastercard and Visa have suspended services in Russia,” said Bhumikitti Ruktaengam, president of the Phuket Tourist Association. He said officials were considering adopting the Mir system—a Russian electronic fund transfer structure—as well as digital currencies. — AFP

News in brief

44 drown as boat capsizes

RABAT: At least 44 migrants, including women and infants, drowned this week off Morocco’s coast as they tried to reach Spain, migrant aid agency Caminando Fronteras has said. Quoting relatives of the victims, it said the bodies of five women and two babies were brought ashore but the rest were still missing. “Tragedy. At least 44 victims drowned off the coast of Tarfaya (southern Morocco),” the aid agency’s Helena Maleno tweeted on Saturday. They were among 61 migrants who boarded a boat heading for Spain’s Canary Islands, around 100 kilometers away from Tarfaya, she said. A total of 16 women and six infants were among those on board, Maleno said. “The bodies of three women and two babies are now at the morgue of Laayoune,” the main city in the disputed Western Sahara territory. — AFP

Chad peace talks start

DOHA: Chad’s military government and dozens of opposition groups started peace talks yesterday in Qatar as a first step towards ending a rebellion and holding elections. The landlocked African nation was thrown into turmoil by the killing of longtime leader Idriss Deby Itno in battle with rebels in the country’s north last April. His son, Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno, took over the country after his death, fronting a 15-member military junta and vowing to hold free elections. Chad’s Prime Minister Albert Pahimi Padacke and African Union Commission head Moussa Faki Mahamat told the opening of the conference that both sides would have to make “concessions” for the talks to succeed. But the process risks being protracted and complicated. — AFP

Train accident kills 60

LUBUMBASHI: A train crash in southeastern Democratic Republic of Congo has killed at least 60 people, the state rail company and local sources said on Saturday. “(Currently) the toll is 61 dead, men, women and children (and) 52 injured who have been evacuated,” Marc Manyonga Ndambo, director of infrastructure at the SNCC train operator said. Local media quoted the provincial governor Fifi Masuka as saying 60 people had been killed. The train was a freight service which had been carrying “several hundred stowaways,” said Manyonga said even though this was prohibited. “Some of the bodies were still trapped in the wagons that had fallen into the ravines,” he added. Manyonga said the train was made up of 15 wagons, 12 of which were empty, and was coming from Luen in a neighboring province destined for the mining town of Tenke, close to Kolwezi. — AFP

US journalist shot dead

IRPIN: A US journalist was shot dead and another wounded yesterday in Irpin, a frontline north-west suburb of Kyiv, medics and witnesses said. Danylo Shapovalov, a surgeon volunteering for the Ukrainian territorial defense, said one of the Americans died instantly and he had treated the other. AFP reporters in Irpin saw the body of the victim. A third victim, a Ukrainian who had been in the same car as the Americans, was also wounded. Ukrainian officials were quick to blame Russian forces for the shooting but the exact circumstances were unclear. AFP reporters heard small arms and artillery fire in the area. “The car was shot at. There were two journalists and one of ours (a Ukrainian),” Shapovalov told AFP. — AFP

Cyclone death toll hits 12

NAMPULA: The death toll from a cyclone that struck Mozambique this week climbed to 12 yesterday after devastating wind and rain lashed the southern African country. Cyclone Gombe has affected more than 30,000 people, injuring 40, and destroyed more than 3,000 homes since making landfall on Friday. Powerful winds reaching 170 kilometers per hour and torrential rainfall have hit the northern Nampula province by the Indian Ocean and neighboring Zambezia province particularly hard. In the port city of Nacala, houses were teetering on the edge of cliffs facing the ocean and walls had collapsed, an AFP photographer saw. Most thatched roofs were damaged and another made of sheet metal lay on the ground after the wind swept away the bricks, while uprooted trees also littered the ground. — AFP



NAMPULA: Nomade Suaque, (40), stands over the rubble of his house, destroyed by Cyclone Gombe in ‘El Triangulo’ neighborhood, Nacala district, Nampula province. — AFP

Russians scramble to leave Thailand as sanctions hit

BANGKOK: Thousands of Russian tourists in Thailand are struggling to find a route home, Thai officials said yesterday, as international sanctions imposed over the war in Ukraine hit holiday-makers. Russia’s invasion in February provoked a host of international measures targeting businesses and banks, with some Russian carriers cancelling flights and global payment firms suspending services. Russians tourists have been among the largest group of visitors to return to Thailand’s beachside resorts since pandemic restrictions eased, but many

Business

MONDAY, MARCH 14, 2022

Rising food prices shake North Africa as Ukraine war rages

Store managers say 'panic buying', not shortages, the problem



TUNIS: (Left) A sign is placed on almost empty shelves of bread and other wheat-based food products that reads in French "one bag per person" at a supermarket in the Tunisian capital on March 13, 2022. (Right) A staff member arranges baked goods at a bakery which is unsubsidized by the Tunisian state on March 11, 2022. —AFP

TUNIS: Households across North Africa are rushing to stock up on flour, semolina and other staples as food prices rise following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, both key wheat exporters to the region. The scramble is worse coming just weeks before the start of the holy month of Ramadan, when Muslims traditionally break a dawn-to-dusk fast with lavish family meals. Tunisia, Morocco and Libya, along with several other Arab countries, import much of their wheat from Ukraine and Russia.

Some fear the Russian invasion could lead to hunger and unrest, with memories of how rising food prices played a role in several Arab uprisings last decade. In one supermarket in the Tunisian capital, the shelves were bare of flour or semolina, and only three packs of sugar sat on a shelf near a sign that read: "One kilo per customer, please". Store managers said the problem was "panic buying", not shortages.

Shopper Houida Hjeij, who said she hadn't been able to find rice or flour for two weeks, blamed the authorities. "With the war in Ukraine, they did not think ahead," the 52-year-old housewife in Tunis said. Bulk-buying ahead of Ramadan, which is expected to start in early April this year, is common in Muslim countries. But some say the war in Ukraine has sparked a shopping frenzy.

Fear of war

Hedi Baccour, of Tunisia's union of supermarket owners, said daily sales of semolina - a staple across North Africa used in dishes of couscous - have jumped by "700 percent" in recent days. Sugar sales are up threefold as Tunisians stockpile basic foodstuffs, said Baccour, who insisted there were no food shortages. Each day pensioner Hedi Bouallegue, 66, makes the round of grocery shops in his Tunis neighborhood to stock up on products like cooking oil and semolina. "I am even ready to pay double the price," he told AFP.

Baker Slim Talbi said he had been paying three times as much for flour than in the past, "although the real effects of the (Russia-Ukraine) war have not hit us yet". "I am worried" about the future, Talbi added, citing Tunisia's dependence on Ukrainian wheat. Tunisia imports almost half of the soft wheat used to make bread from Ukraine. Authorities say the North African country has enough supplies to last three months.



'One kilo per customer, please'

Oil-rich Libya gets about 75 percent of its wheat from Russia and Ukraine. Morocco also relies heavily on the same source for supplies. Algeria - Africa's second-largest wheat consumer after Egypt - does not import any from the two warring eastern European countries, instead sourcing it from Argentina or France, according to the bureau of cereals. "There won't be any shortages - wheat shipments regularly arrive at Algiers port," said harbor official Mustapha, who declined to give his full name.

Despite reassurances, panicked citizens recently ransacked semolina stocks in Algeria's eastern Kabylie region. "War in Ukraine and all the semolina warehouses have been stormed," Mouh Benamer, who lives in the area, posted on Facebook.

Recession, pandemic, recovery

Food prices were on the rise in North Africa before Russia invaded Ukraine more than two weeks ago. Moroccan official Fouzi Lekjaa pointed to a global economic pick-up following a pan-

demically-induced slump. "With the recovery, the market price of cereals and oil products rose," he said. Mourad, 37, a shopper in the Moroccan capital Rabat, said climate change and drought - the worst in his country in decades - were also to blame.

To keep prices affordable and avoid a repeat of bread riots that erupted in the 1980s, Tunisia subsidizes staples like sugar, semolina and pasta. For the past decade, it has set the price of a baguette loaf of bread at six US cents.

Algeria plans to scrap subsidies on basic goods, but has not yet done so. After a truck drivers' strike this week, Morocco said it was mulling fuel subsidies for the sector "to protect citizens' purchasing power and keep prices at a reasonable level," according to government spokesman Mustapha Baitas.

In Libya, which found itself with two rival prime ministers this month, sparking fears of renewed violence, food prices are also hitting the roof. At a Tripoli wholesale market, shopper Saleh Mosbah blamed "unscrupulous merchants". "They always want to take advantage when there is a conflict," he said. Sumaya, a shopper in her 30s who declined to give her full name, blamed the government. "They reassure people by saying there is enough wheat," she said, carrying two five-kilo bags of flour. "I don't believe them." —AFP

CBK joins GCC payments system

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) joined the GCC cross-border payment system (Afaq) that connects real time gross settlement systems (RTGSS) of GCC member states. The first phase has been launched by Gulf Payments Company (GPC) and aims to develop cross-border payments, enhance efficiency, provide cost-effective rates and reduce the reliance on external financial systems and networks.

CBK Governor Dr Mohammad Y Al-Hashel said GCC central banks' joint effort and creation of GPC had now come into fruition with the initiation of Afaq system, which is part of a regional payments infrastructure developed for use by member states. It provides an interbank RTGSS and facilitates highly secure transactions and settlements. This, he noted, enables the drawing up of suitable strategies to avert all types of financial risk as well as increases financial and economic integration within the GCC.

Dr. Al-Hashel reiterated that Afaq, which would include all GCC central banks within the year, aims to facilitate rapid and safe inter-GCC transfers in both GCC and other currencies, at cost effective rates.

The CBK had already initiated the process of enrolling local Kuwaiti banks into the platform; the first phase saw Boubyan Bank complete all measures and conduct all tests required to join the system. Work is underway to ensure the remaining banks complete their enrollment process once all the technical and security tests for the linkage are completed within the specified timeframe.



CBK Governor Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel

Private jets soar past pandemic, oil price woes

GENEVA: Airlines may find themselves swept up in unprecedented turbulence - with air travel shunned over climate concerns, plagued by pandemic shutdowns and soaring oil prices - but for private jet operators, business is booming. The appeal of private jets has taken off since the start of the pandemic, amid fear of catching COVID-19 and as widespread cancellations and stringent measures have turned flying commercial into a logistics headache.

"The impact of Covid really forced people to look elsewhere for their travel needs," said Philippe Scalabrini, who heads the southern European division of the international private aviation company VistaJet. "Anyone who can afford it wants an entire plane at their disposal," he told AFP, adding that Numbers from air traffic regulator Eurocontrol appear to confirm that. It found that private air travel nearly doubled its global market share between 2019 and 2021, when it stood at 12 percent.

Luxury

Standing inside the newest addition to the VistaJet fleet, the Global 7500 built by Canadian business jet maker Bombardier, Scalabrini showed off what air travel can look like in that exclusive market. Aboard the luxury plane, costing a whopping \$72 million,

clients can enjoy plush cream-colored leather chairs, a large double bed, and wine tasting.

To limit jet lag, the cabin pressure can be better regulated than on commercial flights, allowing clients to sleep as soundly "as at their cabin in Saint-Moritz", the chic Alpine ski resort, Scalabrini said. And their pets can travel in luxury as well, with toys and treats on demand. With annual contracts starting at 500,000 (\$550,000), VistaJet's target audience includes wealthy individuals and business leaders, with growing numbers from the tech sector. "Obviously we see the evolution of clients following the macro-trends we see in the world," Scalabrini said.

'The COVID effect'

More than anything, the pandemic has driven the latest upsurge in demand. Scalabrini said "the Covid effect" last year helped VistaJet swell the number of flying hours sold by 90 percent. And the company, founded in 2004 by Swiss billionaire Thomas Flohr, announced last month the purchase of Air Hamburg, in a move it said would help grow its flying hours by another 30 percent.

That announcement, however, landed just three days before Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine and Western countries unleashed a slew of harsh sanctions, sparking panic on markets and sending oil prices soaring. Scalabrini said it was "a bit early" to determine how the crisis would affect his company. "At the moment we cannot fly to Russia, we cannot fly to Ukraine unfortunately, so obviously there is an impact, but it's a minimal impact," he



GENEVA: VistaJet President Europe Philippe Scalabrini poses inside a Bombardier Global 7500 business jet during a presentation at Geneva airport on March 3, 2022. —AFP

said, pointing out that Russian clients made up less than five percent of VistaJet's turnover. "We've got clients all over the world."

Image issue

While private jet companies may weather the crises currently gutting commercial aviation, they face the same outrage over air travel's outsized contribution to climate change. A private jet flight pollutes 10 times more than a commercial flight, according to the Transport and Environment NGO. Environmental questions will in the long term be one of the biggest challenges facing business air travel, Philippe Berland, an air transport specialist with the Sia Partners consulting firm, told AFP.

In the short term, however, he said the immediate question would be how the sector manages to absorb soaring oil prices, and also whether private jet companies can hold onto the clients they gained during the pandemic as commercial flights return to normal. "In this sector, where an hour of flying time is already very expensive, price is not the only factor," Berland said, suggesting that some of the newly won clients may have grown accustomed to the ease and speed of departures with private jets.

Pascal Fabre, aviation expert with the Alix Partners consultancy, said the sector was not very sensitive to rising oil prices. When you buy a plane "for several tens of millions of dollars," he told AFP, "the fuel bill is not an issue." —AFP

Fed set to hike rates to tame inflation

WASHINGTON: Surging prices for fuel, food and housing have sent US inflation to the highest in four decades, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine has made the situation worse, so the Federal Reserve is preparing to take action this week. But the central bank's efforts to put out the inflation fires will be complicated by the prospect of the war and wide-ranging sanctions imposed on Russia will disrupt trade flows and undermine the US economic recovery.

The policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee holds its two-day policy meeting this week, with an announcement set for Wednesday when it is poised to begin raising the benchmark lending rate that was cut to zero at the start of

the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. That would be the first in a series of rate hikes, but amid the rising uncertainty, some economists think policymakers may move less aggressively than previously expected as they weigh the competing forces on the economy.

"The Fed is being tugged in two different directions by the massive increase in energy prices that's taken place over the last few weeks," David Wilcox, a former senior advisor to three successive Fed chairs, told AFP. While higher inflation justifies the tightening moves, "the reduction in purchasing power that households are experiencing ... would call for a more accommodative stance of policy, a more cautious approach," said Wilcox, now with the Peterson Institute for International Economics and Bloomberg Economics.

Markets are pricing in about six rate hikes this year, but Grant Thornton Chief Economist Diane Swonk expects seven, while Wells Fargo raised their forecast from five to six -

which would still leave the policy rate below two percent. Prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, some economists - and even some Fed officials - said the first move in the tightening cycle could be a half point increase to send a strong signal to markets that the central bank was committed to keeping inflation from raging out of control. But Fed Chair Jerome Powell last week declared his intention to call for a quarter-point increase - a stunningly direct comment from a central bank chief, who typically keeps their plans close to the vest.

Wilcox said he was "thunderstruck" by the statement which tamped down speculation of a more aggressive move. While Wilcox remains cautiously optimistic that inflation will come down, he stressed that the Fed will have to be "absolutely clear" that it will act as forcefully as necessary should price pressures accelerate. And in the short term, economists warn that things will get worse before they get better. —AFP

Business

Inside Germany's secret Cold War cash bunker

Authorities had been guided by lessons from history

COCHEM, Germany: For many years, the residents of the leafy town of Cochem in the German Rhineland went about their daily business with no idea they were living on a gold mine. During the Cold War, the German central bank stashed away almost 15 billion marks' worth of an emergency currency in a 1,500-sq-m nuclear bunker beneath the town.

A closely guarded state secret, the currency was codenamed "BBK II" and intended for use if Germany was the target of an attack on its monetary system. After the Cold War, the bunker passed into the hands of a regional cooperative bank and then a real estate fund. In 2016, it was bought by German couple Manfred and Petra Reuter, who turned it into a museum.

Today, with Russia's invasion of Ukraine stoking fears of nuclear conflict, interest in the bunker is growing again. "Many people we know have pointed out that we have a safe bunker and asked whether there would be room for them in case of an emergency," said Petra Reuter. On tours of the bunker, "questions are naturally asked about the current situation", which feels like "a leap back in time 60 years", she said. "The fears are the same."

Inside, behind a heavy iron door, long corridors

lead to decontamination chambers and offices equipped with typewriters and rotary phones. The main room consists of 12 cages where, for almost 25 years, some 18,300 boxes containing millions of 10, 20, 50 and 100 mark banknotes were stored up to the ceiling.

Hundreds of trucks

On the front, the banknotes were almost identical to the real deutschmarks in circulation at the time, but on the back they were very different. Starting in 1964, the notes were delivered to the bunker by hundreds of trucks over a period of about 10 years, with no one suspecting a thing - not even the East German Stasi secret police. The bunker was accessed via a secret passage from what was ostensibly a training and development center for Bundesbank employees in a residential area of the town.

Cochem, located about 100 km from the border with Belgium and Luxembourg, was chosen because it was such a long way from the Iron Curtain. "The citizens of the community were astonished to discover this treasure, which had been hidden for so long near their homes," said Wolfgang Lambertz, the former mayor of the town, which has around

5,000 inhabitants.

Along with the 15 billion marks stored in the bunker, just under 11 billion marks' worth of the alternative currency was also stored in the vaults of the central bank in Frankfurt. Altogether, this added up to around 25 billion marks - roughly equivalent to the total amount of cash circulating in the German economy in 1963.

Operation Bernhard

Perhaps an extreme measure to ward off a merely hypothetical attack, but the German authorities had been guided by lessons from history. During World War II, the Nazis had launched "Operation Bernhard", in which prisoners in concentration camps were forced to manufacture counterfeit pounds with the aim of flooding England with them.

"The most plausible explanation was probably the fear that counterfeit money would be smuggled through the Iron Curtain in order to damage the West German economy," according to Bernd Kaltenhaeuser, president of the Bundesbank's regional office for Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland.

But creating a backup currency today "would no longer make sense because there is less counterfeit



COCHEM, Germany: Facsimiles of former banknotes of the substitute currency are pictured in a former vault of the Bundesbank Bunker Museum on Feb 8, 2022. —AFP

money in circulation and there are fewer cash payments", according to Kaltenhaeuser. In the 1980s, with the Cold War winding down and technology evolving, it was decided that the replacement currency no longer met Germany's security standards. By 1989, the year the Berlin Wall fell, all of the notes had been taken out of the bunker, shredded and burned. —AFP

Ooredoo Group celebrates successful return to MWC

BARCELONA/DOHA: Ooredoo, a leading provider of ICT and one of the world's pioneers in 5G, will drive forward enhancement of its customer experience thanks to new partnerships and agreements with industry heavyweights cemented at Mobile World Congress 2022. With key themes of the event being 5G Connect, Advancing AI, Cloud Net, FinTech, Internet of Everything and Tech Horizon, Ooredoo met with several of its established partners as well as new and prospective partners to explore opportunities within these themes.

The Group made several high-profile announcements at the event, and signed several top-level partnerships with industry leaders. A highlight of the event was the announcement that Ooredoo has been selected by sports giant FIFA and the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy as Official Global Connectivity Services Provider for FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022(tm), to provide a global network connecting Doha with various points of presence in Europe and Asia.

MWC attendees learned about Ooredoo's collaboration with Ericsson and Nokia through which the telco will provide a dedicated LTE network that would provide high-availability voice and data services to support oil and gas applications and operations in such remote locations beyond the normal fixed and mobile network footprint. Details were also shared of the partnership with Toyota and KDDI via which Ooredoo will be the connectivity provider for connected cars in Qatar.

Ooredoo and Google Cloud signed a Memorandum of Understanding for a strategic technology partnership that will further advance Ooredoo's digital offerings. The MoU will see Google Cloud play a significant role in enhancing multiple end-user and enterprise services offered by Ooredoo across its global footprint.

In keeping with industry excitement over the phenomenal potential of eSports, Ooredoo shared an update on its own eSports brand, Ooredoo Nation - Gamers' Land, with recent developments including the launch of gaming Add-ons for postpaid plans; the launch of Channel 0, a dedicated gaming channel on Ooredoo tv; the latest Ooredoo Arena tournaments; and the collaboration with Dell Technologies to further cement commitment to contribute to the eSports scene in Qatar and the region.

An exciting partnership with SAP was also announced, with this collaboration seeing SAP consolidating Ooredoo's ERP applications into a centralised cloud plat-



form to improve user experience through integrated end-to-end processes.

The Group is also proud that both Asiacell Iraq and Ooredoo Kuwait were lauded by speed and network benchmarker Ookla for their service. Asiacell Iraq was recognised for having the Fastest Mobile Network and Best Mobile Coverage in Iraq.

Ooredoo Kuwait was awarded for operating the Fastest 5G Network in Kuwait.

Ooredoo Kuwait has taken major steps in the world of telecommunications over the past two years and during the pandemic, and continued to strengthen its networks up until this day while successfully continued to achieve key milestones in its network development journey. Moreover, the company has taken proactive steps in the Kuwaiti market and outperformed its competitors in providing the best and fastest coverage.



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 10 MARCH 2022

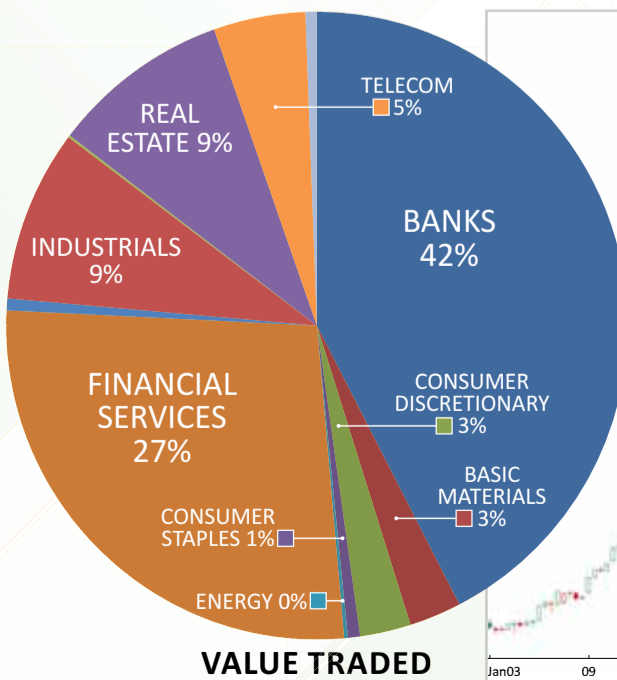
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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	36,063	8,756.23	1.8%	5.2%	14.6%	545,183,368	242,014,731	32,632	32.1	2.7	77.1%
Main Market	10,694	6,341.45	-0.2%	0.8%	7.7%	773,602,731	92,768,511	30,488	17.5	1.4	22.9%
All Share	46,757	7,957.59	1.4%	4.2%	13.0%	1,318,786,099	334,783,242	63,120	28.6	2.4	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
BANKS	27,658	1,856.28	1.9%	5.7%	14.4%	267,958,889	142,015,417	13,888	32.7	2.7	58.44%
BASIC MATERIALS	1,044	1,171.06	2.1%	3.5%	14.3%	12,830,539	9,062,402	1,521	27.5	1.7	2.21%
CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY	770	1,504.79	-2.3%	-2.5%	12.6%	26,335,346	8,857,332	3,156	29.2	6.0	1.63%
CONSUMER STAPLES	221	724.79	-0.9%	0.4%	-0.9%	3,632,159	2,108,970	349	14.9	1.5	0.47%
ENERGY	287	1,380.28	0.8%	0.6%	-3.4%	14,656,889	667,942	759	13.6	1.4	0.61%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	4,662	1,632.85	1.5%	3.6%	14.7%	642,062,837	90,972,412	21,090	11.3	2.2	9.85%
HEALTH CARE	393	792.88	-2.4%	-2.4%	-0.5%	1,706,174	2,043,196	16	28.0	4.9	0.83%
INDUSTRIALS	4,481	1,263.94	-1.3%	-0.2%	10.7%	66,042,192	29,690,705	7,377	39.4	1.4	9.47%
INSURANCE	687	1,643.15	2.8%	1.8%	7.2%	1,827,037	353,490	214	8.1	1.2	1.45%
REAL ESTATE	2,991	1,390.21	1.2%	3.2%	4.8%	251,056,932	31,041,599	10,751	16.6	1.3	6.32%
TECHNOLOGY	10	726.77	0.9%	5.2%	6.3%	26,852	2,616	15	-	0.9	0.02%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	3,879	1,264.98	1.5%	3.9%	16.1%	21,894,222	15,993,050	3,417	17.3	2.1	8.20%
UTILITIES	248	592.11	0.0%	1.8%	-1.3%	8,756,031	1,974,110	567	19.1	4.0	0.52%

Top Gainers					Top Losers				
Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Trades	Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Trades
KHOT	127	48.54	143,200	116	GFC	118	-14.49	33,195	31
PAPER	296	21.81	1,422,680	361	REMAI	15.2	-12.64	836,132	87
URC	106	19.24	34,616,618	1,192	WARBACAP	93	-7.92	482,403	54
OSOS	135	15.39	10,297,157	605	ACICO	190	-7.32	9,789,397	497
BOURSA	2,780	13.01	2,079,329	1,779	JAZEERA	1,580	-7.06	2,968,029	859

Top Volume					Top Value				
Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Trades	Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Trades
GFH	101	-1.94	199,660,681	2,011	KFH	1,000	0.60	44,039,490	4,071
AUB	308	-0.32	106,961,942	1,518	NBK	1,134	2.81	31,549,252	2,654
KPROJ	209	6.09	104,641,264	3,046	AUB	308	-0.32	106,961,942	1,518
MANAZEL	50	-1.37	45,662,169	1,275	KPROJ	209	6.09	104,641,264	3,046
KFH	1000	0.60	44,039,490	4,071	GFH	101	-1.94	199,660,681	2,011



Market Summary:

- Market total market cap reached 46.757 billion KD. The Premier market makes 77.1% whilst the Main market makes 22.9%.
- Premier index is trading at the support level, while the Main Index is trying to overcome resistance to regain its previous peak.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 7957, support levels at 7955, 7934, 7850, and 7810, while resistance at 8038. Premier index closed at 8756, support levels at 8707, 8599, and 8539, while resistance at 8846. The Main index closed at 6341, support levels at 6321, 6267, and 6216, while resistance at 6383.

Business

NBK Money Market Report

Renewed inflationary worries increases market volatility

United States Inflation in the US

In the United States, the headline inflation rose by 0.8 percent month-on-month, in line with market consensus which pushed the year-on-year inflation to 7.9 p from 7.5 percent. Core inflation rose by 0.5 percent on a monthly basis and increased by 6.4 percent annually. The index for food prices rose by 1.0 percent month-on-month and has increased by an average 0.8 percent per month over the past six months. The index for motor fuel increased 6.7 percent monthly showcasing the recent surge in oil prices.

The inflation report continues to show how inflationary pressures are deemed persistent and on an upward trajectory. Subsequently, the 2-year treasury yield surged to 1.73 percent and the 10-year yield to above the 2 percent level. Currently, the market is pricing in 6 rate hikes till end of 2022. The rhetoric for a 50 bps hike in the upcoming Fed meeting seems to have faded as the market is pricing in only a 25 bps rate hike this week. The war in Europe coupled with inflating energy prices have sparked and renewed inflationary worries. Investors are taking a risk-off stance and hence Wall Street major indices closed lower last week.

Market Movement

On the forex front, the dollar remained on top of the currencies hill and gained much ground on the Japanese yen after the inflation report. The USDJPY pair reached a high of 117.05 on Friday and sent the

dollar index to above the 99 level. The single currency lost momentum to the US dollar while the sterling pound fell below the 1.31 level.

EU & UK

ECB's Hawkishness Takes the Market by Surprise
The European Central Bank paved the way for interest rate hikes as soaring inflation outweighed concerns over the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Despite being faced with a sharp rise in uncertainty and an increasingly difficult inflation-growth trade-off to manage, the ECB has seemingly placed more concern on the inflationary impact and pressed ahead with a faster taper of net asset purchases under the Asset Purchase Program (APP) than announced in December. APP purchases will now amount to €40 billion in April, €30 billion in May and €20 billion in June.

Purchases are no longer open-ended and expected to conclude by Q3 2022. The calibration of net purchases for the third quarter will be "data-dependent" and reflect the Governing Council's (GC's) evolving assessment of the outlook. There was also a small change to the intended sequencing of policy. Changes to policy rates will now come "some time after" the end of net asset purchases and will "be gradual". This replaces the previous language of QE ending "shortly before" policy rate rises. Ultimately, the recent events did not alter the ECB's plan to normalize policy.

Consequently, interest rate probabilities for the

Rates - 13th March, 2022

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.0951	1.0804	1.1120	1.0909	1.0800	1.1100	1.0945
GBP	1.3225	1.3024	1.3248	1.3036	1.2800	1.3200	1.3028
JPY	114.76	114.76	117.35	117.28	115.00	118.00	117.02
CHF	0.9167	0.9163	0.9352	0.9346	0.9200	0.9500	0.9309

ECB jumped in the nearest meeting post APP's intended end date. The market has priced in a 100 percent chance of a 10 basis point hike in July's policy meeting. The current expectation of market is a total of 4 hikes in 2022, which would send the policy rate from -0.50 percent to -0.10 percent. The hawkish tone by the ECB alongside the war in Eastern Europe sent the volatility through the roof. The single currency opened the week at 1.0950 and reached a high of 1.1120 on Thursday after the ECB's meeting and before closing the week below the 1.10 level.

Commodities Demand on Energy

Volatility kept oil prices swinging violently

after the stalling of the US-Iran trade deal and deadlock in ceasefire talks between Russia and Ukraine. In addition, the latest oil embargo on Russia from the US and UK could pressure oil prices further as the prospect of an already tight market stretching further comes closer. WTI closed \$109.33 a barrel and Brent closed \$112.67 a barrel. After indulging in an abundance of safe haven flows on mounting tensions and worries from the war, gold lost some of its shine and traded below \$2,000, closing at \$1,985.29 as markets regained some confidence in equities.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar
USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30350.

NBK headquarters achieves Gold LEED certification

KUWAIT: The iconic National Bank of Kuwait headquarters, Kuwait has made a new achievement by obtaining the LEED v2009 for New Construction Gold-certified status from US Green Building Council (USGBC). National Bank of Kuwait headquarters is the first LEED Gold-certified building in Kuwait under the LEED v2009 Certificate for Building Design and Construction granted by USGBC. It also ranks as the third largest building to receive this certificate in the MENA region, and among the top 2 percent of the world's largest buildings in this category.

NBK's building achieved the Gold-certified status with a total score of 67 points, reflecting the Bank's commitment to adopt the highest sustainability standards and its strides to reduce its environmental footprint by creating this exemplary model for construction in Kuwait. LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is the most widely used green building rating system in the world incorporating seven areas of concentration: Sustainable Sites, Water Efficiency, Energy and Atmosphere, Materials and Resources, Indoor Environmental Quality, Innovation in Design Process and Regional Priority.

On this occasion, Isam Al-Sager, Group CEO of National Bank of Kuwait said: "By receiving this prestigious certificate, NBK demonstrates the progress it is making in achieving the strategic pillars of sustainability." Al-Sager mentioned that NBK has set specific goals for sustainable business and formulated standards at the bank level including a pivotal role for climate protection in the future business model. In this context, the new building's receiving of this certificate reflects the Bank's commitment to placing environmental protection as a top priority at the heart of its future agenda.

Huawei MatePad now available in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Huawei announced the availability of the new Huawei MatePad, a new generation smart office mid-range educational tablet powered by HarmonyOS 2 in Kuwait. The all-rounded tablet features a stunning 10.4-inch 2K FullView Display and quad-speakers that are tuned by Harman Kardon for a delightful sound experience. The tablet is also compatible with the HUAWEI M-Pencil Package (2nd generation) and Super Device features offering users multiple smart ways to accomplish tasks. In addition to a powerful battery to keep consumers going all-day coupled with great video and audio conference call experience.

The Huawei MatePad will be available in Kuwait on March 17, 2022, with pre-orders starting on the 14th of March, 2022 with a starting price of (KWD 69.9) from Huawei's online platforms as well as certified retailers[MIAOI]. Customers who pre-order Huawei MatePad 128GB, will get free gifts worth KD 64.198! Those gifts include mouse, 1 year warranty (multi-country support), M-Pencil 2, 3-months subscriptions of Huawei Music, 3-months subscription Huawei Video, Huawei Cloud Space Discount, 3-months subscription Starzplay.

Customers who purchase Huawei MatePad 128GB in retail, will get free

gifts worth KD 39.198! Those gifts include mouse, 1 year warranty (multi-country support), mini speaker, 3-months subscriptions of Huawei Music, 3-months subscription Huawei Video, Huawei Cloud Space Discount, 3-months subscription Starzplay. Customers who pre-order Huawei MatePad 64GB, will get free gifts worth KD 64.198! Those gifts include mouse, 1 year warranty (multi-country support), Keyboard, 3-months subscriptions of Huawei Music, 3-months subscription Huawei Video, Huawei Cloud Space Discount, 3-months subscription Starzplay.

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

Presented in a simple yet sophisticated look, the Huawei MatePad boasts a 10.4-inch 2K HUAWEI FullView Display with an 84 percent screen-to-body ratio, allowing consumers to fully immerse in the experience with no distractions. The Huawei MatePad is also a joy to behold; the micro-curved frame makes the device look thinner while weighing only 450 grams allowing for a more comfortable grip. Huawei's mid-range tablet also comes with a quad-channel, quad-speaker sound system, as well as professional tuning by Harman Kardon, which provides an ultimate cinema-grade multimedia experience for all content.



LuLu Hypermarket wins 'Service Hero 2021' award

KUWAIT: LuLu Hypermarket, the largest lifestyle shopping destination in Kuwait and the leading regional retailer, won the prestigious 'Service Hero 2021 Customer Service Assessment' award, after consumers in Kuwait voted the retailer as the 'Best Supermarket 2021' in the country. This is the third time that LuLu Hypermarket is being selected for this annual award, after having won the 'Service Hero 2012 & 2013 - Customer Service Assessment Award for Best Specialty Store in Kuwait'.

In a statement to the media following the ceremony held to present the 'Service Hero 2021' award on March 7, top LuLu Hypermarket management in Kuwait expressed their gratitude and appreciation to all their valued customers, well-wishers, and other stakeholders for the vote of confidence in the brand. The statement also underlined the hypermarket's pride in winning the Arab world's only 100 percent consumer-powered customer satisfaction index.

"As a responsible retailer, it is our commitment and obligation to our loyal customers and to the great country of Kuwait to facilitate a well-organized and hygienic market, where they are able to purchase quality products at the best competitive prices in a world-class shopping ambience," said the statement from the hypermarket's management in Kuwait.

The statement went on to add, "We also give the utmost priority to enriching and refreshing the product range available on our shelves to cater to the taste, desire, requirement, and choice of our customers. Our future expansion plans are also designed to extend our services to all areas of the country and to meet the demands of various sectors of our customer base in the most efficient manner".

The award is seen as a further attestation of the widely entrenched loyalty and popularity among shoppers in Kuwait to the brand, and its customer-oriented services. LuLu Hypermarket won the 2021 award following in-depth and stringent assessment procedures that evaluated criteria across several service dimensions.

Among the dimensions examined by the index evaluators were quality and variety of the hypermarket's product range, reliability and speed of service delivery, staff attitude, and convenience of location and value to price, as well as store hygiene, product availability and the usefulness and functionality of their online presence.

The top scoring brands on overall customer satisfaction in each service category, which met the minimum vote requirements, were then awarded pole-position prizes. Launched in 2010, the Service Hero Awards are the only national index which awards prizes based solely on consumer feedback. The assessment is overseen by an independent advisory council.



overnight for use in the tower's air conditioning during the day, as well as energy-efficient under-floor air conditioning on all floors that improves both thermal comfort as well as air quality for occupants.

Other green characteristics of the building include grey water recycling system used to offset around 60 percent of potable water demand for WC flushing, and use of zero ODP and very low GWP refrigerants for HVAC systems to prevent ozone-damaging and reduce Global warming impacts. The building embodies a rich past and an ambitious future, as reflected in the innovative, environment-friendly design and engineering, as well as world-class specifications, demonstrating the Bank's prestigious position on the local and regional banking arenas.

The artfully designed building soaring for 300 meters, divided into 63 floors, with a total area of 1.22 million sq ft, has become one of the new landmarks of the financial district in the heart of Kuwait City. It is worth mentioning that USGBC measures performance and set the standards that encourage continuous improvement and commitment to promoting sustainability and economic prosperity. Cities and communities that achieve LEED certification reduce carbon emissions and create a healthy environment and strive to improve the lives of their people.

National Bank of Kuwait places ESG as a core principle in its business, continuing its responsible role in supporting the global trend for transition to low-carbon economy, with special focus on assessing the direct and indirect environmental impact of our operations, especially as the risks of climate change continue to emerge.



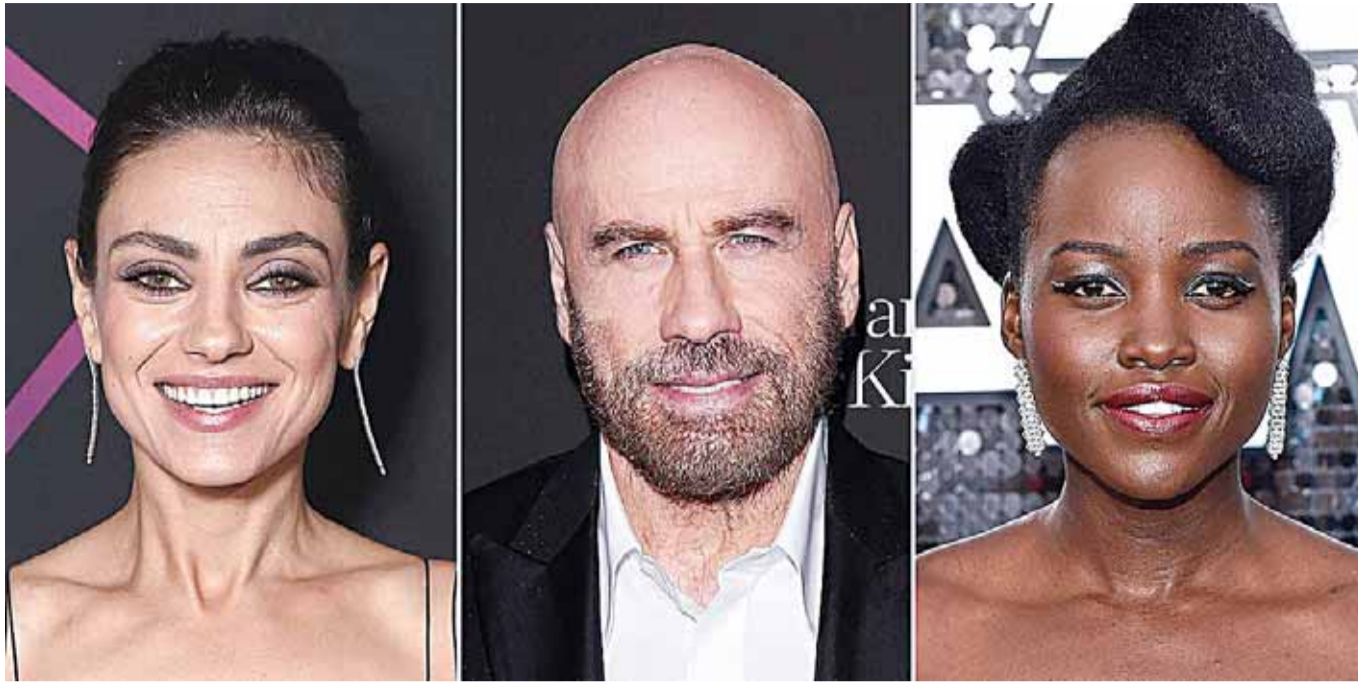
Huawei is offering consumers the chance to truly express themselves with the Huawei M-Pencil Package bringing a more realistic writing experience to comprehensively improve work and learning efficiency. The stylus brings system-level capabilities including Huawei FreeScript, Annotate and Take snippet, making handwriting input more efficient and convenient.

Multi-tasking has also been enhanced thanks to smart multi-tasking features like Multi-Windows, which enables consumers to open up to four windows of different apps simultaneously, making multitasking across different applications much easier. There is also App Multiplier which has been updated and now adds more flexibility and convenience to the landscape app experience. App Multiplier splits a screen of the same app into two allow-

ing consumers to work on two tasks separately at the same time, which effectively utilizes the large screen of a tablet. The Huawei MatePad also supports Huawei Smart Keyboard that features 1.3mm key travel to offer consumers a comfortable and responsive typing experience.

The Huawei MatePad is equipped with a 7250mAh battery that can provide up to 12 hours of continuous local 1080p. It also supports 22.5W Huawei SuperCharge, requiring only 2.5 hours to fully charge, keeping consumers mind at peace. To enhance a video conference call experience, the Huawei MatePad is fitted with a rear 13MP camera and an 8MP front camera. In terms of voice and sound, the tablet has adopted three microphones and Huawei's self-developed noise reduction feature.

Lifestyle | Gossip



TRAVOLTA, KUNIS AND NYONG'O ANNOUNCED AS PRESENTERS FOR 2022 OSCARS

John Travolta, Mila Kunis and Lupita Nyong'o will present at the 94th Academy Awards. The trio will be joined by Naomi Scott, Daniel Kaluuya - last year's Best Support Actor winner and Wesley Snipes at the ceremony on March 27th, according to the event's producers Will Packer and Shayla Cowan. The freshly announced names add to the already existing lineup of presenters Lady Gaga, Kevin Costner, Anthony Hopkins - 2021's Best Actor winner -, Lily James, Zoe Kravitz, John Leguizamo, Simu Liu, Rami Malek, Rosie Perez, Chris Rock, Uma Thurman, Black Panther costume designer Ruth E. Carter and last year's Best Supporting Actress Yuh-Jung Youn. This week, Will shared how he and everyone involved - the first entirely Black production team - are work-

ing to refresh the awards, which are being hosted by comics Amy Schumer, Regina Hall and Wanda Sykes. He said: "You need something other than just a chance to see stars. We have to make a show that is entertaining and appeals to a broad swath of the viewing public." "My approach is to bring everybody together around the idea of a love for cinema. And so one of the things you'll see is that not everyone involved with the show may be a movie person." "It absolutely means that we are not limited to just folks within the [traditional] movie industry." "I want to make sure this felt like something that was as wide-ranging and far-reaching as the movies themselves."

KIM HAS GONE INSTAGRAM OFFICIAL WITH PETE

The 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians' star posted a selection of loved-up snaps of her and the 28-year-old comic on Friday just over a week after she was declared 'legally single' by a judge in California amid her divorce from Kanye West, 44. In the caption of the photo dump, the 41-year-old reality television personality wrote: "Whose car are we gonna take?!" In one of the images, Pete - who met the 'SKIMS' founder when she hosted SNL, the weekly NBC sketch show he stars on - is gazing into Kim's eyes



as she puckers up. The second photo posted by Kim - who shares North, eight, Saint, six, Chicago, four, and Psalm, two, with her 'Gold Digger' rapper ex - is a black-and-white selfie of the pair, who have been linked since October. On Wednesday, Kim gave her first public insight into their relationship as she admitted to not filming with her new boyfriend. She said: "I have not filmed with him, and I'm not opposed to it. It's just not what he does. But if there was an event happening and he was there, he wouldn't tell the cameras to get away. I think I might film something really exciting coming, but it wouldn't be for this season. It wouldn't reach until next season." Kim reassured faithful viewers - who will now be following her and the rest of her famous family on their new Hulu reality series 'The Kardashians' - she will "always be honest and open". She continued: "You'll just have to see, but I'm always open and honest and I'll never not be, so you'll definitely get that honesty and openness when it comes to the relationship that I'm in." Kardashian said, "I definitely explain how we met and who reached out to who and how it happened and all the details that everyone wants to know. I'm definitely open to talking, and I definitely explain it."



DUFF SAYS VANITY FAIR COVER SHOOT WAS 'ANXIETY-INDUCING'

Hilary Duff has said that her Vanity Fair cover shoot was 'anxiety-inducing'. The 34-year-old actress starred on the cover of the iconic magazine back in 2003 alongside fellow teen idols Amanda Bynes, Mary-Kate Olsen, Ashley Olsen, Mandy Moore, Alexis Bledel, Raven Symone, Evan Rachel Wood and Lindsay Lohan but admitted that instead of seeing it as a "big achievement" in her career, it was "anxiety-inducing" and highly stressful. Asked if the moment was a career high, she said: "Like explain career high? Like personal high or just like a big achievement? Like I remember being like, 'This is cool I was included in this.' But no, this was a very high-stress, anxiety-inducing day." However, the former 'Lizzie McGuire' star went on to claim that the whole thing is now "funny" because of her friendship with Mandy Moore. Speaking to Vanity Fair for their YouTube video 'Hilary Duff Takes a Lie Detector Test', she said: "Also, Mandy

and I are great friends now. So, this is very funny." Hilary didn't elaborate on why the day was stressful but 'American Gothic' star Evan Rachel Wood previously spoke out about the 'It's Totally Raining Teens' cover shoot, claiming that the whole experience had almost reduced her to tears. In a series of since-deleted tweets, she said: "I was almost in tears after this shoot. They tried that dress on me, I wasn't comfortable but they told me there was no time...cause everyone else took up too much time with their fittings. Then I was given a choice on whether I wanted to wear flats or heels. I chose flats and was immediately handed heels and told they looked better. I was 15 and felt for the first time my identity being erased and the pressure...to shut up and do what you are told. I felt like meat. Since then, I have found my voice. Never again."

SHIELDS HAD 'NEVER EXPERIENCED' ANYTHING LIKE THE PAIN OF A BROKEN FEMUR

Brooke Shields had "never experienced" anything like the pain of a broken femur. The 56-year-old actress shattered upper thighbone while using a balance board at a New York City gym back in May 2021 and - although she is now able to walk again - admitted that the pain almost caused her to pass out at times. She said: "The femur is the biggest bone in the body and I don't think I've ever experienced anything [like that]. It's amazing the level [of pain]. I mean, you almost pass out from the pain. I'm able to walk now in this kind of environment. It's just you have to fight. You have to fight for it." Following her recovering from the accident, the 'Endless Love' star returned to the San Diego Zoo - where she had undertaken an internship as a teenager back in 1993 - to open its 3.2-acre wildlife basecamp exhibit and spoke of how it had been the most "extraordinary experience" of her life. She told Entertainment Tonight: "It was probably the most extraordinary experience of my life. I think my relationships with animals have been clearer and more honest and less judgmental." The former model - who has daughters Rowan, 18, and Grier, 15 with husband Chris Henchy and was previously married to tennis player Andre Agassi - then claimed that her relationship with animals have always been "healthier" than her relationships with people. She said: "[My relationships with animals] have always been much healthier than my relationships with humans have ever been. I learned that at a very, very early age!"



RIHANNA TO LAUNCH LINGERIE FIRM ON THE STOCK MARKET

Rihanna is reportedly launching her lingerie firm on the stock market. The 34-year-old pop star - who is thought to be worth \$1.7bn after launching Fenty Beauty cosmetics company back in 2017 and Savage x Fenty the following year - is now said to be in talks to offer the public shares in the fashion company through an Initial Public Offering (IPO) which could see the value of the brand jump to over \$3bn. Bloomberg reports: "Savage X Fenty is working with banks including Goldman Sachs Group Inc. and Morgan Stanley, said the people, who asked not to be identified because the information is private. A listing could happen as soon as this year, one of the people said." The news of the Initial Public Offering (IPO) comes shortly after the 'Umbrella' hitmaker - who is expecting

her first child with boyfriend and rapper ASAP Rocky - had opened a chain of physical stores for the underwear brand after the store had been online only since its inception as she noted that she wanted her customers to "come in and feel represented." She said: "The whole idea of the retail space is that I wanted women and men to come in and feel represented, to walk away from the experience feeling confident and that they belong. I've experienced being a customer and shopping in the lingerie space and have felt as if I didn't fit the mould of the product. But Savage X Fenty is very inclusive, and I want to continue to expand on that so that our consumers can feel our commitment within the retail space."

ANNE HATHAWAY AND HER HUSBAND HAVE MATCHING TATTOOS

The 'WeCrashed' actress has never explained the meaning behind the letter 'M' she has inked on her left wrist but she's now admitted Adam Shulman has a similar design on his body too. She said: "My husband has a matching one." Asked if she knows the tattoo also looks like a 'W', she laughed and said: "Yes". However, pressed on the meaning of the inking, she cryptically said: "[It means] many things." The 39-year-old star - who has sons Jonathan, five, and two-year-old Jack, with her spouse - feels "lucky" to have Adam in her life because he always does his "best" for her. She told You magazine: "He's the guy for me. I do my best to be the woman for him and he makes me feel all the time that I am. Actually, we do our best for each other. I'm lucky. And I know it." In 2013, Anne won an Oscar for 'Les Miserables' but the time was tainted because she was experiencing a vicious backlash which "complicated" the situation but she tried to stay focused on a more positive future. Referring to the opening line of her speech, she said: "It came true? Yeah. People still tear at that one. It was a strange moment. Such an achievement but also... It would have been lovely if it could have been less complicated. I felt like it was the only thing I could say that held the whole experience. Most people interpreted one half of that phrase accurately. "Dreams aren't the only things that can come true." "It was my way of acknowledging both realities - the high and the low - the best I could at the time. Without directly talking about it. Because I was counting on there being a time when the negative part was in the rear view. So I've kept working and trying and growing. Just kept on doing what I love and working on myself and that's led me here." And now, the 'Ocean's 8' star feels relieved to be in a better place now. She said: "What a relief to know first-hand that you can grow. That's huge. It takes work, and it's not like that ever stops, but how fortunate to be in a place where you believe, because there can be a way through painful things. It's not lost on me, the gift of the opportunity to have that perspective."—Bang Showbiz



KOURTNEY KARDASHIAN WANTS TO 'PROTECT' HER 'SACRED' RELATIONSHIP

Kourtney Kardashian wants to "protect" her "sacred" relationship with Travis Barker "as much as [she] can". The Poosh founder - who is engaged to the Blink-182 rocker - has insisted her future husband is not against being filmed for her family's new Hulu show 'The Kardashians', but at the same time, they want to keep their life together as private as possible. The mother-of-three - who has Mason, 12, Penelope, nine, and Reign, seven, with former partner Scott Disick - explained: "I definitely hold my relationship really close. It's so sacred to me and I am very protective of it. I think I've learned a lot of lessons. "There is a lot of us on there, and we've had such a good time doing it because we have such a good time when we're together, but I definitely want to protect it as much as I can. But also, this is my life." Scott, 38, was a regular cast member on former show 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians', but Kourtney admitted it will only be the odd thing she films with Travis, 46, for the new program. The 42-year-old star added of her fiancé in an interview with Variety: "He obviously has a full-time job and a full career, so it's not his thing, but I think he's happy to, and we have had so much fun while we've been filming certain things that we're doing, so I'll just invite the producers to come along." Meanwhile, Kourtney's sister Kim plans to tell all about her relationship with Pete Davidson on 'The Kardashians'. The 41-year-old reality star - who began dating the 'Saturday Night Live' star back in 2021 following her split from rapper Kanye West - will "explain" how



her new romance came to be on the reality show. She said: "[Viewers will learn] how we met and who reached out to who and how it happened and all the details that everyone wants to know. I'm definitely open to talking, and I definitely explain it." The SKIMS founder also went on to explain that while Pete, 28, does not feature on 'The Kardashians', she is "not opposed" to working with her new beau at some point. She said: "I have not filmed with him. And I'm not opposed to it. It's just not what he does. But if there was an event happening and he was there, he wouldn't tell the cameras to get away. I think I might film something really exciting coming, but it wouldn't be for this season." However, the star - who has kids North, eight, Saint, six, Chicago, four, and Psalm, two, with Kanye - also claimed that in recent years she has learned how to become more "cautious" when it comes to sharing her private life.

CAMPION WINS TOP HOLLYWOOD DIRECTOR PRIZE FOR 'POWER OF THE DOG'

Jane Campion hailed the shattering of Hollywood's glass ceiling as her movie "The Power of the Dog" was named the year's best film by her fellow directors Saturday—a major accolade which historically leads to Oscars glory. Campion won the Directors Guild of America's top prize for her Netflix adaptation of a Western novel about the toxic masculinity of sexually repressed cowboys, fending off illustrious rivals at the Los Angeles gala including Steven Spielberg. Campion is the third woman to ever win the top Directors Guild of America prize, after Kathryn Bigelow for 2008's "The Hurt Locker," and Chloe Zhao last year for "Nomadland."

The New Zealand auteur said it was increasingly common to hear about glass ceilings being shattered during Hollywood's award season, and that "perhaps it's time to claim a sense of victory on that front." "We've come so far and what's more, we're never going backwards," she said, before capping the night by taking the top prize, presented by last year's winner Zhao. "I'm so proud of you... I'm here because I care about women having voices as well," said Campion. Campion, who was first nominated in 1994 for "The Piano," earlier in the night reflected on a time when she was frequently "the only woman in the room." "I remember that outsider feeling as I fought to get my stories told, to bring dynamic stories from underserved perspectives to light in a male-dominated field."

Maggie Gyllenhaal won best first-time director for "The Lost Daughter," a drama about the challenges and taboos surrounding motherhood. Gyllenhaal—until now primarily known as an actress in films such as "The Dark Knight" and



(From left to right) Russell Hollander, National Executive Director, DGA, Chloe Zhao, Winner of the Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Theatrical Feature Film award for 'The Power of the Dog' Jane Campion and Lesli Linka Glatter, President, DGA, pose in the press room during the 74th Annual Directors Guild Of America Awards at The Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, California. —AFP photos

"Secretary"—said watching Campion's "The Piano" as a teen had "changed my life" and sparked a desire to one day direct. "I think it is one of the real reasons that I am standing here and that ultimately, I got brave enough to say what I wanted," said Gyllenhaal.

'Dangerous'

In the last nine years, only one director—Sam Mendes—has won the top DGA award and failed to then win best director at the Oscars, a fact that propels Campion to firm favorite status for the Academy Awards on March 27. While Campion won on Saturday, many stars

and nominees also devoted their speeches to fellow nominee Spielberg, with Rita Moreno hailing a "wizard," Denis Villeneuve a "giant" and Spike Lee "the godfather of cinema."

Spielberg, on his 12th DGA nomination, admitted that remaking the beloved musical "West Side Story" had been "really scary." "It was terrifying, and I gave up a whole bunch of times. And every single time I said 'this is just too dangerous,'" the legendary director of "Jaws," "Schindler's List" and "Jurassic Park" said. Lee received the DGA's lifetime achievement award—the 35th person in Hollywood history to be granted the



(From left) Kirsten Dunst, Jesse Plemons, and Jane Campion accept the Theatrical Feature Film award for "The Power of the Dog" onstage during the 74th Annual Directors Guild Of America Awards at The Beverly Hilton.

honor, and the first Black man. "Attica," by Stanley Nelson, which recounts the United States' deadliest prison riot, won best documentary, beating musician Questlove's strongly favored "Summer of Soul." The protest at Attica prison in 1971 New York state—by mainly Black and Latino inmates—ended in 43 deaths as law enforcement stormed the prison.

Picking a successor'

Although not broadcast on television and lower key than some other Hollywood awards, the DGAs are longer-running, and its 18,000 voters including the industry's top directors offer presti-

gious recognition. They also honor the year's best TV episodes, with an installment of "Hacks" taking best comedy and "The Underground Railroad" limited series. Best drama prize was a foregone conclusion—all five nominated episodes were from the same show, HBO's "Succession." "We're so glad that we don't have to choose the winners," said Brian Cox, who plays the patriarch of a squabbling media dynasty on "Succession." "Because picking any of these incredible directors is as difficult as a parent picking a successor for his business—and that is something I would never ever do." —AFP



Queen Elizabeth II appears on a screen via videolink from Windsor Castle, where she is in residence. —AFP photos

UK zoo names white rhino 'Queenie' for Elizabeth II

Over her record-breaking reign, Queen Elizabeth II has had many things named after her. Joining the list is a rare white rhino newly born in a British wildlife park. "Queenie" the rhino was born in the Cotswold Wildlife Park and Gardens in southern England, and named in honor of the monarch's 70th anniversary on the throne. "All the rhinos here are named after very special people and I think everyone agrees that 2022 will always be special because of Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee," park chief Reggie Heyworth said. "I thought it might be a bit presumptuous to call our new baby 'Elizabeth', so I have christened her 'Queenie' instead," he said in a statement released Saturday.

Numbers of white rhinos have recovered somewhat in their native southern Africa after coming under protection, but births in captivity remain rare, the wildlife park said. The park is also home to critically endangered Bactrian camels including one named after the queen's great-grandson Prince Louis, son of William and Kate. It was born on the same day as the young prince in April 2018.

Louis the camel has become a father for the first time, the park said. His calves have yet to be named. Queenie joins a chicken dish, a cake, ships, trains and a host of buildings around the world named in honor of the monarch. Queen Elizabeth, 95, has been suffering from ill-health including a mild bout of Covid, and was forced to cancel an appearance at a Commonwealth Day service in Westminster Abbey taking place on Monday. —AFP

Baldwin has insisted he is not 'culpable' for Hutchins' death

The 63-year-old actor has filed an arbitration demand claiming his contract protects him from financial responsibility in the death of cinematographer, who was killed when a gun went off on the set of "Rust" last October, and in the paperwork he has stressed that the events leading up to the tragedy had nothing to do with him. Court documents obtained by "Entertainment Tonight" state "this is a rare instance when the system broke down, and someone should be held legally culpable for the tragic consequences. That person is not Alec Baldwin."

Alec—who is among the defendants in a wrongful death lawsuit filed by Halyna's family—insisted he wasn't "reckless" on the set, having previously denied pulling the trigger on the gun, and blamed armorer Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, and assistant director Dave Halls for telling him the weapon didn't have live rounds, and also mentioned Seth Kenney, who had supplied the ammunition for the movie.

The arbitration demand sent to producers stated:

VIETNAM BANS NEW TOM HOLLAND FILM OVER SOUTH CHINA SEA MAP

Vietnam has banned a new Hollywood film starring Tom Holland over scenes with a map showing Beijing's claims to the South China Sea, state media reported Saturday. The action-and-adventure caper "Uncharted" shows a map featuring the so-called nine-dash line, which sets out Beijing's expansive claims to the disputed waters, where Hanoi has rival claims. Sony's movie, starring Mark Wahlberg, Antonio Banderas and Holland had been set for nationwide release on March 18.

"During the movie review, the National Evaluation and Classification Council discovered that the image of the nine-dashed line appeared in the movie," director of Vietnam's Department of Cinema Vi Kien Thanh told the state-controlled Zing news outlet. "Therefore, this movie will be banned from screening." On the film's official Facebook page, Vietnamese users left

comments decrying the map.

"Hoang Sa Truong Sa belongs to Vietnam!," read one, referencing the contested Parcel and Spratly Islands. The long-running issue has been closely contested in the film world. In the 2018 romantic comedy "Crazy Rich Asians," a scene featuring a designer bag with a map of the world showing the disputed South China Sea islands under Beijing's control was cut in Vietnam.

A year later, Hanoi pulled the animated DreamWorks film "Abominable" from screens over the same issue, with Netflix also told to ditch episodes of its "Pine Gap" series last year over similar scenes. The South China Sea is home to valuable oil and gas deposits and shipping lanes, and several of China's neighbors have voiced concern that it was seeking to expand its reach. —AFP



Tom Holland

Matthew Lawrence avoided drugs because of Robin Williams

The 42-year-old actor starred alongside the late comedian—who took his own life back in 2014 after years of struggling with addiction and depression—in the 1993 hit "Mrs. Doubtfire" and remembers how Robin would open up to him about his pain when the cameras were off.

He said: "He was the first adult who really let me in on his condition. Like, full-on let me in, mean, as bright as he was on camera—I would go visit him in his trailer to talk to him—it was painful for him. It's really painful for him. He didn't hide it. He talked to me about it." Matthew starred as Christopher in "Mrs. Doubtfire" which saw Robin take on the role of his out-of-work father who develops an alter-ego as an elderly woman in order to spend time with his children following a divorce and explained that the tragic star was "very serious" when it came to urging the then-teenager to stay away from drugs.



Matthew Lawrence

During his appearance at the first-ever '90s Con on Saturday he said: "Don't ever do drugs. Especially cocaine. He was very serious. He was like, 'You know when you come to my trailer and you see me like that?' He's like, 'That's the reason why. And now I'm fighting for the rest of my life because I spent 10 years doing something very stupid every day. Do not do it. I stayed away from it because of him.'"

Mara Wilson—who also starred alongside Robin in the classic comedy and would go on to achieve worldwide fame by taking on the title role in "Matilda" a few years later—attended the event and claimed that Robin had a "massive influence" on her as a child actress. She said: "Robin had a massive influence on me. He, during filming, would talk to me a lot about his issues with mental health and addiction. And I have had a lifelong struggle with anxiety and depression. So we had those conversations." —Bang Showbiz

DMX's 5-Year-Old Son Diagnosed With Stage 3 Kidney Disease

DMX's son has been diagnosed with Stage 3 kidney disease at the age of five. The late rap star—who died at the age of 50 back in 2021 following a cocaine-induced heart attack—was father to Exodus with Desiree Lindstrom and his fiancée opened up about their son's kidney diagnosis in honor of National Kidney Day, which makes it difficult for the child regulate the levels of potassium and creatinine in his body.

She said: "Exodus is stable, he's been stable since I had him. He has stage 3 kidney disease. I've just continued to keep his potassium down; he can't eat high potassium foods." The 29-year-old Instagram star—who started dating the "Party Up" hitmaker in 2013 while he was still married to his first wife, Tashera Simmons—went on to claim that her son is an "amazing child" amid all his frequent trips to the doctor.

Speaking in a preview clip for her appearance on the "It's Tricky" with Raquel Harper podcast, she said: "[We go to the doctor] very often and they ensure his creatinine levels are down. Like I said he's an amazing child. I just



DMX

want to build myself to be a great mother to Exodus. I want him to see that he has a strong mother, for one, that can stand up on her own. And I'm just trusting in God through the process." DMX—whose real name was Earl Simmons and stage name was a diminutive of Dark Man X—was the father of 17 children from 11 different women in total, with his last two being a set of twins named Aidyn and K'yd, with Pebbles Junell born in December 2019. —Bang Showbiz

"Immediately before the handoff to Baldwin, upon information and belief, Halls had taken the gun off a prop 2 cart after it had been loaded by the set's armorer, Hannah Gutierrez Reed, the person responsible for gun safety and managing the operation of firearm-related props on the set.

"Reed claims to have personally checked all of the rounds to ensure that they weren't 'hot' and then loaded them into the pistol. Halls later told an investigator that, after [Reed] opened the gun for him to inspect, he did not check all of the rounds as he should have before he handed it to ... Baldwin... "At this point, two things are clear: someone is culpable for chambering the live round that led to this horrific tragedy, and it is someone other than Baldwin."

"Baldwin is an actor. He didn't announce that the gun was 'cold' when it really contained a live round; he didn't load the gun; he didn't check the bullets in the gun; he didn't purchase the bullets; he didn't make the bullets and represent that they were dummies; he wasn't in charge of firearm safety on the set; he didn't hire the people who supplied the bullets or checked the gun; and he played no role in managing the movie's props. Each of those jobs was performed by someone else." The "Boss Baby" star dismissed reports he had



Alec Baldwin

refused weapons training on the set, with his lawyer highlighting email correspondence with Rust's costume designer, showing his had requested gun training long before the film started, and ultimately had a 90-minute session with Hannah, who reminded him of weapon safety measures, including reassuring him it was "her job" to check the guns.

Alec said he returned \$100,000 of his \$250,000 fee for the movie but had wanted to complete the film to honor Halyna and also took it upon himself to "provide [the Hutchins family] redress for their loss." The documents stated: "The proposed settlement for Hutchins included a component of insurance proceeds.

"In addition, Baldwin made an exhaustive effort to contact the Rust cast in the hope of acquiring their support to finish the film. 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."

The submission also included copies of text messages between Alec and Halyna's husband, Matthew Hutchins and although Halyna's widow recently claimed he was angered

watching Alec's interview on the tragedy on ABC, the actor's lawyer claimed they had a friendly exchange two weeks later. The documents stated: "On December 17, over two weeks after Baldwin's interview with Stephanopoulos had aired on ABC, Baldwin sent a text message to Hutchins in light of the upcoming holidays, writing, 'In spite of the anguish of all of this, I am wishing you and your son a happy holiday.'"

"Hutchins responded—again, more than two weeks after the interview—stating, 'I genuinely hope you and the whole family can get together and have moments of fun, love, and togetherness and that it is a healing time for everyone.'" Alec is seeking to "indemnify, defend, and hold harmless" himself and his production company El Dorado Pictures from any liability and is seeking to have his legal fees covered.

Matthew's attorney, Brian Panish, has accused the actor of "trying to avoid liability and accountability for his reckless actions before and on Oct 21st that resulted in the death of Halyna Hutchins." He added in a statement: "Baldwin's disclosure of personal texts with Matt Hutchins is irrelevant to his demand for arbitration and fails to demonstrate anything other than Hutchins' dignity in his engagement with Baldwin. "It is shameful that Baldwin claims Hutchins' actions in filing a wrongful death lawsuit derailed the completion of 'Rust.' The only action that ended the film's production was Baldwin's killing of Halyna Hutchins." —AFP

Lifestyle | Features

ARGENTINE FAMILY COMES HOME AFTER 22-YEAR DRIVE AROUND THE WORLD



This file photo taken on July 19, 2007 shows Candelaria (second left) and Herman Zapp (right), and their children Pampa (left) and Tehue (second right), standing next to their 1928 Graham-Page automobile near the US Capitol in Washington DC. —AFP photos

An Argentine family is about to finish the trip of a lifetime: they have covered five continents in a 1928 jalopy on an adventure that began in 2000, while bringing into the world and raising four kids who are now adolescents. The Zapp family—Herman and Candelaria and those children—have driven a total of 362,000 kilometers (225,000 miles) and have now stopped off in this town on the border with Uruguay before their scheduled arrival Sunday back where they started on January 25, 2000 at the Obelisk, a monument in downtown Buenos Aires.

"I have very mixed feelings. We are ending a dream, or fulfilling a dream," Herman told AFP. "What will come now? Thousands of changes, thousands of options," said the 53-year-old, who is already thinking of sailing around the world. Candelaria, who was 29 when the trip began and is now 51, said her biggest and best discovery was the people encountered along the way. "People are wonderful. Humanity is incredible," said Candelaria. She said the family visited no fewer than 102 countries, although sometimes they had to take detours because of wars or other kinds of conflict.

'Good in cities'

The couple had been married six years, had good jobs and had just built a house, with plans to have kids, too, when wanderlust hit. Their round-the-world journey began with a backpacking trip in Alaska. And somebody offered them a car, a 1928 model of an American make called Graham-Page. The engine was bad and the paint looked terrible. "It would not even start," said Candelaria Zapp. "The seats are not great, nor is the muffler. It does not have air conditioning, either. It is a car that you have to keep your eye on. It does not look comfortable, but it was marvelous," said Herman. "It was good in cities, in mud and on sand," he added.

They went through only eight sets of tires in 22 years and only twice needed to do major engine work. Herman shows off the roadster by opening up a canvas on the top that forms a sort of tent for the kids to sleep under when it was time to camp out. "It is nicer now than when it first came out," he said of the modified uber-vintage vehicle. While out on the road, and with the first two kids born—Pampa, now 19, came into this world in the US and Tehue, 16, during a visit back to Argentina—they enlarged the car by actually cutting it in half and adding 40 cm (16 inches) of length and another seat.

That made room for the arrival of Paloma, now 14 and born in Canada, and Wallaby, 12, down under in Australia. The last additions to the family were a dog named Timon and a cat called Hakuna during a stay in Brazil, where the Zapps were stranded for a while in 2020 because of COVID-19. More on that car, which looks like something out of a gangster movie: the trunk acts like a kitchen storage area, and the heat of the engine is used to cook or heat water. Clothes and tools are stored under the seats. And for all these years, it was home sweet home.

"It is a small house but with a huge backyard, with beaches, mountains and lakes. If you do not like the view, you can change it," Herman quipped. On the side of the car is a sign that reads "A family traveling around the world."

The Zapps usually stayed as guests at people's houses—they estimate around 2,000 altogether. "Humanity is incredible," Candelaria said of people's hospitality. "Many helped just to be part of a dream." But it was not all easy going. Herman once caught malaria, the family drove across Asia during the bird flu outbreak, and had to deal with Ebola in Africa and dengue fever in Central America.

'A lot of friends'

Here on the streets of Gualeguaychu, people honk their horns when they see the Zapps' old Graham-Page. Vintage car buffs have their picture taken with it. And some buy a copy of the book the Zapps have written about their adventure, entitled "Catching a Dream." They have sold about 100,000 copies and say this is their main source of revenue for all this traveling. For the record, they did the Americas, Africa, Oceania, Asia and Europe.

They touched Mount Everest, ate duck eggs in Asia, danced with native people in Namibia, entered the tomb of King Tut in Egypt and sailed across many a sea. For the kids, it was an unforgettable experience. They did their studies remotely and with home learning with Candelaria. Now, in-person classes await them in Argentina. "What I most want to do is make a lot of friends," said Paloma, the 14-year-old. —AFP



Argentinean Candelaria Zapp boils water in a container heated by the exhaust manifold of the family car, a 1928 Graham-Page, near Gaualeguaychu, Entre Rios province, Argentina.



Argentinean Zapp family and Timon, the family dog, remain inside their car.



Argentinean Zapp family rests next to its car, a 1928 Graham-Page, near Gaualeguaychu, Entre Rios province, Argentina.



Paloma Zapp looks out from a tent on the ceiling of the Argentinean family car, a 1928 Graham-Page, as Timon, the family dog, rests, near Gaualeguaychu, Entre Rios province, Argentina.

SHARJAH SHOWCASES GENUINE HERITAGE



Girls enjoy a popular swing.



Woman sowing a straw mat.



Men playing on drums.



Paintings on display.



Men playing chess game called 'dama'.

Sharjah Heritage Days event, organized by Sharjah Institute for Heritage, displays a host of cultural and popular activities for people of all ages. The activities feature folkloric and popular shows, displays of old clothes, popular food and games for the adults and youngsters. —KUNA

Sports

Nadal pulls off another great escape as Medvedev cruises

Osaka exits Indian Wells in tears

News in brief

Nice hang on for draw

PARIS: Nice survived the first-half dismissal of captain Dante and Walter Benitez saved a dreadful Panenka penalty to secure a 0-0 draw at Montpellier in Ligue 1 on Saturday. The 38-year-old Brazilian was sent off for the second time in three games following a foul on Elye Wahi in the Nice penalty area 10 minutes before half-time. Teji Savanian attempted to chip his spot-kick down the middle but his effort was easily held by Benitez, who kept a fourth successive clean sheet for a Nice team with the league's best defense. "The penalty and the red card changed the match," said Nice coach Christophe Galtier. "I asked to see (referee) Clement Turpin for an explanation. He judged what Dante did to be unsporting, but I didn't think it was. I consider the red card to be very harsh." Nice forward Andy Delort hit the post against his former club, as did Montpellier's Valere Germain, who spent the 2015-16 season on loan at the Allianz Riviera. —AFP

Skating star Wust quits at 35

THE HAGUE: Dutch speed skater Ireen Wust, who won 13 Olympic medals and is the only athlete to win a gold medal in an individual event at five different Games, ended her career on Saturday in front of her home fans in a World Cup race in Heerenveen. "It wasn't the best race but I enjoyed every moment," the 35-year-old told Dutch public broadcaster NOS after finishing fourth in the 1500m. "I couldn't have imagined a nicer farewell." At last month's Beijing Games she retained her 1500 meters title, smashing the Olympic record in the process. Wust won her first gold medal at the 2006 Turin Olympics and took a title at every Winter Games since—a unique achievement in summer or winter Olympics. Dutch speed skating also paid tribute on Saturday to Sven Kramer, another legend of the sport. Kramer won three consecutive Olympic titles in the 5000m in 2010, 2014 and 2018. —AFP

Fleetwood, Hoge share lead

MIAMI: Fierce winds and cold temperatures created brutal conditions in Saturday's darkness-halted second round of the Players Championship, with England's Tommy Fleetwood and American Tom Hoge sharing the lead. Elite golfers battled blustery breezes with 40 mph gusts all day and were already looking at a Monday finish after two days of torrential rain wreaked havoc at TPC Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. "When I got to 17 and 18, you couldn't hardly stand up much less hit a golf shot," American Kevin Kisner said after shooting a two-over 74. "It's brutal. It's pure luck and somewhat loss of integrity of the tournament." The famed par-3 17th island green was buffeted by north winds and averaged 3.79 strokes, the most since 1984. "It was blowing so hard," two-time major winner Dustin Johnson said after a 73. —AFP

Koerstz Madsen sees off Lin

BANGKOK: A tense playoff between Lin Xiyu and Nanna Koerstz Madsen brought the final round of LPGA Thailand to a spectacular close with the Danish player snatching victory yesterday. Koerstz Madsen became the first player from Denmark to win the LPGA title, taking home the tournament's \$240,000 prize at the Siam Country Club. The two-time Olympian bolted out of the gates on her final round with an eagle before ending on 67 - and chalked up a tournament record in the process. "It was fun. I really tried to enjoy the moment. Standing now with the trophy it was even more fun," she said. Towards the end of the front nine the 27-year-old began to wobble, chalking up one bogey at the seventh hole and then another two at the sixteenth and final. But she triumphed in the end, sweating through hot conditions and play disrupted by lightning, to sink another eagle in the playoffs for the win. —AFP

Ireland survive England scare

TWICKENHAM: Ireland captain Johnny Sexton was glad to see his side "stay alive" in the Six Nations title race after a grueling 32-15 win over 14-man England at Twickenham on Saturday. England had to play nearly the whole match a man down, with lock Charlie Ewels shown a red card after just 82 seconds - the quickest sending-off in Championship history - for a dangerous head-on-head clash with Ireland second row James Ryan. Even so, England were level at 15-15 with 20 minutes left thanks to five Marcus Smith penalties that arose from their scrum dominance. But Ireland, despite some heroic England defence, eventually pulled clear thanks to two late tries from replacements Jack Conan and Finlay Bealham after James Lowe and Hugo Keenan had crossed the Red Rose line in the first half. Victory left Ireland, who've now won three of their four matches this Six Nations, second in the table and hoping England derail France's bid for a Grand Slam in Paris during next weekend's final round of matches. —AFP

Beckham's Inter Miami fall

MIAMI: Inter Miami coach Phil Neville called out star striker Gonzalo Higuain after Saturday's 2-0 loss to Los Angeles FC left David Beckham's club on one point from three matches. With two losses and a draw in the young Major League Soccer campaign after the home defeat, Inter Miami must have clutch efforts, Neville said, from the 34-year-old Argentine forward. "For us to be successful, he has to perform in these moments for this team," Neville said. "That's the challenge. For me, and I'm really strong on this, his role hasn't changed. He is the one that is our best finisher. He is the one that we demand the most goals from. He is the one that we demand the most assists from. Period." The third-year team, however, has changed around former Juventus and Real Madrid star Higuain after a transformative off-season roster overhaul following Miami's failure to reach the 2021 MLS playoffs. —AFP

INDIAN WELLS: Rafael Nadal pulled off another great escape Saturday, rallying from two breaks down in the third set to beat young American Sebastian Korda in the second round at Indian Wells. As Daniil Medvedev—the man Nadal beat with an epic comeback in the Australian Open final—cruised to victory in his first match as the world's top-ranked player, Nadal was made to work by 21-year-old Korda, ranked 38th in the world.

"I feel very, very lucky today to be through," Nadal said after a 6-2, 1-6, 7-6 (7/3) victory in the prestigious WTA and ATP Masters hard court tournament. "Sebastian was playing some fantastic tennis. I didn't play my best match without a doubt (but) a lot of credit to him that he played so aggressive and he put me in a lot of trouble." The night ended with four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka departing Stadium Court in tears after she was heckled early in a 6-0, 6-4 second-round loss to Veronika Kudermetova.

Osaka, who put athlete mental health in the spotlight during a tumultuous 2021, said it wasn't so much the "Naomi, you suck" shout from the crowd but the fact that it reminded her of how Venus and Serena Williams were jeered at the same tournament in 2001. "To be honest I feel like I've been heckled before, it didn't really bother me," she told the crowd after the match.

"But, like, I've watched a video of Venus and Serena being heckled here. If you've never watched it you should watch it," Osaka added, choking back

tears. "I don't know why, but it went into my head and it got replayed a lot." Osaka asked the chair umpire to intervene after the incident, to no avail, and at 0-3 down the former world number one's emotions briefly spilled over. She pulled herself together and even though she raised her game in the second set she couldn't find a way past Kudermetova.

'A great feeling'

Medvedev had opened the action on Stadium Court and after saving a break point in the opening game had little trouble with 21-year-old Czech qualifier Tomas Machac, ranked 158th in the world. The US Open champion wrapped up a 6-3, 6-2 victory in 70 minutes, although Medvedev said it "was not as easy as it seems" after he sealed the win on a third match point.

Medvedev said it was a "great feeling" to take the court as world number one, "something I've always dreamed of." Medvedev, who has never made it past the fourth round in four prior appearances, next faces France's Gael Monfils, who beat Serbian Filip Krajinovic 6-3, 6-4.

Nadal, who won a record 21st Grand Slam at the Australian Open in January, improved his perfect season's start to 16 straight victories with a gritty display that owed more to experience. Korda led the third set 5-2 and twice served for the match. But he couldn't conjure a match point as Nadal reeled off four games in a row. "I think it's true that probably he got a little bit more nervous," said Nadal, who next plays Britain's Dan Evans, a 6-2, 6-0 winner



INDIAN WELLS: Naomi Osaka of Japan walks off the court after losing to Veronika Kudermetova of Russia during the BNP Paribas Open at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden. —AFP

over Argentina's Federico Coria.

Paolini shocks Sabalenka

Nadal was joined in the third round by rising young compatriot Carlos Alcaraz, who beat American Mackenzie McDonald 6-3, 6-3. The 18-year-old Alcaraz, coming off a title at the Rio Open, converted five of his nine break-point chances and rallied from a break down in the second set.

Fifth-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas was pushed to the limit by Jack Sock, overcoming 28 forehand winners by the American in a 7-6 (7/5), 3-6, 7-6 (7/5) victory. Defending men's and women's champions Cameron Norrie and Paula Badosa both advanced. Britain's Norrie,

seeded 12th, defeated Pedro Martinez 6-3, 6-3 to earn a rematch of last year's final against Georgia's Nikoloz Basilashvili.

Badosa kicked off her title defense with a 6-2, 7-6 (7/4) victory over Tereza Martincova. Badosa had lost three prior meetings with the Czech, although all had come before the Spaniard moved into the top 10 with her Indian Wells victory in October, when a pandemic delay shifted the event from its usual March slot. The women's draw produced the first big upset of the week, as 46th-ranked Italian Jasmine Paolini stunned world number three Aryna Sabalenka 2-6, 6-3, 6-3. —AFP

Zain sponsors Al Marshoud International Showjumping Championship

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its main sponsorship of the eighth Atiyab Al Marshoud International Show Jumping Championship 2022. The competition, held at the Kuwait Riding Center in Sabhan, came under supervision from the Kuwait Equestrian Federation and featured many riders representing various local and international equestrian clubs.

Zain expressed its pride in supporting this unique international sporting event in collaboration with Atiyab Al Marshoud. The company's support springs from its corporate sustainability strategy towards supporting Kuwaiti sports and youth. Zain is a strong believer in the talents and capabilities of the nation's young athletes, especially those who are passionate about equestrian sports, which are deep rooted in Kuwaiti, Arab, and Islamic identity.

The eighth edition of Atiyab Al Marshoud International Show Jumping Championship was held at the Kuwait Riding Center in Sabhan and featured many Kuwaiti and international riders who represented some of the biggest local and global equestrian clubs. The competition was refereed by a professional international team, with supervision from the Kuwait Equestrian Federation.

Zain is always keen on supporting the various sports programs and official competitions hosted in Kuwait with the aim of elevating the Kuwaiti sports scene. The company strongly believes that the private sector has a vital role in progressing sports and youth initiatives, and it makes this belief a reality by shouldering similar events.

As a leading private sector company in Kuwait,

Thompson scores 38, leads Warriors over Bucks

WASHINGTON: Klay Thompson scored a season-high 38 points to spark the Golden State Warriors over defending NBA champion Milwaukee 122-109 on Saturday, snapping the Bucks' six-game win streak. In his best game since returning in January after missing 2 1/2 years with injuries, the 32-year-old guard hit 15-of-24 from the floor, including 8-of-14 from 3-point range, with six rebounds and five assists in 34 minutes.

"It's not losing confidence. Never losing confidence," Thompson said. "I've been through a lot. Just to be able to be out here and compete, it's a blessing." Jordan Poole added 30 points for the Warriors, who got only eight points and eight assists from Stephen Curry, content to watch "Splash Brothers" partner Thompson unleash a superb display. "I'm a perfectionist at times," said Thompson. "(I had to) just be patient. Steve (Kerr, the Warriors' coach) was telling me just to get great shots."

Thompson missed the entire 2019-20 season with a torn left knee ligament and the entire 2020-21 campaign with an Achilles tendon injury, but came back in January and had his prior season-high of 33 points last month in a victory over the Los Angeles Lakers. "It was a challenge but after being on so many great teams and knowing what it takes to get to that final stage, I knew how hard I had to work," Thompson said. "I don't want to peak yet. There's still a long way to go."

Golden State matched Memphis for second place in the Western Conference at 46-22 while the Bucks, led by 31 points from Giannis Antetokounmpo, fell to 42-26, second in the Eastern Conference, 2 1/2 games behind Miami. At Denver, Pascal Siakam scored 33 points and Scottie Barnes added 25 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds to



Al Khashti awarding the winners

Zain is constantly looking to identify and support excellence across the sports sector. The company will continue to put Kuwaiti sports and athletes at

the forefront of its priorities and pledges to continue motivating them to achieve all the recognition and support they deserve.

ignite the Toronto Raptors to a 127-115 triumph. Nikola Jokic led the Nuggets with 26 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists.

Clarkson's 45 leads Jazz

Jordan Clarkson scored a career-high 45 points off the bench on 15-of-21 shooting, including 7-of-13 from 3-point range, to lead the Utah Jazz over visiting Sacramento 134-125 despite 41 for the Kings from De'Aaron Fox. French center Rudy Gobert, averaging 15.4 points and 14.7 assists for Utah, did not play due to a left foot sprain. Mike Conley was also out for the Jazz. Portland's Josh Hart scored 44 points, hitting 15-of-21 from the floor and 6-of-9 from 3-point range, to lead the Trail Blazers over visiting Washington 127-118. DeMar DeRozan scored 25 points and Montenegrin center Nikola Vucevic added 20 points and 14 rebounds to lead the Chicago Bulls over visiting Cleveland 101-91.

Chicago's Zach LaVine missed the game with a sore left knee but the Bulls welcomed back guard Alex Caruso, who has missed 22 games since being sidelined in January with a broken right wrist. Caruso had 11 points, four steals and four assists in 29 minutes off the bench. Tyrese Haliburton scored 19 points and passed off 10 assists while Duane Washington added 19 off the bench to power Indiana to a 119-108 victory at San Antonio. Jock Landale had a game-high 26 points off the Spurs bench while Tre Jones had nine points, 10 rebounds and 12 assists for San Antonio.

Karl-Anthony Towns and Anthony Edwards each scored 15 points and Jaylen Nowell had 16 off the bench as the balanced Minnesota Timberwolves had eight double-digit scorers in a 113-104 victory at Miami. Jimmy Butler was out with a sore toe for the Heat, who were led by 30 points off the bench from Tyler Herro. Miami forward Markieff Morris had six points and four rebounds in 17 minutes off the bench after being cleared to return to the Heat lineup on Saturday for the first time in four months. Morris missed 58 games after suffering a whiplash injury in a scuffle during a November game at Denver. —AFP

Windies defy England in first Test stalemate

ANTIGUA: West Indies survived a collapse either side of the tea interval to play out a draw on the final day of the first Test against England at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on Saturday. Set an unlikely victory target of 286, and having lost four wickets for nine runs to be stumbling at 67 for four at the start of the last session, first innings century-maker Nkrumah Bonner and former captain Jason Holder defied the visitors for more than two hours in an unbroken fifth-wicket stand of 80 off 35 overs to see the home side to safety at 147 for five.

Bonner's unbeaten 38, following on from his nine-hour-plus 123 in the first innings, earned him the man of the match award. Holder finished on 37 not out in another important contribution from the all-rounder against the English. "Obviously we wanted to win but we're happy to come away with the draw," said Bonner. "I always wanted to play Test cricket and over the years I set out to bat long. I'm versatile. I adapt to the situation."

Following Joe Root's second innings declaration at 349 for six in the morning session, left-arm spinner Jack Leach claimed three wickets in quick succession after Ben Stokes made the breakthrough by removing West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite. Without the services of their fastest bowler, Mark Wood, due to an elbow injury, the tourists were further frustrated for 25 overs by Brathwaite and John Campbell, who put on 59. However, Stokes was brought into the attack as the fifth bowler and responded by trapping Brathwaite leg-before for 33. —AFP

Sports

Bayern drop more points after draw at Hoffenheim

Hertha stay winless in 2022, sack Korkut as relegation looms

BERLIN: Bayern Munich were held to a frustrating 1-1 draw at Hoffenheim on Saturday as the runaway Bundesliga leaders had three goals disallowed and also hit the post. "Luck wasn't on our side," bemoaned captain Manuel Neuer. Having also been held at home by Leverkusen last weekend, Bayern have now drawn their last two league games.

Christoph Baumgartner gave Hoffenheim a deserved lead before Robert Lewandowski leveled on the stroke of half-time in Sinsheim with a record-equaling 17th away goal this season. It was a tough afternoon for Bayern who had two goals by Thomas Mueller and one by Lewandowski ruled out before Serge Gnabry struck the post. "We had a few more chances and at the end it was disappointing not to travel home with three points," admitted Neuer. Bayern are ten points clear in the Bundesliga, but second-placed Dortmund, who were home to Bielefeld yesterday, have two games in hand.

Tough return for Nagelsmann

It was a frustrating return to Sinsheim for Munich coach Julian Nagelsmann, who spent nine years with Hoffenheim, three as head coach. "I am pleased with the overall performance, especially as we had goals ruled offside which were marginal, even if we only took a point," said Nagelsmann. Bayern had lost three of their five previous away matches against Hoffenheim

and there was a cup match atmosphere among the sold-out home crowd hoping for another upset.

The hosts landed the first blow when striker Andrej Kramaric fired a pass to the far post where Baumgartner was waiting to drive past Neuer with half an hour played. The Germany captain had hoped to set a new Bundesliga record of 311 victories, but Neuer will have to wait at least another week.

Lewandowski struck before half-time when he powered in Bayern's equalizer to claim his 29th league goal this season. It was end to end in the second half, which opened with Lewandowski's disallowed goal, then Gnabry beat the defense, but hit the post. Mueller had his head in his hands when his shot was scrambled off the line. At the other end, Neuer denied Hoffenheim a late winner with a superb save at close range to block a shot by Jacob Bruun Larsen.

Hertha stay winless in 2022

Hapless Hertha Berlin remain winless in nine games in 2022 as their 2-0 loss at Moenchengladbach piled pressure on head coach Tayfun Korkut. Gladbach dominated at Borussia Park even with their coach Adi Huetter sidelined by COVID. Alassane Plea converted a penalty for the hosts and Matthias Ginter compounded Hertha's misery by heading in a second goal after the break.

The defeat leaves Hertha second from bottom,

capping a chaotic week which saw investor Lars Windhorst fall out with the club's board and sports director Arne Friedrich quit abruptly. Earlier, Freiburg climbed back into the Champions League places despite surrendering a two-goal lead before defender Nico Schlotterbeck sealed a 3-2 win at Wolfsburg.

Stuttgart snatched a valuable point in the relegation battle. Sasa Kalajdzic's 90th minute equaliser sealed a 1-1 draw at Union Berlin to lift Stuttgart to third from bottom, one place above Hertha. "To fight for a point like that is good for morale," said relieved Stuttgart coach Pellegrino Matarazzo as his side backed up last weekend's fight-back win at Gladbach. An outbreak of 20 COVID cases at Mainz meant their away game at Augsburg on Saturday was postponed.

Hertha sack Korkut

Meanwhile, Hertha Berlin sacked Tayfun Korkut as coach yesterday, the morning after a 2-0 loss to Borussia Moenchengladbach stretched their winless streak in 2022 to nine games and pushed them closer to Bundesliga relegation. "Hertha BSC's management have decided to part company with head coach Tayfun Korkut with immediate effect," the club said in a statement. A successor will be announced "as soon as they have been finalised", it added. Former

Turkey international Korkut joined Hertha last November following the firing of Pal Dardai.

Under his stewardship Hertha have been on a losing streak since the start of the year, dropping to 17th in the Bundesliga table and raising the dreaded prospect of dropping out of the top division. "After a promising start with seven points from the first four games and a positive trend, we've now clearly analysed the performances and results from the nine games in the second half of the season," managing director Fredi Bobic said in the statement.

"We came to the conclusion that we needed another change of coach." He added: "We're currently in the relegation zone. We've got eight games left to pick up the points we need to stay up. In the same statement, Korkut thanked everyone at Hertha "for the open and honest cooperation". "I hope the club can avoid relegation and I wish the whole Hertha family all the best for the future," the German-born 47-year-old said. Hertha have also been having a chaotic time off the pitch lately.

Main investor Lars Windhorst has become embroiled in a disagreement with the club's executive committee and sports director Arne Friedrich abruptly quit last Monday. After Bobic said Hertha must "take points" at Borussia Park, Korkut drily responded on Thursday that his side knows they are effectively "forbidden to lose". —AFP



Shooting Grand Prix

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Engr Duajj Khalaf Al-Otaibi said during a press conference Saturday that HII the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Shooting Grand Prix will start on 20th March with the participation of more than 200 shooters. Al-Otaibi said this championship has become one of the most important

events on the international calendar due to the support of HII the Amir. The championship will be held at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex. It is an important event ahead of international events to qualify for the Paris 2024 Olympics. Meanwhile, Secretary General of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations said the organizing committee has prepared ranges and welcomed all participants to Kuwait.

Kuwait's Al-Rashidi wins bronze medal



By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Shooting Team member Talal Al-Turqi Al-Rashidi won the bronze medal at the World Cup Clay Target Shooting event which is being held in Cyprus. Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Secretary General

Obaid Munahi Al-Osaimi dedicated the medal to Kuwait leadership and Kuwait people. He said Talal Al-Rashidi was able to snatch the bronze medal following fierce competition with world champions. Al-Osaimi said Kuwait Shooting Federation is looking forward to win more medals during this championship.

International Athletics Championship

KUWAIT: Kuwait Disabled Athletics team left for Sharjah, UAE to participate in the International Athletics Championship. The Championship will be held from 14 till 16 March and will be followed by Fazza International Championship in Dubai (17-25 March). Kuwait's delegation is headed by Mohsen Al-Ajmi and includes 11 players of both genders. Al-Ajmi said all athletes are well prepared after participating in the third West Asia Paralympic games in Bahrain.



Mohsen Al-Ajmi

Crusaders crash as Brumbies and Reds remain unbeaten

SYDNEY: Rameka Pohipi scored a match-winning try after the siren as Waikato Chiefs upset the Canterbury Crusaders, but the ACT Brumbies and Queensland Reds kept their unbeaten Super Rugby Pacific records intact at the weekend. The Crusaders led 21-10 early in the second-half at Christchurch, but the Sam Cane-led Chiefs refused to go away and two tries in the last six minutes was just reward after they dominated possession.

It was the Chiefs' first away victory against the Crusaders since the opening round of the

2016 campaign, and ended the 12-time champions winning start to the season. "Every time the Kiwi teams play it's down to the wire," said Cane, with two tries from winger Shaun Stevenson and nine points off Bryn Gatland's boot also contributing to the 24-21 win. "We had a mountain of possession in that second half and they defended so well. We just had to keep plugging, building phases and we stayed disciplined and managed to get what we needed just in the nick of time."

Defeat saw the Crusaders slip to third on the 12-team table after round four with the Brumbies and the Reds the only two unbeaten sides. The Brumbies cruised past the struggling Melbourne Rebels 36-17 to bag a bonus point, but it was a much harder task for the Reds against newcomers Fijian Drua who staged an incredible fight-back before falling 33-28. —AFP

Petro, Wydad book last-eight as Ahly and Zamalek lose

JOHANNESBURG: Unfancied Petro Luanda of Angola and perennial title challengers Wydad Casablanca of Morocco on Saturday became the first qualifiers for the CAF Champions League quarter-finals. But there was no joy for two of the three most successful sides in the marquee African club competition with Al Ahly and Zamalek of Egypt both losing in a drama-filled matchday 4. Chabab Belouizdad and Entente Setif of Algeria, Esperance of Tunisia and Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa all won and are set to make the knockout stage.

Raja Casablanca of Morocco conceded and lost for the first time in six qualifying and group matches, but should still advance while goal-shy Ahly can go through, but only as a group runner-up. The individual honours were claimed by Brazil-born Petro captain Tiago Azulao, whose early and late first-half goals set up a 3-0 triumph over fellow Angolan outfit Sagrada Esperanca in Luanda.

Petro, whose only previous appearance in the knockout phase was 21 years ago, started with six Angolans, four Brazilians and a Portuguese, and the mix proved far too strong for Sagrada in Group D. Azulao netted within a minute of the kick-off and his second goal, just before half-time, raised his overall tally to five, making him the leading Champions League scorer this season. Erico Castro completed the rout deep in added time by converting a penalty against opponents who have failed to score in four group games.

Wydad completed a double over Zamalek by winning 1-0 in Cairo through an early second-half penalty slotted Jorginho-style into the net by captain Yahya Jabrane. Petro have 10 points and Wydad nine with two rounds to come while Zamalek (two) and Sagrada (one) will be playing only for pride. Zamalek sacked French coach Patrice Carteron after failing away to Wydad, and rehired 75-year-old Portuguese Jesualdo Ferreira in a vain attempt to turn the tide. —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Khaldiya	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
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112

Curtain closes on Beijing Paralympics

Chinese and Ukrainians star; Russian, Belarusian competitors banned



BEIJING: Flagbearer Ukraine's Vitalii Lukianenko (right) takes part in the closing ceremony of the Beijing 2022 Winter Paralympic Games at the National Stadium, known as the Bird's Nest in Beijing yesterday. — AFP

BEIJING: Beijing's Winter Paralympics closed yesterday following a ban on Russian and Belarusian competitors as well as stellar performances from the host nation and athletes from war-torn Ukraine. At the "Bird's Nest" stadium in the capital, China handed the Paralympics flag to Italy's Milano-Cortina which is gearing up to stage the Games in four years. Beijing is the first city to host both the Summer and Winter Olympics and Paralympics and there are hopes this year's event will leave a legacy of better accessibility and rights for 85 million Chinese with disabilities.

In his closing ceremony speech, International Paralympic Committee (IPC) president Andrew Parsons hailed the athletes as "beacons of hope, and champions for peace". "In the Paralympic villages there were different nations, different views, different abilities. Differences here did not divide us. They united us," he said. "Through this

unity we have hope. Hopes for inclusion, hopes for harmony, and importantly hopes for peace."

On ice and snow athletes had "produced moments of magic" while organizers had achieved a "stunning, secure and spectacular" Games, Parsons said. Chinese President Xi Jinping was among dignitaries in attendance as the Paralympic flame was extinguished following nine days of sporting action in para-ice hockey, wheelchair curling, para-snowboarding, para-alpine skiing, para-biathlon and para-cross country skiing.

At the opening ceremony—watched by 190 million people in China-state broadcaster CCTV appeared to censor an anti-war speech by Parsons but has since not provided an explanation. And in the closing ceremony, not all of his speech was translated into Chinese for the domestic audience, with phrases including "champions for peace" and

"hopes for peace" omitted. Beijing has been treading a cautious diplomatic line on the Ukraine invasion, refusing to condemn the actions of Moscow, with which it only last month touted a "no-limits" friendship.

Controversy concerning whether athletes from Russia and ally Belarus should be allowed to compete overshadowed the lead-up to the Games. The International Olympic Committee had urged sporting federations across the world to exclude athletes from those nations. The IPC initially said it would allow them to compete as neutrals, but after threats of boycotts from other competitors and tensions rising in the athletes' village, organisers banned them.

'Resilience'

After an arduous journey to the Chinese capital, Ukraine's athletes came a remarkable second in the medals table after their best performance in a Winter

Paralympics. One athlete learned her soldier father had been taken prisoner by Russian troops during the Games while another won a gold medal after discovering her home in Kharkiv had been bombed. The team, which dominated in biathlon and cross-country skiing, claimed 11 gold medals and 29 podium finishes—four more medals than the country's previous best at Turin in 2006. The squad took their final gold in the open cross-country relay yesterday, ahead of France and Norway.

Team veteran Vitalii Lukianenko, 43 - who won double gold and a silver in the biathlon-carried the Ukrainian flag at the closing ceremony. Parsons paid a glowing tribute to the Ukraine team on Saturday. "To compete here at such a high level knowing their family and nation is under attack is just incredible," he said. "It's one of the most incredible displays of resilience I've ever seen in my life, in or outside of sport."

China emerged as a force to be reckoned with—topping the medal count ahead of Ukraine, Canada, France and the United States—with 18 golds and 61 medals in all. China made its debut at the Paralympics in 2002 but recorded its first medal only four years ago - a gold in wheelchair curling at Pyeongchang in South Korea. "For certain, China is now a Paralympic winter sports powerhouse," Parsons told the closing ceremony.

More than 560 athletes from 46 nations competed at the Games and there was a blitz of medals on the last day of competition. The United States swept past Canada 5-0 to take the para-ice hockey gold. The Americans also dominated in the mixed cross-country relay in Zhangjiakou, sharing the podium with China and Canada, while Italian, French and Norwegian male athletes snapped up the last goals in alpine skiing categories. — AFP

Messi and PSG stars jeered despite win

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain beat Ligue 1 strugglers Bordeaux 3-0 yesterday amid incessant whistles directed at stars including Lionel Messi and Neymar from home fans furious at another European exit. Amid a gloomy atmosphere in the French capital, only Kylian Mbappe, who scored both goals in the last-16 Champions League defeat to Real Madrid, escaped the wrath of the fans. Yesterday, Mbappe was again on target, scoring the opening goal after 24 minutes with Neymar and Leandro Paredes adding two more in the second half.

The Parisians hold a 15-point lead on second-placed Nice and are on track to equal Saint-Etienne's record of 10 French titles, but the frustration of their

home fans spilled over. Seven-time Ballon d'Or winner Messi was booed as never before in his career, even in the rare bad times with Argentina, and whistled at every touch of the ball. Coach Mauricio Pochettino said the players had greeted the hostility "with sadness". "No-one who loves PSG, its colors, and who feels the frustration of elimination, can experience it in any other way."

"Sadness. I think that's the right word. The sadness of experiencing an afternoon like this here at the Parc des Princes. "Messi and Neymar? We are all affected, we understand the disappointment and frustration, which we also share. But we are responsible. We only have to assume it as a team and we will be united until the end." — AFP



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's Argentine forward Lionel Messi kicks the ball during the French L1 football match between Paris-Saint Germain (PSG) and Girondins de Bordeaux yesterday. — AFP

Havertz eases Chelsea gloom

LONDON: Chelsea shrugged off uncertainty over the club's future to beat Newcastle 1-0 thanks to Kai Havertz's late goal at Stamford Bridge yesterday, while Ukrainian international Andriy Yarmolenko broke down in tears after scoring in West Ham's 2-1 victory over Aston Villa. The European champions are still reeling from the impact of the sanctions placed on billionaire owner Roman Abramovich by the UK government for alleged close links to Vladimir Putin as the Russian president wages war on Ukraine.

Chelsea have only been allowed to keep operating thanks to a special licence that still imposes a series of restrictions such as a ban on selling tickets and merchandise. There was little immediate sign of change once the action got underway in front of a full house at Stamford Bridge with all the tickets already sold prior to Thursday's announcement of sanctions.

Prior to the match both Chelsea's technical and performance advisor Petr Cech and manager Thomas Tuchel could offer no guarantees the Blues can even afford to fulfill their fixtures for the rest of the season unless the restrictions of the licence are eased. In contrast to matches in recent weeks there was no chanting of Abramovich's name by the Chelsea fans, although there was still a banner with his image hailing the "Roman Empire".

The chaos caused by questions over where Abramovich amassed his wealth have also seen renewed criticism of the decision to allow Newcastle to be taken over earlier this season by the Saudi sov-

ereign wealth fund. The Magpies have seen immediate results from their first transfer window under new ownership as they were unbeaten in nine league games to climb away from the relegation zone.

Newcastle will rightly feel aggrieved that Havertz should not have been on the pitch to score the winner as he caught Dan Burn with an elbow in the first half, but escaped with just a yellow card. The German then produced the one moment of real quality from a scrappy game when he controlled Jorginho's ball over the top beautifully before prodding home the winner in the 89th minute. Victory solidified Chelsea's position in third place as they remain well on course for the much-needed financial boost of qualifying for next season's Champions League.

Emotional Yarmolenko

West Ham also have ambitions of a top-four finish as they closed to within two points of fourth-placed Manchester United in emotional circumstances at the London Stadium. Yarmolenko had been given time off following Russia's invasion of his homeland to help aid some of his family to safety. Introduced as a second-half substitute, he fired home the opening goal 20 minutes from time and was overcome with emotion as he bent down on his knees in celebration.

Pablo Fornals quickly doubled the Hammers' lead before Jacob Ramsey pulled a late consolation goal back for Villa. At the bottom of the table, Leeds and Watford secured big wins in their battle to beat the drop as Everton slipped even closer to the relegation zone. Leeds secured their first win under new manager Jesse Marsch in dramatic fashion as Joe Gelhardt struck deep into stoppage time to beat bottom-of-the-table Norwich 2-1



LONDON: Newcastle United's English defender Dan Burn (left) vies in the air with Chelsea's German midfielder Kai Havertz during the English Premier League football match between Chelsea and Newcastle United yesterday. — AFP

at a relieved Elland Road.

Victory opened up a four-point gap for Leeds over Everton, who are now only out of the bottom three on goal difference. Frank Lampard's men slipped to an eighth defeat in nine league games as Conor Coady's header earned Wolves a 1-0 win at Goodison Park. Watford secured a much-needed win to keep alive their hopes of survival by beating Southampton 2-1 at St Mary's thanks to Cucho Hernandez's double. — AFP