



**11** Gulf Bank AGM approves distributing 7% in cash and 5% in bonus shares



# Amir hails KNPC clean fuels project as people's 'wealth'

## Refineries now fully operational after multibillion-dollar revamp



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah inaugurates KNPC's full operation of the clean fuel project, flanked by HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Oil Minister Mohammad Al-Fares during a ceremony at the Mina Abdullah refinery on March 22, 2022. — KUNA

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah hailed on Tuesday the completion of state refiner Kuwait National Petroleum Company's multibillion-dollar clean fuels project, saying it is "wealth" bestowed upon the Kuwaiti people. "I congratulate the Kuwaiti people on the completion of this project," HH the Amir said during a KNPC ceremony to inaugurate the now fully-operational facility, where he was joined by HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

Also present were HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Mohammad Al-Fares, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Deputy Chairman and CEO Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah and KNPC CEO Waleed Al-Bader.

HH the Amir unveiled a memorial plaque before leaving the venue. Addressing the event, HH the Crown Prince, representing HH the Amir, highly commended the project as reflecting Kuwait's commitment to fulfilling local needs and international demand for clean fuel, in compli-

ance with global endeavors to cut air pollutants.

He underlined Kuwait's ambition for attaining a clear-cut development strategy that would promote the country's status in the global oil refining industry. He also pointed out top priorities for creating new jobs for young Kuwaitis, enabling them to work in their own country's most vital sector. HH the Crown Prince voiced much appreciation to all sincere Kuwaitis for their great efforts and achievements in carrying out the project.

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Mohammad Al-Fares appreciated HH the Amir's patronage and attendance of the KNPC's biofuel project completion ceremony, together with HH the Crown Prince's presence, as reflecting the commitment of the country's wise political leadership to following up on and supporting national development projects in various domains.

The minister said the clean fuel project is one of the major projects in the history of the Kuwaiti oil sector, which included a wide-scale and unprecedented revamp and development of the Mina Al-Ahmadi and Mina Abdullah refineries.

Continued on Page 6

### News in brief

#### Govt reshuffles Cabinet

KUWAIT: Government Communication Center Chairman and Government Spokesman Tareq Al-Mezrem announced a Cabinet reshuffle on Tuesday. Under the decree, Mohammad Al-Fares has been appointed Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ali Al-Mousa as Minister of Public Works and Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, and Mohammad Al-Rajhi as Minister of State for National Affairs and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Mezrem said in a tweet. — KUNA



Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Egypt's President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, and PM of the Zionist entity Naftali Bennett meet in Sharm el-Sheikh. — AFP

#### Sisi hosts UAE, Zionist leaders

CAIRO: Egypt hosted the Zionist and UAE leaders for unprecedented three-way talks Tuesday as the Ukraine war rocks energy and food markets and major powers inch toward a revived Iran nuclear deal. The summit was held in the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh between Egypt's President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, Prime Minister of the Zionist entity Naftali Bennett and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed. — AFP (See Page 6)

## Zain Group holds AGM; dividend of 23 fils for H2 2021 approved

KUWAIT: Zain Group Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on Tuesday at Zain Group's headquarters in Kuwait, that was livestreamed for shareholders and qualified parties and attended with a shareholder quorum of 75.14 percent. The AGM approved the recommended cash dividend of 23 percent (23 fils per share) for the second half of 2021, payable to the shareholders already registered in the company's record as of April 6, 2022. The cash dividends will be paid to eligible shareholders commencing April 13, 2022.

This cash dividend of 23 fils per share follows the semi-annual dividend of 10 fils distributed in the second half of 2021, thus totaling 33 fils per share dividend for the year. This third consecutive payment of 33 fils per share on an annual basis completes the company's three-year minimum commit-

ment that started in 2019. Zain Group Chairman, Ahmed Al Tahous said: 2021 was a successful year in terms of driving shareholder value given the board and management's focus on operational efficiency, significant investment in network upgrades, while managing the negative effects of the pandemic on our operations.

Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi said: The annual dividend payout of 33 fils reflects a 77 percent payout ratio, one of the highest in the region, providing a clear indication of the strength of Zain's financial solvency and solid operational performance. It also reflects the company's ability to execute on its profitable growth plans despite the continuing challenges of the pandemic and impact of unavoidable currency devaluations on the business. (See Page 8)



Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi

## Khan hosts OIC meeting of FMs

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan trumpeted his Islamic credentials on Tuesday at a meeting of foreign ministers from Muslim nations, even as he battles the most serious domestic challenge to his rule since coming to power. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is meeting in Islamabad with an ambitious agenda that seeks approval for over 100 declarations, including aid for financially strapped Afghanistan and support for the Palestinians and Kashmir.

The meeting is also attended by China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi, despite Beijing being accused of detaining more than a million Uyghur and other Turkic-speaking Muslims in political re-education camps across Xinjiang. "China and the Islamic world have found a path of friendly coexistence and win-win cooperation between different civilizations."

Continued on Page 6



ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan poses with Organization of Islamic Cooperation foreign ministers and representatives on March 22, 2022. — AFP



## Local

# KRCS presents humanitarian initiative at Expo Dubai 2020

## KRCS portrays Kuwait's civic image worldwide



DUBAI: Kuwait Red Crescent Society officials lecture at Kuwait pavilion at Dubai Expo. —KUNA photos



Officials distribute gifts at the Kuwait pavilion.

**DUBAI:** The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) presented its activities, achievements and humanitarian initiatives at the international level in the Kuwait's pavilion at (Expo Dubai 2020) on Tuesday. KRCS provides relief to those affected by humanitarian disasters and humanitarian crises.

The Director of Public Relations and Media Khaled Al-Zaid told Kuwait News Agency that the aim of the participation is to highlight Kuwait's march in the field of humanitarian work and its honorable record in giving and supporting people in the most severe circumstances and crises, as well as its role in supporting needy families in Kuwait.

Al-Zaid added that the association's participation in Expo Dubai 2020 comes from the standpoint of the pioneering humanitarian aspect of Kuwait, which has become a beacon of humanitarian work - stressing the association's keenness to be part of the successes of the pavilion in light of the high number of visitors it recorded.

He pointed out that the association seeks, through this participation, to provide the visitors of the exhibition with an opportunity to learn about the association's contributions and various works - praising the role of the Ministry of Information and its keenness to highlight the Kuwait humanitarian works in a special section.

Al-Zaid said that a corner was allocated for children in the pavilion to introduce them to the role of the Kuwait Red Crescent, by distributing sketchbooks bearing pictures, in addition to distributing badges bearing the name of the association and first aid kits.

He said that the KRCS' pavilion witnessed the influx of a large number of visitors to the exhibition from different countries of the world, along with school students, to learn about the most important humanitarian initiatives and projects organized by the KRCS since its establishment in 1966, stressing that Expo Dubai is an important platform in promoting the culture of volunteerism.



Kuwait pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai shed light on the Kuwaiti constitution and its tremendous features, which gathered vital components of presidential and parliamentary systems. The pavilion also showed the beginning of the democratic life in the country and the launch of the Kuwaiti constitution by the late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah in 1962.



The Kuwait pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai displayed sculptures of different types of wild animals and birds that lived in the Kuwaiti desert. The sculptures included Chlamydotis, which is considered as the most famous migratory bird in Kuwait and the Arabian Peninsula. Other sculptures on display were of the desert owl, the flamingo, and various varieties of birds. The Expo aims to introduce diverse traditions and cultures from around the world in one place. —KUNA photos

### Kuwait's civic image

KRCS has largely contributed to portraying Kuwait's civic image worldwide with its diverse relief activities, namely in Africa where it had secured badly needed water for impoverished communities, said an official of the society on Tuesday. In a lecture at the State of Kuwait Pavilion at Expo Dubai 2020, Al-Zaid said the Kuwaiti society had been involved in many ventures to secure clean water for people living amid hard conditions, particularly poor populations in Africa.

In 2016, the society launched an initiative, themed "a sip saves a life," to secure drinking water in the African continent when the regional nations were suffering from severe draught. Moreover, the KRCS dug 16 water wells in Somalia, established pipelines to secure water to villages in several Somali regions where rainfalls

were scarce, added Al-Zaid in his lecture, marking the World Water Day.

In Tanzania, the Kuwait Red Crescent Society dug 16 wells for 16 schools in Dar Salam as part of an initiative branded, "a well for each school," and repaired water installations in Kenya to help the country during the 2019 draught. In Indonesia, in aftermath of the 2004 tsunami, the KRCS built a water desalination plant and rebuilt utilities in damaged areas.

Al-Zaid also shed light on some of the relief works in Yemen, including a water project for the relocated in Maarib and fixing the water system in Hadramot. He called for cooperation among nations to deal with the water scarcity issue. The world celebrates on March 22 the World Water Day to affirm necessity of this vital living resource. More than two billion people throughout the globe cannot access water resources. —KUNA



Parliament Speaker's gavel

## Kuwait to boost water production capacity

**KUWAIT:** Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy official, Engr Khalifa Al-Furaij, stated that the ministry aims to reach water production capacity of 900 million imperial gallons by 2030. Ministry Acting Undersecretary, Al-Furaij stated on the occasion of world water day, that the ministry is diligent in continuing its maintenance activities, affirming that water situation during summer remains stable.

Al-Furaij commented that Kuwait is keen on celebrating world water day, as it is a great opportunity to raise awareness around conserving water resources and ensuring their sustainability, and enforcing the United Nations' sustained development goals of 2030. The world water day slogan, "Groundwater: Making Invisible Visible", reflects the importance of groundwater as a main source of natural water, underscoring that groundwater suffers exploitation and pollution.

The ministry official pointed out that Kuwait suffers groundwater scarcity, and therefore, it developed a system to conserve it and protect it from improper usage, including desalinating seawater. Al-Furaij also highlighted Kuwait's efforts in providing drinking water for its citizens since the 1950s, as water consumption per person doubled within the last 35 years to reach 96 imperial gallons.

On her part, Ministry Assistant Undersecretary Engineer Maha Al-Asousi touched on the areas the ministry recently started providing water for, including several blocks of Abdullah Al-Mubarak area, noting that they are working on providing water for even more areas. —KUNA

## Minister affirms keenness on finding sustainable solutions

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Finance Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid affirmed yesterday the government's keenness on finding sustainable solutions to continuously finance real estate loans, indicating that such solutions require cooperation between the executive and legislative authorities. This came in the minister's statement upon inaugurating the new Kuwait Credit Bank headquarters, adding that technical solutions require careful deliberation against backdrop of fluctuation of oil prices and increase of residential demands.

As for the retiree financial grant, the minister urged citizens not to worry as a solution exists where retirees are granted what they desire and justice is achieved. During his speech, Minister Al-Rushaid, labeled KCB an essential pillar to the foundation of modern Kuwait, as the bank's purpose is intertwined with citizens' lives.

He also highlighted the bank's contribution towards supporting issues of women and people with special needs. The minister of finance spoke of the challenges the bank is facing, saying that the circumstances during which the bank was built completely differ from current circumstances of exponential population growth and architectural expansion.

He added that the bank is adopting new practical and administrative mechanisms to be able to overcome such challenges. On his part, KCB's chief of board of directors, Salah Al-Mudhaf, affirmed the bank's readiness to finance real estate loans for citizens seeking to build homes in Al-Mutlaa and South Khaitan areas.

Speaking of the real estate mortgage law,



KUWAIT: Minister of Finance Al-Rushaid and Director General of Credit Bank of Kuwait Salah Al-Mudhaf are pictured during the inauguration of the bank's new headquarters. —KUNA photos

Al-Mudhaf illustrated that a study has been conducted with an international specialized corporation, and it concluded with three focal points to resolve residential crisis: releasing government-owned lands for residential purposes, bringing in real estate developers and adopting property mortgage laws.

He indicated that the law awaits deliberation and issuing from the National Assembly as it had already been submitted to the cabinet and referred to parliament. Al-Mudhaf commented that the bank's new headquarters was designed according to international standards to further facilitate utilization, as it is



also eco-friendly and efficient in energy conserving. —KUNA



## Local



## Crown Prince receives Canada's Gov General

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received earlier on Tuesday at Bayan Palace Canada's Governor General Mary Jeannie May Simon, and Chief of the Defense Staff, on the occasion of their official visit to the country. They tackled the deep-rooted bilat-

eral ties between both nations and means to develop and boost them in all fields.

The meeting was attended by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Counsellor at His Highness the Prime Minister Diwan Sheikh Basel Humoud Al-Sabah, Director of His Highness the Crown Prince Office retired Lieutenant General Jamal Mohammad Al-Thayab, Foreign Affairs Undersecretary at His Highness the Crown Prince Diwan Mazen Essa Al-Essa, Ambassador of Kuwait to Canada Reem Mohammad Al-Khaled, and Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Americas Affairs Counsellor Nawaf Abdullatif Al-Ahmad. —KUNA

## Defense Minister holds talks with top officials



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense receives the undersecretaries of the National Guard. —KUNA photos

**KUWAIT:** Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Tuesday affirmed necessity of boosting collective action among the various national military sectors for sake of upgrading capacity and efficiency. The Ministry of Defense said in a statement that the minister made the note during a meeting with the undersecretaries of the National Guard, the

Ministry of Interior and ranking officers who expressed congratulations to him on assuming the defense post. Separately, he received head of the United Nations Human Settlements Program, UN Habitat, Dr Amira Al-Hassan, accompanied by the programmed mission deputy head, Qusai Al-Duaij. The two sides discussed during the meeting means of boosting cooperation. —KUNA

## Ministry sets conditions for collecting donations

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor has set 13 conditions and controls for organizing and collecting donations during the upcoming month of Ramadan. Director of the Public Relations and Media Department in the ministry Ahmed Al-Enezi said in a press statement.

The Department of Charitable Societies and Charitable Associations in the Ministry has put in place the necessary arrangements and procedures to organize the 19th edition of the project to collect donations during Ramadan - specifying the special regulations that licensed charities must adhere.

Al-Enezi explained that among the conditions is the prohibition of collecting cash donations, whether in headquarters or public places and others. He added that one of the conditions is also the prohibition of collecting donations in any form in unlicensed places in commercial complexes and

public squares, except after obtaining approval from the Ministry.

On charities, Al-Enezi stressed the need for associations to commit to using the association's bank accounts only and approved by the Ministry - issuing the identification card to its delegates, showing the personal identity of the Ministry of Social Affairs team, and clearly writing the date of donation and the name of the donor.

He called on the associations to commit to giving a copy of the deduction after the end of recording the data for each donor and a copy of (K-Net) after completing the withdrawal process - writing the amounts recorded in the deduction in numbers and letters, and approving the advertisements for the project before publishing and using them.

In relation to foreign projects, he praised the pioneering and great role of Kuwaiti charities, which contributed to giving Kuwait a global position in the humanitarian, charitable and relief aspects, indicating that the organizational process carried out by the Ministry from time to time aims to preserve the rights of the donor and the association, as well as preserving the bright and honorable image of charitable work in Kuwait. —KUNA



**DOHA:** Commander of the Kuwaiti Naval Force Commodore Hazzaia Al-Alati has affirmed the Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense's keenness on studying other states' military expertise for strengthening the Kuwaiti armed forces. Commodore Al-Alati, speaking to KUNA, on margins of the Doha International Maritime Defense Exhibition and Conference (DIMDEX 2022) on Tuesday, said Kuwait is keen on staying abreast of latest innovations in technology in the security systems overhaul of the national military systems. Kuwait's participation in the event is due to its distinctive impact at the Gulf and Middle Eastern levels, displaying latest productions in the defense systems. —KUNA

# Political leadership keen on retirees' interests, welfare

## Cabinet condemns Houthi attacks

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwaiti political leadership has been keen on the interests and welfare of retired Kuwaitis, said the Cabinet on Monday. During its weekly meeting chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at Seif Palace, the Cabinet discussed the latest developments pertaining to the social insurance of retired Kuwaitis, and their proposed advantages and rights.

The Cabinet said that there are efforts to reach a consensus on this act and take all relevant measures as soon as possible. Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad said after the meeting. All proposals taken by the National Assembly in this matter will be taken into consideration, the minister said.

The ministers listened to a presentation by Health Minister Dr Khaled Suleiman on the recent situation in Kuwait that witnessed a big decline in the numbers of coronavirus infections, deaths and recoveries. The Cabinet congratulated Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Ali Al-Mousa on the renewed confidence given by the National Assembly during Wednesday's session.

Afterwards, the Cabinet approved a donation evaluated at KD 750,000 from Ali Thunayan Al-Ghanim to establish Al-Abdali Health Center and another donation estimated at KD 350,000

from the national Cooperative Projects Committee to fund the establishment of a specialized medical center - thanking them for their generous donations.

Moreover, the Cabinet expressed Kuwait's strong condemnation and denunciation of the dangerous drone and ballistic attacks launched by Houthi militias which targeted peaceful civilians, some residential areas and economic vital facilities in Saudi Arabia. These hostile acts target not only Saudi Arabia's security but also the global oil supplies, economy and sea navigation, the Cabinet said.

The acts also are a blatant violation of international law, and undermine Saudi Arabia and the whole region's security, it added. The Cabinet calls for a rapid action from the international community to deter these terrorist acts and hold the perpetrators accountable. The Cabinet further affirmed Kuwait's firm support to Saudi Arabia in all measures it takes to preserve its security and sovereignty.

It expressed deep sorrow over the Boeing 737-800 plane crash in the southern province of Guangxi, China, offering condolences to Chinese President Xi Jinping and relatives of the victims. In addition, it offered sincere condolences to the Pakistani leader and people on the passing away of former Pakistan president Mohammad Rafiq Tarar. —KUNA



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense receives the Ministry of Interior and other top ranking officers.

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Email: info@kuwaittimes.com  
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Kuwaiti-Saudi  
gas field deal

**KUWAIT:** The recently clinched development plan of Kuwaiti-Saudi Dorra offshore gas field will be essential to promoting existing cooperation in vital domains, said the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) Tuesday. The signing of a relevant document came under a memo of understanding (MoU) that was signed by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia on December 24, 2019 and entailed the development and utilization of Dorra gas field, OAPEC's Secretary-General Ali Ben Sabt said in a press statement.

The joint Dorra offshore gas field is expected to produce up to 84,000 barrels of gas condensate and one billion cubic feet of natural gas per day. The energy ministers of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia on Monday signed the development plan of the joint Dorra offshore gas field. The gas field is located in the Kuwait-Saudi Neutral Zone, where production is divided equally between the two Gulf neighbors. —KUNA

Kuwait overhauling  
meteorological early  
warning systems

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Aviation Authority has embarked on a package of projects for overhauling the meteorological forecast systems, an official said on Tuesday. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is executing several ventures namely installment of early warning systems to forecast sand storms, replacing monitoring devices, increasing mechanized monitors for services on the ground, in the agricultural sector and at sea, said Imad Al-Jalawi, the DGCA deputy director general in a statement to KUNA on Tuesday.

Marking the World Meteorological Day, falling on March 23, Al-Jalawi revealed that the Authority planned establishment of a system for examining factors of high altitude skies, one for generating hydrogen, in addition to early warning systems for winds and lightning as well as a mobile meteorological system.

Moreover, there will be researches and reports concerning climatic changes, their impact on the society and means of coping with these changes. These projects serve the broad objectives of the UN sustainable development for boosting a high quality health environment, a sustainable living environment and diversified economy for the UN member states. Al-Jalawi has affirmed deployment of the new systems will be effective to take measures ahead of the difficult weather conditions, thus lives may be saved. —KUNA

First Deputy PM discusses ties  
with US Embassy Deputy Chief

**KUWAIT:** First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior (Retired General) Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah stressed Tuesday depth of relations between Kuwait and US. This came in a Ministry of Interior's statement, quoting the First Deputy Prime Minister as saying during a meeting with Deputy Chief of Mission at US Embassy in Kuwait, James Holtsnider, and his accompanying delegation. The talks between the two sides dealt with a number of issues of common interest, especially those related to the security aspect and ways of strengthening relations between the two countries. For his part, Holtsnider stressed the importance of the topics discussed, expressing his country's hope for more cooperation and coordination with Kuwait. —KUNA

Kuwait named head of OIC human  
rights commission for second term

## Foreign minister chairs delegation at OIC session

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al Mohammad Al-Sabah chaired the Kuwait's delegation at the 48th ministerial session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), held in the Pakistani capital Islamabad on March 22-23. The convening ministers addressed a host of issues namely mounting challenges facing the Muslim nation, the Palestinian cause, combating terrorism, Islamophobia, in addition to beefing up coordination among the OIC member states.

During the session, Kuwait was named, by unanimity, for a second term as head of the OIC-affiliated human rights commission, where conferees lauded its leading role at the international level for boosting human rights, basic rights, sovereignty of the law and promoting Islamic values.

Addressing the OIC session, the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister noted that the OIC was established 53 years ago in the aftermath of torching Al-Aqsa Mosque, affirming that it was set up to back the Palestinian people. He affirmed support for the Palestinians' legitimate rights and their struggle to establish an independent state. He lauded the pivotal role played by the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, the UNRWA, for securing basic needs for the refugees.

On the Houthi militias' terrorist attacks on Saudi Arabia and the UAE, he said these offenses are tantamount to a flagrant breach of the international and humane laws and constitute a threat to the region's security and stability. He called on the international community to bring into account culprits of these



terrorist attacks, re-affirming Kuwait's unwavering support for Riyadh and Abu Dhabi.

Moreover, the minister reaffirmed backing for diplomacy intended to settle the Yemeni strife. He declared support for the recent declaration by the GCC Secretariat General to host Yemeni consultations on March 29-April 7 to settle the crisis. On

Afghanistan, Sheikh Dr Ahmad expressed deep concern at the aggravating humanitarian crisis in this country, urged for renouncing extremism, violence and bids to link up Islam with terrorism and hatred-fomenting rhetoric. He called upon Muslim nations to coordinate to cope with fallouts of the Ukrainian crisis. —KUNA

27th Qurain Cultural  
Festival kicks off

By Nawara Fattahova

**KUWAIT:** The 27th Qurain Cultural Festival opened on Monday at the Abdulhusain Abdulredha Theatre in Salmiya. During the opening ceremony, Dr Suad Al-Sabah was awarded as the Arab Poem Day personality of the year. Other personalities were awarded for their efforts and services in culture, formative arts and social sciences. Also, encouragement awards were given to winners in various fields of arts and sciences.

A laser light show was presented, followed by commemorating famous astronomer Saleh Al-Ojairi, who passed away recently, along with other Kuwaiti pioneers who passed away including poet Ahmad Al-Saqaf, Abdulaziz Al-Mfarej, and Ismail Fahad Ismail.

Minister of Information and Chairman of the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL) Dr Hamad Rouh El-Din said people missed the Qurain Festival after a long interruption due to the pandemic. "The government is supporting this cultural festival and the development of the cultural movement in Kuwait. I'm glad to be awarding all these great personalities for 2021. This encourages the cultural movement and future generations. I hope these cultural and artistic activities will continue," he said during the opening ceremony.

Secretary General of NCCAL Dr Eisa Al-Ansari noted that symbols of arts and literature are being awarded during this year's festival. "NCCAL is supporting and developing intellectual production through providing a suitable environment for high-quality cultural and artistic productions. The Qurain Festival is a milestone in Arab culture, and it launch tonight represents the official return of cultural festivals after two years of interruption," he pointed out. The festival's activities will continue till March 30, and include the following:

**March 22:** Al Arabi Magazine exhibition (for three days) at the Modern Arts Museum

**March 22:** (8:00 pm) Graduation ceremony of the first batch of the 'Music House' project at the Modern Arts Museum



**March 23:** (6:30 pm) 'Arab Poem Day' ceremony at the Kuwait National Library

**March 24:** (10:00 am) NCCAL publications exhibition (till March 30) at the Kuwait National Library

**March 24:** (5:00 pm) Kufi calligraphy workshop (for two days) at the Kuwait National Library

**March 24:** (6:30 pm) Unveiling the mural 'Kuwait and USA 60 years of friendship' at the Modern Arts Museum

**March 25:** (8:00 pm) Musical performance of folk band Naser Bu Awadh at Souq Mubarakiya

**March 26:** (8:00 pm) Theatre play 'Al Taboor Al Sadis' at Dasma Theatre

**March 27:** (9:00 am) 'Reviving the horse heritage among Arabs' - documentary and photo exhibition on horses at the Kuwait National Library

**March 27:** (5:00 pm) 'Digital Content Creation' workshop at the Kuwait National Library



**March 28:** (10:00 am) Open Heritage Day at Bayt Al Bader

**March 28:** (10:00 am) Celebrating the international day of intellectual property and youth at the Kuwait National Library

**March 28:** (6:30 pm) 'Art and Literature in New Form' lecture at the Kuwait National Library

**March 28:** (7:00 pm) Musical performance 'The Sununu Project' at the Yarmouk Cultural Center

**March 29:** (10:00 am) Launching the center of NCCAL publication at the NCCAL headquarters

**March 29:** (6:30 pm) Al Qurain formative arts exhibition (for one week) at the Funoon and Ahmad Al-Advani Hall

**March 29:** (8:00 pm) 'Suda 22' exhibition at Bayt Al Sadu

**March 30:** (8:00 pm) Conclusion ceremony presented by poet Saher at the Abdulhusain Abdulredha Theatre.

'FANTASIA': The  
art camp by ICSK

**KUWAIT:** ICSK unceasingly strives to cultivate and develop the innate artistic qualities of its students. In continuation with the various development and training initiatives for the students, a 10-day art camp 'FANTASIA' is being held at ICSK for the students of classes 3 to 12 from 20th to 29th March, 2022. The main objective for organizing the art camp is to give the students in-depth information and hands on experience in the different types of art using different materials and mediums.

The students would be trained and guided by experts in the field of art. The inauguration of the 10-day art camp took place on 20th March, 2022 and was graced by the chief guest Dr Amir Ahmed, President of Indian Doctors Forum, Kuwait, Hon Members of Board of Trustees, Dr V Binumon, Principal and Senior Administrator ICSK, Vice Principal, Susan Rajesh, Deputy Vice Principal Mini Shaji, Academic Supervisors, HOD's, teachers and students.

This was the first event conducted in the school in the offline mode after almost 2 years of break forced by the global pandemic, which was attended by around 200 students. The program began with the Islamic Prayer by Juwairiya Sajid Ali of class 10 followed by the Kuwait National Anthem. The program was further blessed by a soulful prayer rendition by the school choir 'Swarajali'.

Susan Rajesh, Vice Principal ICSK Senior warmly welcomed the Chief Guest Dr Amir Ahmed who inaugurated the art camp and also painted a picture on a canvas as an inaugural painting. He praised the efforts taken by the school management for the overall development of the students of the school. He motivated the students with his inspiring words of encouragement. Dr V Binumon presented a memento to the Chief Guest Dr Amir Ahmed



as a token of gratitude.

Dr V Binumon in his address to the students appreciated the students for their active participation in all the activities, programs and seminars conducted both online and offline during the past academic year. He further motivated the students with his encouraging words expressing that each and every student is gifted with artistic talents and that they should effectively utilize the opportunities given by the school in developing the same, he also expressed a great desire to see maximum participation from the students for the camp.

Nageswar Rao, HOD of Arts, FAIPS gave detailed information on the nuances of colors and painting accompanied with a power point presentation. Nageswar Rao was also presented a memento by Dr V Binumon as a mark of appreciation. There was a powerpoint presentation on the different genres of artlike Indian folk art, Decorative composition, Caricature, Calligraphy, Zen tangle art, Collage, Monochromatic painting, Coffee painting, Live sketch, Pencil shading, Still life painting and Conceptual Drawing that would be taught during the 10-day art camp and a brief description of each was given by Mumtaz Firoz art teacher ICSK Khaitan.

At the culmination of the program the stu-



dents were divided into 3 groups and were given an opportunity to display their artistic skills on canvases put up on the walls of the auditorium using different materials like oil pastels, sketch pens, water colors etc. They were at freedom to draw, color and sketch and bring out the creative artist in them. The outcome was really amazing and beyond imagination. The vote of thanks was given by Mukundhan P.HOD Department of Art, ICSK. The inaugural program ended with the National Anthem of India.





HK martial arts teacher charged over sedition

## Libya tensions simmer in shadow of Ukraine war

Page 6

Page 7

# Ukraine eyes Mariupol evacuation bid

## Russian troops continue their relentless assaults on their neighbour

**KYIV, Ukraine:** Ukrainian authorities announced a new bid Tuesday to rescue civilians from besieged port city Mariupol which has been under heavy bombardments since Russia's invasion began almost a month ago, as capital Kyiv hunkered down in a curfew.

More than 200,000 people are trapped in the city described by those who managed to escape as a "freezing hellscape riddled with dead bodies and destroyed buildings", Human Rights Watch said, quoting data provided by a local official.

"We know that there will not be enough space for everyone" on Tuesday, but "we will try to carry out the evacuation until we have gotten all the inhabitants of Mariupol out," vowed Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk in a video address.

As Russian troops continued their relentless assaults on their neighbour, Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky said all issues would be on the table if Russia's Vladimir Putin agreed to direct talks to end the war, including contested Crimea and Donbas.

But he warned his country would be "destroyed" before it surrenders. The Kremlin in return said it would like to see negotiations with Kyiv to be "more active and substantial". With Russia's military appearing to make little headway in capturing key targets, fears are growing that Putin may resort to even more drastic means to turn the tide.

US President Joe Biden warned that Putin was considering using chemical and biological weapons in Ukraine as he held talks with European leaders on Monday on what he called Moscow's increasingly "brutal tactics". The US leader is due to travel to Brussels on Thursday for a series of summits gathering NATO, EU and G7 leaders, before heading to Poland, which has received the bulk of the three million Ukrainians fleeing war in their country.

### 'Desperate bid'

Since Russia launched its invasion on February 24, at least 117 children have been killed in the war, Ukraine's federal prosecutor said. Some 548 schools

have been damaged, including 72 completely destroyed. But both Western and Ukrainian experts believe the war was not going the way the Kremlin had expected.

Moscow has stepped up its military activity, flying 300 sorties in the past 24 hours, in a "desperate" bid to turn the tide against the Ukrainian resistance, a senior US defence official said. Ukraine's army command said Russian troops now had ammunition, food and fuel to last just three days.

Three hundred Russian soldiers have defected in the north-eastern Sumy region, added the army command on Facebook. But even in areas Russia has captured, resistance has continued, with Ukraine's leaders on Tuesday accusing Russian troops of firing on unarmed protesters in the occupied southern city of Kherson.

A series of videos posted on social media and the messaging app Telegram showed citizens gathering in Kherson's "Freedom Square" protesting against Russia's recent seizure of the city. Russian soldiers could be seen firing into the air, and video footage showing a bleeding elderly man being carried away, though local officials said there were no fatalities.

### 'Massive war crime'

On the frontlines, authorities said evacuation of residents from Mariupol will be the priority on Tuesday. Three routes have been drawn up linking the port city to Zaporizhzhia, Vereshchuk said. European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell had described as a "massive war crime" the siege of Mariupol, which had killed more than 2,000 people.

Russia had given Mariupol until 5:00 am on Monday to surrender, but Kyiv rejected the ultimatum and said the city's resistance was bolstering the defence of all of Ukraine. Mariupol is a pivotal target in Putin's war-providing a land bridge between Russian forces in Crimea to the southwest and Russian-controlled territory to the north and east.

While little progress had been made from diplomatic efforts to solve the conflict, Zelensky once again renewed a call for direct discussions with his



BUDAPEST, Hungary: Ukrainians arrive at the BOK sports hall (Budapest Olympic Center), where a new transit shelter for Ukrainian refugees was installed, in the Hungarian capital Budapest on March 22, 2022. —AFP

Russian counterpart. "If I have this opportunity and Russia has the desire, we would go through all the questions," he told Ukrainian journalists in an interview published by media outlet Suspilne.

"Would we solve them all? No. But there is chance, that we partially could-at least to stop the war," he added. Zelensky said he was even willing to discuss Russian-occupied Crimea and the break-away Russian regions in Donbas, though he insisted he still believes they must be returned to Ukraine.

"At the first meeting with the president of Russia, I am ready to raise these issues," he said, adding that any agreement involving "historic" changes would be put to a national referendum. "This is a very difficult story for everyone. Crimea and Donbas... And to find a way out, we need to take this first step, which I spoke about: security guarantees, the end of the

war," he said.

He repeated his assertion that Ukraine "already understood" it could not join NATO, but he added that his countrymen would not simply "hand over" the capital, the eastern city of Kharkiv, or the heavily bombed and besieged southern port of Mariupol. "Ukraine cannot fulfil Russian ultimatums," he said. "We should be destroyed first."

### Trust fund

In Kyiv, a 35-hour curfew came into effect from 8:00 pm (1800 GMT) Monday, after Russian strikes laid waste to the "Retroville" shopping complex, killing at least eight people. "It's the biggest bomb to have hit the city until now," said 30-year-old Dima Stepanenko, who found himself flung to "the foot of his bed" by the explosion. —AFP



WASHINGTON: Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson testifies on her nomination to become an Associate Justice of the US Supreme Court during a Senate Judiciary Committee confirmation hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, March 22, 2022. —AFP

## Biden's SC pick faces grilling from senators

**WASHINGTON:** The confirmation hearings for Supreme Court nominee Ketanji Brown Jackson are expected to heat up Tuesday as she is grilled by senators in her bid to be the first Black woman on the country's highest judicial bench.

The federal judge, who briefly introduced herself to the American public at the start of the televised sessions on Monday, will face hours of questioning on her sentencing record and judicial philosophy. Jackson, a 51-year-old Harvard graduate, is widely expected to be confirmed to succeed fellow liberal Justice Stephen Breyer, who retires this summer.

Her addition to the 6-3 conservative-leaning bench will not shift the balance of power but it would make history. Of 115 Supreme Court justices, 108 have been white men. After a first day of opening statements from Jackson and members of the Judiciary Committee, the business end of the process begins as senators get 50 minutes each over two days for questions.

"Over the course of the week, I expect the American people will finally see for themselves why Judge Jackson is one of the most qualified individuals ever to be nominated to the Supreme Court of the United States," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said in a statement.

A Politico/Morning Consult poll out Tuesday shows that 47 percent of voters think Jackson should be confirmed, while 19 percent are against. The support is likely partly explained by the Republican strategy — at least in the early stages — of not turning the confirmation into a major partisan fight.

Keen to keep the focus on kitchen table issues like inflation that will resonate in November's midterm elections, conservatives have trodden lightly so far, although Jackson can expect a rougher ride over the coming days.

### 'Without fear or favor'

During the first day of hearings, Jackson vowed to defend the "grand experiment of American democracy" and assured senators she always applied the law "without fear or favor." But the session heard from several Republicans who suggested that the former public defender was "soft on crime."

Republicans don't have the votes to stop President Joe Biden's nominee from being confirmed, but politicians often use the national spotlight of Supreme Court confirmations to further their own political ambitions.

Republican Senator Josh Hawley, who rejects widespread speculation that he intends to run for president in 2024, listed several cases he called examples of Jackson being too lenient in sentencing convicts in child pornography cases. The Democratic leadership has angrily rejected the accusation, accusing Hawley of selectively picking quotes and context to suit his narrative, while independent factcheckers have debunked most of Hawley's claims.

Republicans are expected to focus during questioning on Tuesday on committing Jackson to a position on so-called "court packing" — or efforts to manipulate the bench's membership for partisan ends. She is also likely to face several hours being interrogated on her judicial philosophy, whether she will seek to interpret the law or to remake it according to her political views. —AFP

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## International

# Police seek motive in deadly Sweden school attack

## Investigators search suspect's home in the nearby town

**MALMO, Sweden:** Police in Sweden were Tuesday attempting to determine why an 18-year-old student allegedly killed two teachers at a high school a day earlier in an attack that has shaken the country. The two victims, both women in their 50s, were teachers at Malmo Latin, a large high school in Sweden's third-biggest city, police said at a press conference on Tuesday.

Media reports said the suspect, whose name has not been disclosed, was armed with a knife and an axe, though police have not confirmed that information. Police chief Petra Stenkula said police had seized "several weapons that are not firearms" at the scene.

Investigators were now trying to determine whether the suspect specifically targeted his victims or chose them at random, and whether he had planned to attack more people. "We don't know yet if he had any connection to these employees", Stenkula told reporters.

The student "has no criminal record", she said, adding that police were looking into his background and movements prior to the attack. Investigators were on Tuesday searching the suspect's home in the nearby town of Trelleborg, she added.

Police were alerted to the attack at 5:12 pm (1612 GMT) and a first patrol was able to enter the school minutes later. About 50 students and teachers were inside at the time, and news footage

showed heavily equipped and armed police inspecting the interior of the building.

### Recent attacks

The suspect was arrested on the third floor just 10 minutes after the first alert, putting up no resistance, Stenkula said. His two victims were lying on the floor nearby, she added. The teachers were rushed to hospital for treatment but their deaths were announced later in the evening.

According to daily Aftonbladet, the alleged attacker called emergency services to say where he was and that he had laid down his weapons, and confessed to the killings. Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson on Tuesday expressed her "sadness" and "consternation" over the attack.

At the high school, which was closed on Tuesday, a support group has been set up for teachers and students, local authorities said. "Everyone is deeply shocked. Devastated," a teacher at the school who didn't want to be identified told AFP on Tuesday.

"It's an awful crime, it's impossible to take it all in", she said, standing outside the school where a group of about 20 students stood hugging and crying, some with flowers to lay down on the ground. School attacks are relatively rare in Sweden, which has in recent years grown more accustomed to shootings and bombings in underworld settlements of scores that kill dozens of people each year.



**MALMO, Sweden:** Swedish Chief of Malmo Police Petra Stenkula (2nd L) and Director of High School and Adult Education Annelie Schwartz hold a press conference at the Malmo Latin School on March 22, 2022 in Malmo, Sweden, a day after two women were killed. — AFP

But several serious incidents have taken place at schools in southern Sweden in recent months. In January, a 16-year-old was arrested after wounding another student and a teacher with a knife at a school in the small town of Kristianstad. That incident was

linked to a similar knife attack in August 2021 in the town of Eslov, about 50 kilometres (30 miles) away, when a student attacked a 45-year-old school employee. No link has been established between those two events and the Malmo attack. — AFP

## Rights group urges Uganda to shut secret 'torture' sites

**KAMPALA, Uganda:** Uganda's government must stop using illegal detention centres as a weapon against dissidents and close the facilities, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said Tuesday in a report documenting the prevalence of torture at the clandestine sites.

The report featured interviews with 51 people, including 34 former detainees and eyewitnesses to abductions, who described a litany of abuse at the hands of police, army officials and Uganda's domestic intelligence agency, the Internal Security Organisation (ISO), between April 2019 and November 2021.

The crackdown reached fever pitch during the two months leading up to and following Uganda's January 2021 general elections, which saw government critics, opposition politicians and protesters unlawfully detained and forcibly disappeared.

In many cases, the whereabouts of those detained remain unknown, HRW said, more than a year after the re-election of President Yoweri Museveni, who has ruled Uganda with an iron fist since 1986. "Human Rights Watch calls on the government of Uganda to immediately close all so-called safehouses and other unauthorised detention centres," the global rights body said.

"The authorities should immediately release all detainees held in such places of detention or bring them promptly before a court to be charged." Victims told HRW about being bundled into vans known as "drones", which are associated with abductions of government opponents in Uganda, before being taken to secret detention sites supervised by the ISO.

The locations ranged from residential neighbourhoods in the capital Kampala to an island in Lake Victoria, where detainees were allegedly tortured, with their captors pulling out their fingernails, burning their bodies with an iron or sexually assaulting them.

### 'I was crucified'

In some cases, victims were handcuffed, chained and suspended from the ceiling for a dozen hours at a time, in a technique called "Rambo". A pregnant



**ENTEBBE, Uganda:** This handout picture taken on March 17, 2022 and released by Presidential Press Unit Uganda, shows General Abdel Fattah Abdelrahman Al Burhan (L), the Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council of the Republic of the Sudan and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni (R) posing prior to a bilateral talks at the State House. — AFP

detainee told HRW she was raped twice and beaten by an officer while in custody, causing her to miscarry and undergo a hysterectomy. After leaving the hospital, she was tortured once more. "I was tied up—they called it "Rambo"—I was crucified," she said.

Others spoke of being injected with unknown substances or subjected to electric shocks, while some described seeing detainees with bricks hanging from their testicles. Hassan Mutyaba, a businessman who spent eight months in captivity, told a press conference in Kampala most of his fellow detainees were too frightened to speak out publicly. "We are not going to survive. Today (I) am here but I won't be there tomorrow because I have come out," he said at the event organised by HRW.

In February 2020, the parliament's house committee on human rights published a report documenting cases of torture at detention centres operated by the police and ISO and called for further investigations. But no such probes have taken place, HRW said.

"Urgent steps are needed to help victims, to hold abusive security agents to account, and to end this spectre of impunity and injustice," said Oryem Nyeko, Uganda researcher at HRW. In recent years, Uganda has witnessed a series of crackdowns aimed at stamping out dissent, with journalists attacked, lawyers jailed, election monitors prosecuted and opposition leaders violently muzzled. — AFP

## Libya tensions simmer in shadow of Ukraine war

**TRIPOLI, Libya:** With the world focused on Ukraine, UN mediators are trying to avoid a political crisis degenerating into new violence in Libya, where Russia has long been a major player. The war-battered North African country found itself with two governments earlier this month after the eastern-based House of Representatives appointed ex-interior minister Fathi Bashagha in a challenge to the Tripoli-based premier, Abdulhamid Dbeibah.

Bashagha came to power on the back of an alliance with eastern Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar, Moscow's main ally in Libya with backing from the Kremlin-linked Wagner paramilitary group. But Dbeibah, who was installed last year as part of a United Nations-led peace process, has insisted he will only cede power to an elected administration.

Bashagha has ruled out using force to dislodge his rival, but the standoff has sparked fears of a return to violence in a country that has seen a decade of chaos since the 2011 revolt that toppled dictator Muammar Gaddafi. On March 10, pro-Bashagha armed groups deployed on the edges of the capital, raising fears of a confrontation that would end a fragile ceasefire in place since October 2020.

But Khaled al-Montasser, an international relations professor at the University of Tripoli, said Bashagha had placed a losing bet against Dbeibah. "He thought that as long as he had the vote of confidence from parliament, he could easily get rid of the internationally-supported government," said Montasser. "It quickly became clear he was wrong."

### 'Parallel governments'

The UN, keen to avoid the collapse of a hard-won ceasefire in place for the past 17 months, has called for calm and offered to mediate in the standoff. Last week, the permanent members of the UN Security Council avoided taking sides in the dispute-except Russia, which openly backed Bashagha.

Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo warned in a briefing to the Security Council that "the Libyan executive is facing a crisis that could, if left unresolved, lead to instability and parallel govern-



**PARIS:** This combination of pictures created on March 22, 2022 shows Libya's presidential candidate and former interior minister Fathi Bashagha in Benghazi and another one dated June 1, 2021 of Libyan Interim Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah addressing the media at the Elysee presidential palace in Paris after a meeting with the French president. — AFP

ments in the country".

Stephanie Williams, the world body's top Libya official, has been urging the sides to accept mediation over a new constitutional basis for elections, a key bone of contention. She is set to meet representatives of the Tripoli-based High State Council in the Tunisian capital on Tuesday, but parliament has yet to respond publicly to her mediation offer or appoint its own delegates.

### Oil blockade?

Analyst Faraj al-Dali told AFP that to avoid two rival administrations taking root, foreign actors should push for peaceful solutions and dialogue. That would clearly show that "the international community and the United States don't want to see war return in Libya, especially in the current context of the war between Russia and Ukraine", he said.

US Ambassador Richard Norland, who met Bashagha in Tunis on Sunday, said "choosing one camp at the expense of the other is not an option". While diplomats are not openly discussing the possibility that Russia would push Haftar to install Bashagha in Tripoli by force, some believe he could use his control over oil export terminals as a weapon by halting shipments-at a sensitive time for European energy markets. — AFP

## Amir hails KNPC clean fuels...

Continued from Page 1

with a view to producing high-quality oil byproducts that comply with relevant global criteria and requirements. He added that the project mirrors Kuwait's endeavor to become an attractive economic hub, and is part of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's strategic goals of making best use of the country's oil resources, given that it would contribute to boosting national earnings, opening new world markets and promoting Kuwait's lead-

ing status in the global oil industry. Fares said the significance of the project stems from the fact that the oil sector is the key pillar of Kuwait's national economy, and that's why the state, topped by HH the Amir and HH the Crown Prince, pays much attention to this natural resource and is keen on developing this vital sector.

He noted that to maintain its competitive edge, the Kuwaiti oil sector has always been eager to keep up with the latest developments of this industry and to fulfill its variable requirements by means of using cutting-edge technology and developing human capabilities and skills. The minister concluded by speaking highly of the oil sector's strategic policies and plans in qualifying and training Kuwaiti young people in efficiently running the country's oil affairs. — KUNA

extremist. "There is a perception that there is different types of Islam," he told the 57-nation IOC gathering. "The moment you say you are a moderate Muslim, you acknowledge extremism," he added, saying this suggested there was division on the issue of blasphemy. Khan long campaigned against growing anti-Muslim sentiment, and takes credit for the UN's move last week to adopt an International Day to Combat Islamophobia.

In a speech that at times seemed aimed more at a domestic audience than a gathering of foreign diplomats, Khan said he was inspired to enter politics by the example of the "perfect" society that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) created in Madinah centuries ago. He also railed against corruption among the elite and what he called permissiveness in Pakistan, a state that has grown increasingly conservative and patriarchal over the past four decades. — AFP

## Egypt's Sisi hosts UAE, Zionist leaders

**CAIRO:** Egypt hosted the Zionist and UAE leaders for unprecedented three-way talks Tuesday as the Ukraine war rocks energy and food markets and major powers inch toward a revived Iran nuclear deal. The summit was held in the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh between Egypt's President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, Prime Minister of the Zionist entity Naftali Bennett and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed.

It comes nearly a month after Russia invaded Ukraine in a move that sparked concerns about security and sent prices of oil, wheat and other key commodities soaring. Egypt, the Zionist entity and the United Arab Emirates are allies of the United States but they have so far avoided taking positions against Russia over its war on Ukraine.

"Against the backdrop of the recent developments in the world and the region, the leaders discussed the ties between the three countries and ways to strengthen them on all levels," said a statement from Bennett's office. It was the first summit of its kind, and signaled "a new doctrine" of regional diplomacy championed by the UAE, said Mustafa Kamel Al-Sayyid, a professor of political science at Cairo University.

Bennett and Sheikh Mohammed had arrived in Egypt on Monday. At their meeting on Tuesday, the three leaders discussed "energy, market stability, and food security," Egyptian presidency spokesman Bassam Radi said. Zionist media said the leaders would also discuss reports that Iran and Western



**SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt:** Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Egypt's President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, and Prime Minister of the Zionist entity Naftali Bennett pose after a meeting in this Egyptian Red Sea resort. — AFP

powers, including the United States, are close to a deal to revive the 2015 nuclear accord.

Bennett is vehemently opposed to the deal which is designed to prevent the Zionist entity's arch foe Iran from acquiring an atomic bomb - a goal the Islamic republic has always denied. The Zionist leader on Sunday appealed to the United States not to remove Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps from its blacklist of foreign terrorist organizations as part of a renewed deal.

Bennett also travelled to Sharm el-Sheikh in September last year, in what was the first visit in over a decade by a Zionist head of government. Egypt was the first Arab country to sign a peace treaty with the Zionist entity in 1979, after decades of enmity and conflict. — AFP

## Khan hosts OIC meeting of FM's...

Continued from Page 1

which serves as a model for a new form of diplomatic ties," Wang said. Khan is hosting the conference whilst scrambling to fight a no-confidence vote in the National Assembly as early as next week, with the opposition accusing him of mismanaging the economy and foreign policy.

In an address to dozens of foreign ministers, he partly blamed Muslims for allowing Islamophobia to spread, saying they had not united against actions deemed blasphemous for fear of being labelled



## International

# Chinese recovery teams sift debris of crashed China Eastern jet

## President Xi Jinping calls for a full probe following the crash

**WUZHOU, China:** Chinese recovery teams Tuesday picked through the debris of a crashed China Eastern jet after it inexplicably plummeted from the sky into a mountainside with 132 people on board. Hopes of finding any survivors had all but vanished a day after the Boeing 737-800 passenger jet nosedived into the mountain-likely making it China's deadliest air crash in nearly three decades.

Questions mounted over the cause of the crash, which saw the stricken jet drop 20,000 feet (6,096 metres) in just over a minute before plunging into rugged terrain in southern China on Monday afternoon. The airline has acknowledged that some aboard the jet, which was travelling from the city of Kunming to the southern hub of Guangzhou, had died, but there has been no official confirmation of the number of dead.

President Xi Jinping quickly called for a full probe following the crash as search teams armed with drones descended upon the site in a forested, rural area of Guangxi province. On Tuesday, scorch marks were visible from the crash and resulting fire, rescue workers told AFP, with one speculating that passengers had been "totally incinerated" from the intensity of the blaze.

A villager near the sprawling crash site, giving only his surname Ou, recounted hearing a "sound like thunder" followed by a blaze that blistered the surrounding hills. State media showed uniformed search teams clambering over upturned earth, blasted trees and scattered debris, including a section of plane bearing the carrier's blue and red livery.

A torn wallet and a burned camera lens were among the eviscerated possessions captured on video by a reporter from the state-run People's Daily who was able to enter the crash site. But AFP journalists were blocked at a hillside checkpoint by a group of men identifying themselves as Communist Party

members who said they had "orders from above" to prevent access. The disaster occurred after a high-speed vertical nosedive, according to a video carried by Chinese media. AFP could not immediately verify the video's authenticity.

### 'Miss you forever'

Flight MU5735, which took off from Kunming shortly after 1:00 pm (0500 GMT), lost contact over Wuzhou, a city in the Guangxi region, according to China's aviation authority. The foreign ministry said Tuesday they believed all passengers on board were Chinese nationals.

In Guangzhou airport, staff assisted loved ones of the 123 passengers and nine crew members aboard the plane, which stopped sending any flight information after dropping a total of 26,000 feet in altitude in just three minutes.

Relatives and friends of those onboard endured a grim wait for news. A user on Weibo, China's Twitter-like platform, wrote that he was a friend of a crew member on the crashed plane. "I will miss you forever," he wrote, describing the "enthusiasm" his friend took to his new job this year.

The disaster prompted an unusually swift public reaction from Xi, who said he was "shocked" and called for "absolute safety" in air travel. State media said Vice Premier Liu He, a powerful official close to Xi who usually deals with economic matters, had been dispatched to the area to oversee rescue and investigation work.

The US National Transportation Safety Board said it had named a senior investigator as a representative to the probe, and that officials from Boeing, General Electric and the Federal Aviation Administration would be technical advisers. Flight tracking website FlightRadar24 showed the plane sharply dropped from an altitude of 29,100 feet to 7,850 feet in just over a



**WUZHOU, China:** Paramilitary police officers conducting a search at the site of the China Eastern Airlines plane crash in Tengxian county, Wuzhou city, in China's southern Guangxi region. A China Eastern passenger jet carrying 132 people crashed onto a mountainside in southern China on March 21. —AFP

minute.

After a brief upswing, it plunged to 3,225 feet, the tracker said. Jean-Paul Troadec, former director of France's Bureau of Enquiry and Analysis for Civil Aviation Safety, told AFP it was "far too early" to draw conclusions, but said the FlightRadar data pattern was "very unusual".

health crisis with the needs of the world's second biggest economy.

Shenyang, an industrial base home to factories including carmaker BMW, reported 47 new cases Tuesday as authorities put all housing compounds under "closed management" and barred residents from leaving without a 48-hour negative test result.

Last week Chinese President Xi Jinping stressed the need to "minimise the impact" of the pandemic on China's economy, but also urged officials to "stick to" the current zero-COVID approach. But

China had enjoyed an enviable air safety record in recent years, despite a huge boom in travel. Chinese media reported that the airline will now ground all the 737-800 jets. The deadliest Chinese commercial flight accident was a China Northwest Airlines crash in 1994 that killed all 160 onboard. —AFP

## China locks down city of 9 million as virus ripples

**BEIJING:** China locked down an industrial city of nine million people overnight and reported more than 4,000 virus cases on Tuesday, as the nation's "zero-COVID" strategy is confronted by an

Omicron wave. Health authorities reported 4,770 new infections across the country, the bulk in the northeastern province of Jilin, as the city of Shenyang in neighbouring Liaoning province was ordered to lock down late Monday.

China has moved fast in recent weeks to snuff out virus clusters with a pick-and-mix of hyper-local lockdowns, mass testing and citywide closures. It reported two COVID-19 deaths on Saturday, the first in over a year. Authorities have warned of the risk posed to growth by persistent lockdowns as the country strives to balance the

## HK martial arts teacher charged over sedition

**HONG KONG:** A Hong Kong martial arts coach accused of running an armed separatist movement with his assistant has been charged with sedition, police said Tuesday, after a raid that seized weapons including crossbows and machetes.

Police allege the coach, 59, and a 62-year-old female assistant — both of whom face weapons charges — set up a martial arts training hall to "incite hatred" against the government and organise "an armed force for Hong Kong independence".

"The arrested persons were deeply affected by misinformation and became self-radicalised... Now they are spreading the misinformation to others," senior superintendent Steve Li told a press conference. Hong Kong's colonial-era sedition law, which lay unused for decades, has reemerged in the past year as a key tool in the ongoing crackdown on dissent that followed 2019's massive democracy protests.

Authorities said they are also considering more serious charges for the duo under the sweeping national security law Beijing imposed on the city in response to the at-times violent demonstrations. The male suspect was charged with one count of sedition, while both suspects faced charges related to the possession of weapons and firearms without a license, police confirmed Tuesday afternoon.

The suspects — arrested Sunday in the city's Tsim Sha Shui district — are accused of posting anti-government messages including calls to topple China's communist regime and for a "shadow government and self-defence force" to be established.

"With this vicious cycle, we are very worried those radicalised will go one step further and com-



**HONG KONG, China:** Hong Kong Police Force on March 22, 2022 shows crossbows, machetes, currency and other related items seized during a police raid on a martial arts studio, where a Hong Kong martial arts coach and assistant accused of running an armed separatist movement. —AFP

mit terrorist attacks," Li said. The arrests came after Hong Kong's National Security Department — which enforces the law — sent an undercover officer to the martial arts studio, where the two suspects were teaching "combat tai chi". Police said they found unlawful weapons including an airgun, eight crossbows, 30 steel-tipped arrows and a collection of blades. Airguns exceeding a certain level of power are considered firearms under Hong Kong law.

The suspects also allegedly urged people to resist anti-coronavirus policies, opposing the government's contact-tracing app and vaccination drives, police said. Sedition carries a maximum penalty of two years in prison.

Hong Kong authorities have increasingly applied the label of "sedition" to speech that challenges official policies on the coronavirus. Last month, singer Tommy Yuen and two others were arrested over social media posts that urged people to defy COVID-19 restrictions. —AFP

ported Marcos Jr, who he has previously described as "weak".

Presidential spokesman Martin Andanar said Duterte's position was "not clear". Outgoing presidents usually identify their preferred successor, who they hope will shield them from criminal charges brought by rivals as much as protect their legacy.

They rarely end up winning. Duterte, who is constitutionally barred from seeking a second six-year term and remains popular among many Filipinos, had chosen loyal aide Senator Christopher Go to replace him, but he pulled out of the contest.

Since then, Duterte has been cryptic about who he wants to see in the presidential palace. He recently said the next leader should be a lawyer and compassionate-raising eyebrows among observers as the description seemed to best fit his nemesis, incumbent Vice President Leni Robredo, who is a distant second behind Marcos Jr in the polls.

The positions of president and vice president are elected separately in the Philippines. But University of the Philippines political science professor Jean Franco said PDP-Laban's backing was "tantamount to Duterte endorsing the candidacies of Marcos and his daughter". —AFP

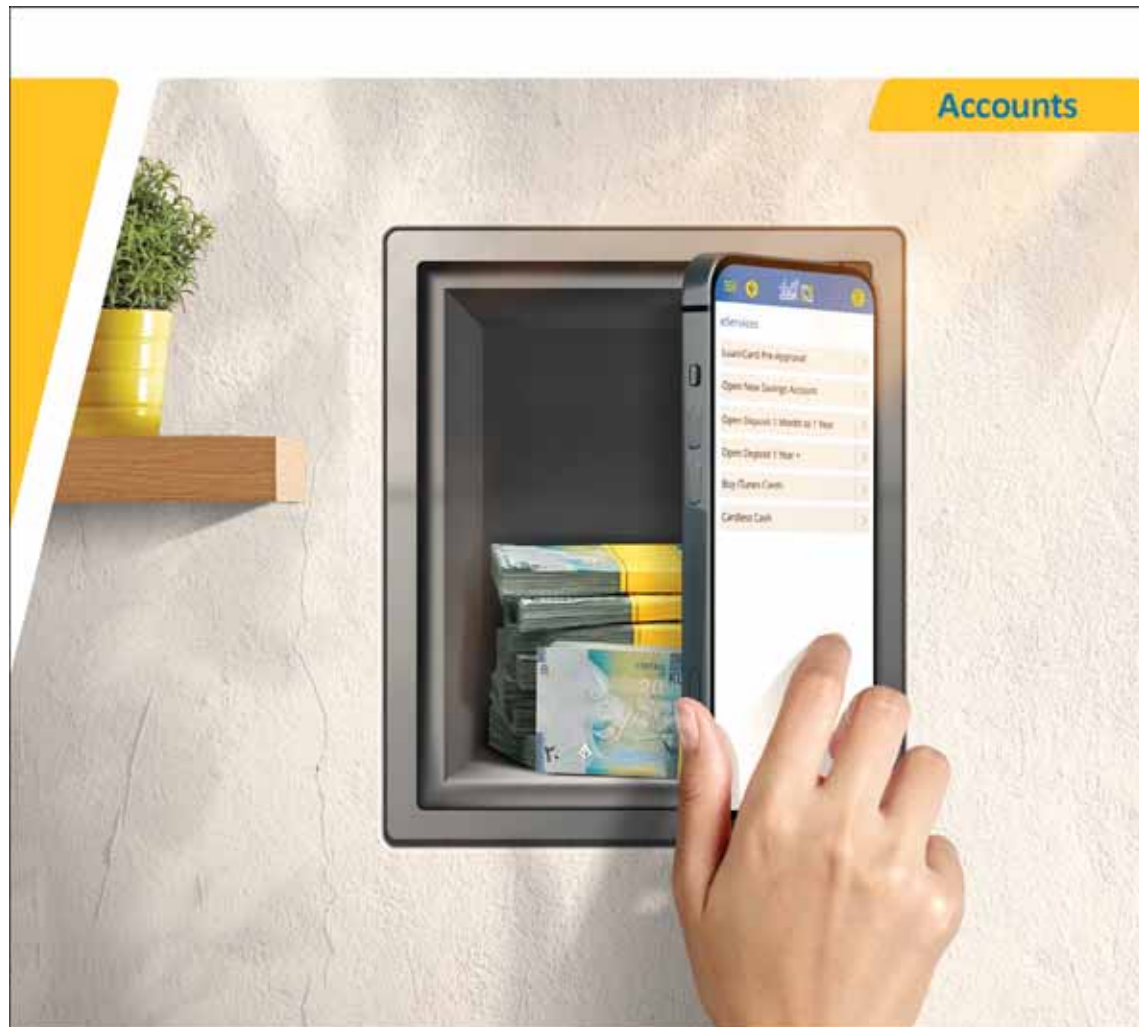
## Duterte's party backs Marcos heir for Philippine presidency

**MANILA:** Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's party on Tuesday threw its support behind presidential election favourite Ferdinand Marcos Junior, as his main rival appears to gain momentum in the race for the top job.

Voter surveys show the son and namesake of the country's former dictator heading towards a landslide victory in the May 9 polls, fuelled by a massive social media campaign pumping out positive misinformation about him.

Marcos Jr, 64, has teamed up with vice presidential frontrunner and first daughter Sara Duterte, in a formidable alliance between the scions of two of the country's most powerful political families.

"We are endorsing the candidacy of Bongbong Marcos Jr-this is a party decision," said Alfonso Cusi, president of PDP-Laban and leader of the pro-Duterte faction of the party. Cusi would not confirm if the decision meant Duterte also sup-



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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2022

# Business



KUWAIT: (From left) Talal Al-Muzaini from Deloitte, Zain Group Chairman Ahmed Al-Tahous, Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi and Zain Group Chief Financial Officer Ossama Matta



KUWAIT: Bader Al-Kharafi (center) addresses the annual general assembly as Ahmed Al-Tahous (left) and Ossama Matta (right) look on at Zain Group's headquarters yesterday.

## Zain Group holds Annual General Assembly with a quorum of 75.14%

### Dividend of 23 fils per share for second half of 2021 approved

#### Bader Al-Kharafi: Our 4Sight strategy empowered Zain to be a leading technology innovator

KUWAIT: Zain Group Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on Tuesday at Zain Group's headquarters in Kuwait, that was livestreamed for shareholders and qualified parties and attended with a shareholder quorum of 75.14 percent. The AGM approved the recommended cash dividend of 23 percent (23 fils per share) for the second half of 2021, payable to the shareholders already registered in the company's record as of 6 April 2022. The cash dividends will be paid to eligible shareholders commencing 13 April 2022.

This cash dividend of 23 fils per share follows the semi-annual dividend of 10 fils distributed in the second half of 2021, thus totaling 33 fils per share dividend for the year. This third consecutive payment of 33 fils per share on an annual basis completes the company's three-year minimum commitment that started in 2019. Zain Group Chairman, Ahmed Al-Tahous said: The Board of Directors welcomes all shareholders and affiliated parties to the annual General Assembly, and we are pleased to present the Zain Group annual report, available only in digital format.

2021 was a successful year in terms of driving shareholder value given the board and management's focus on operational efficiency, significant investment in network upgrades, while managing the negative effects of the pandemic on our operations. As economic activity across our footprint generally recovers, Zain is well prepared to exploit the multiple opportunities opening as demand for telecommunications

#### Driving financial performance

The solid performance in 2021 reflects the success of monetization initiatives implemented by management across Zain markets. The significant investments we have made in 5G roll-outs in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain; 4G upgrades and new network sites across Iraq, Jordan, Sudan and South Sudan; and expansion of Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) infrastructure; as well as spectrum license fees paid have made Zain future-ready to exploit the next phase of growth. Throughout 2021, Zain Group invested USD 1.1 billion in CAPEX (21 percent of revenue).

For the full-year 2021, Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 1.5 billion (\$5 billion), a year-on-year (Y-o-Y) decrease of 5 percent. Consolidated EBITDA for the period declined by 5 percent Y-o-Y, to KD 628 million (\$2.1 billion), reflecting an EBITDA margin of 41 percent. Consolidated net income reached KD 186 million (\$616 million), up 2 percent Y-o-Y and reflecting earnings per share of 43 fils (\$0.14).

For the full-year 2021, currency devaluations in Sudan from 55 in January 2021 to 436 (SDG/USD) end of December 2021; in South Sudan from 175 in January 2021 to 426 (SSP/USD) end of December 2021; and a 19 percent currency devaluation in Iraq from 1,190 to 1,470 (IQD / USD) resulted in a foreign currency translation impact of \$962 million in revenue and \$479 million in EBITDA.

Notably, if the \$962 million currency translation impact on revenue was excluded, Y-o-Y revenue would have grown

provider. ZainTech unifies Zain Group's ICT assets to offer enterprises and governments a unique value proposition for comprehensive enterprise digital solutions and transformation services under one roof.

The entity will provide a center of excellence and managed solutions across the ICT stack including cloud, cyber-security, big data, IoT, AI, smart cities, drones, and emerging technologies. ZainTech leverages Zain's global reach, unique footprint and infrastructure across its operations as well as other key markets in the Middle East to offer a single point of contact for sales and personalized customer care for multinational corporations with multiple points of presence across the region.

#### Fostering innovation in fintech

Innovating and scaling mobile financial services across our operating markets is a key focus as we aim to fulfill our fintech aspirations of creating the first telco-led challenger bank in the region. Through fintech, we provide far-reaching benefits to exposed groups and others.

We are energized by the customer uptake and transaction growth we have experienced with 'Tamam', our micro-financing arm in Saudi Arabia, 'ZainCash' mobile money platforms in Jordan and Iraq, and 'Al-Gurush' in South Sudan. We will continue to foster innovations in fintech and have plans to launch fintech services in Kuwait, Bahrain and Sudan in 2022.

#### Regulatory policies critical to our success

Since the beginning of the pandemic, and to support the upsurge in demand, national regulatory authorities granted Zain temporary spectrum or rights to use existing frequencies on a technology-neutral basis across our footprint. Zain also invested \$379 million in 2021 to acquire additional spectrum licenses in several markets to provide sound connectivity and offer a wider array of digital services.

The region witnessed various forms of legislation and regulations implemented by telecom and financial services regulators to accelerate digital transformation, including in the areas of cloud computing, electronic payments, and enforcement of electronic contracts through the judicial system. These initiatives will serve to boost the take-up of digital services, and Zain is primed to maximize the opportunities in this space.

#### Corporate governance and compliance

Zain Group adopts a conservative approach to making decisions related to risk management, and adheres to the highest standards of corporate governance, as the Board of Directors works to ensure that the culture of accountability and compliance with laws, regulations and best practices is adopted Group-wide. Every employee across Zain entities is committed to the Group's Code of Conduct, all operating in a transparent manner and championing the principles of good corporate governance. Through these values and principles,



Zain Group Chairman Ahmed Al-Tahous

“ Zain aiming to establish stronger foothold with government and enterprises across the region, and providing meaningful connectivity to the communities we serve ”



Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi

“ Bader Al-Kharafi: Annual dividend reflects a 77 percent payout ratio, one of the highest in the region, indicative of the strength of our financial solvency and solid operational performance ”

services continues to rise by individuals and enterprises alike. Our 4G and 5G networks, data centers, cloud and other customer facing digital platforms are all future ready and operating at optimal levels.

Zain looks forward unlocking opportunities brought by the 4th Industrial revolution, establishing a strong foothold within the government and enterprise sector and providing meaningful connectivity to the communities we serve. We express our sincere appreciation for the confidence shown to us by our valued customers and shareholders, as well as by all the government ministries and regulatory authorities across our markets given their support in overcoming the challenges of the emerging industry dynamics.

Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi said: The annual dividend payout of 33 fils reflects a 77 percent payout ratio, one of the highest in the region, providing a clear indication of the strength of Zain's financial solvency and solid operational performance. It also reflects the company's ability to execute on its profitable growth plans despite the continuing challenges of the pandemic and impact of unavoidable currency devaluations on the business.

2021 was a successful year in terms of driving shareholder value given the board and management's prudent execution of our sustainability-conscious 4Sight strategy that empowered Zain to be a leading technology innovator. Promoting digital inclusion is of critical importance for governments and businesses at the present time and Zain continues seeking new lucrative business verticals in the digital arena.

Given the presence of the pandemic, digital technologies are being relied upon in a growing manner to bridge the digital divide, prepare the workforce for more innovative jobs in the future, and develop secure digital platforms. Zain Group continues to accelerate investments in new business verticals, being one of the first telcos in the region to provide digital applications and platforms to support enterprises and governments, and it has continually built on that competitive advantage. We are also creating significant value for shareholders through the unlocking of capital and optimization of infrastructure assets through our tower sale and leaseback strategy.

There has been a surge in demand for broadband access due to the pandemic, and Zain has risen to the challenge across its markets. The company continues to diligently deal with other challenges including fluctuations in currency exchange rates, additional taxes, regulatory developments, intensified competition, the rise of unlicensed competitors, and the evolution of purchase patterns and consumer spending.

As we seek out new growth opportunities in a sustainable conscious manner, our priority remains to provide world-class telecommunication services to our valued customers while delivering excellent returns to shareholders and maintaining impeccable corporate governance.

by 13 percent to reach \$6 billion, and EBITDA would have grown by 17 percent for 2021.

We continue to manage significant currency devaluations in these countries by revamping prices and focusing on monetizing new digital services while seeking lucrative opportunities in the enterprise segment to capitalize on network roll-outs. The Group's operations achieved significant growth in digital service revenues, generating over \$2.1 billion, representing 42 percent of Zain Group's consolidated revenues for 2021.

#### Optimization of tower network

Portfolio optimization is a key component of the 4Sight strategy, unlocking capital and allocating resources for more effective and sustainable use. Accordingly, Zain has focused on sharing passive assets with competitors in some markets, thereby reducing its carbon footprint. In Kuwait and Jordan, Zain has moved to sell its towers and lease them back, while in Saudi Arabia, a tower sale is likely to be completed in early 2022. We have partnered with TASC Towers to expand our tower strategy to build on the success of the transaction in Jordan.

#### Revamping the wholesale business

In 2021, Zain relaunched its wholesale business, Zain Global Connect (ZGC), consolidating the capacity, voice and roaming businesses across Zain operating companies, ultimately evolving to become the single interface for all Zain operations. Zain Global Connect also serves as a resource for other international carriers having requirements within Zain's footprint. The wholesale company seeks to become a truly regional carrier, opening up new revenue streams for the Group through local, regional, and international activities.

#### ZainTech offering full suite of digital and ICT services under one roof

We are confident that the introduction of ZainTech in October 2021 will drive shareholder value and support Zain's vision of becoming a leading ICT and digital lifestyle

#### Zain Ventures supports the entrepreneurial ecosystem

We aim to foster digital transformation in our operating markets by investing in innovative digital services to create opportunities that bridge the digital divide, ensure business continuity, and advance socio-economic development. Accordingly, Zain Ventures was established in 2021 to spearhead Zain's existing investment portfolio and diversify its range of activities.

We expanded our relationship with regional and international venture capital funds, namely MEVP, Wamda, Colle Capital, BECO Capital and Valor Capital. During 2021, Zain Ventures invested in and signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Pipe, a US-based financial technology company, which claims to be the world's first recurring revenue trading platform. We also invested in and signed a MoU with Swvl, a mass-transit industry leader that offers diversified transit solutions; and participated in ZoodPay's series B \$38 million fundraising, joining other global and existing investors.

#### Zain Esports attracting a large gaming community

The Middle East is one of the fastest-growing regions for gaming in the world and Zain esports aims to foster the growth of the ecosystem in the MENA region and unlock the potential of talent. Since the establishment of Zain esports in November 2020, the entity has held 16 tournaments attracting over 18,000 gaming participants, over 43 million social media impressions, and 5.7 million engagements on its Twitch, YouTube and other social media channels.

As a good corporate citizen, Zain esports co-published a Child Online Safety booklet in collaboration with Zain Group Corporate Sustainability and UNICEF, which was distributed to various esports clubs in the region. Gaming is one of the largest use cases for mobile and home broadband services and is destined to help Zain operating companies connect to the gaming community through its state-of-the-art infrastructure.

- Dividends for 2021 total 33 fils, inclusive of previous 10 fils distribution
- Cash dividends to be paid to eligible shareholders from 13 April 2022
- Zain's digital platforms are future ready and operating at optimal levels
- Zain continues seeking new lucrative business verticals in the digital arena

the Group looks to have a positive impact on the telecom sector across the communities it serves.

#### Corporate sustainability at the forefront

Continuing to drive systemic change in the communities in which Zain operates by providing access to meaningful connectivity, the company is guided by the four pillars of its five-year corporate sustainability strategy, which is centered on Climate Change, Social Business, Inclusion, and Generation Youth. The company addresses societal deficits and challenges across its operations through foundational elements that include the furthering of its aim to safeguard the planet, fostering innovation, reducing inequalities, and building prosperous communities.

Zain is committed to implementing programs that make it a cleaner, more efficient, and environmentally friendly organization. Climate action also continued to be a critical item for Zain as the effects of climate change are evident across regions. Our climate efforts were recognized in December 2021 when Zain Group scored an A- in the latest CDP Score Report - Climate Change 2021, which ranks the company within the global leadership band and the highest ranked and only telecom operator in the Middle East and Africa.

#### Diversity and inclusion uplifts employees

We believe people are the company's greatest single differentiator, and so Zain takes the subject of uplifting its entire workforce extremely seriously and is proud to be one of the first telecom providers in the region to have established a diversity and inclusion department. We are focused on nurturing a diverse and inclusive culture, through a series of carefully crafted programs and initiatives, and we are beginning to see the fruits of our labor. The pillars of the diversity and inclusion drive are based on five strategic programs: WE, our gender diversity initiative that targets Zain having 25 percent of females in leadership roles; WE ABLE, our disability inclusive program; ZY, our youth development program; Internal Innovation through Zainiac initiative; and BE WELL, our mental wellness program. These initiatives have all been successful in creating a more inclusive organization. There has been a significant evolution in how we approach work and how leadership, culture, and values are established as being fundamental to nurturing an inclusive environment.

#### Zain's annual report available only in digital format

In accordance with the Zain Group Board of Directors' vision to address our environmental footprint wherever possible and in alignment with Zain's Corporate Sustainability strategy, for the first time, the company is not printing the Annual Report, transitioning to a digital format only. The 2021 Annual Report can be downloaded by visiting: <https://zain.com/en/investor-relations>



## Business

# In climate fight, rich nations must give up oil first: Report

## Rich countries asked to cap global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2034

**PARIS:** Rich countries must end their oil and gas production by 2034 to cap global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius and give poorer nations time to replace fossil fuel income, according to a report released Tuesday. The 70-page analysis from the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research comes as nearly 200 nations kicked off a two-week negotiation to validate a landmark assessment of options for reducing carbon pollution and extracting CO2 from the air.

The overarching objective, enshrined in the 2015 Paris Agreement, is to cap global warming “well below” 2C, and 1.5C if possible. A torrent of research since 2015, along with a crescendo of deadly extreme weather across the globe, has confirmed that the lower aspirational target is by far a safer threshold.

Some poorer nations produce only a tiny percentage of global output but are so reliant on fossil fuel revenues that rapidly removing this income could undercut their economic or political stability, the Tyndall Centre report shows.

Countries such as South Sudan, the Republic of Congo and Gabon have little economic revenue apart from oil and gas production. By contrast, wealthy nations that are major producers would remain rich even if fossil fuel income were removed.

Oil and gas revenue, for example, contribute eight percent to US GDP, but the country's GDP per capita would still be about \$60,000 — second highest in the world among oil and gas producing nations—without it, according to the report. “We use the GDP per capita that remains once we’ve removed the revenue from oil and gas as an indicator of capacity,” lead author Kevin Anderson, a professor of energy and climate change at the

University of Manchester, told AFP.

There are 88 countries in the world that produce oil and gas. “We calculated emissions phase-out dates for all of them consistent with the Paris Agreement temperature goals,” Anderson said. “We found that wealthy countries need to be at zero oil and gas production by 2034.”

### First coal, then oil & gas

The very poorest countries can continue to produce out to 2050, according to the calculation, and other countries such as China and Mexico are somewhere in between.

When countries signed the Paris climate treaty, it was accepted that wealthy nations should take bigger and faster steps to decarbonize their economies and provide financial support to help poorer countries wean themselves of fossil fuels. The principle has already been applied to coal-power generation, with the UN calling on rich OECD countries to phase out coal use by 2030, and the rest of the world by 2040.

The new report, Phaseout Pathways for Fossil Fuel Production, applies the same approach to oil and gas. For a 50/50 chance of limiting the rise in global temperatures to 1.5C, 19 countries in which per capita GDP would remain above \$50,000 without oil and gas revenue must end production by 2034. Included in this tranche are the US, Norway, Britain, Canada, Australia and the United Arab Emirates. Another 14 “high capacity” nations where per capita GDP would be about \$28,000 without income from oil and gas must end production in 2039, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Kazakhstan.

The next group of countries—including China,

eastern state of Brandenburg, is Tesla's first production site in Europe, and local officials are hoping it will help the region position itself as a hub for electric vehicle production. Tesla aims to eventually employ some 12,000 workers at the site who will churn out around 500,000 Model Y cars annually. The first 30 of the all-electric, compact SUVs to roll off the assembly line were delivered to customers during Tuesday's ceremony.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Economy Minister Robert Habeck were also in attendance. Tesla's arrival is likely to jolt Germany's flagship auto industry, setting the stage for fierce competition with rivals Volkswagen, BMW and Mercedes-Benz as they pivot from traditional engines to cleaner electric vehicles. Tesla's focus on Europe comes as the continent grapples with sky-high energy costs that have sent petrol prices soaring, prompting drivers to take a closer look at electric alternatives.

The “gigafactory” near Berlin is “one of the biggest strategic endeavors for Tesla over the last decade and should further vault its market share within Europe over the coming years as more consumers aggressively head down the EV path,” ana-

lysts at investment firm Wedbush said.

But as with other carmakers, shortages of raw materials and supply chain disruptions linked in part to Russia's invasion of Ukraine are weighing on Tesla. Musk said last week that the company was facing “significant recent inflation pressure”. — AFP



Brazil and Mexico—would need to end output by 2043, followed by Indonesia, Iran and Egypt in 2045. Only the poorest oil and gas producing nations such as Iraq, Libya and Angola could continue to pump crude and extract gas until mid-century. “This report illustrates only too clearly why there also needs to be an urgent phase-out of oil and gas production,” said Connie Hedegaard, former European Commissioner for climate, and Danish minister for climate and energy. The Russian invasion of Ukraine, she noted, has “made it abundantly clear that there are numerous rea-

sons why the world needs to get off its dependence on fossil fuels.”

Romain Loualalen, global policy lead at Oil Change International, said the report is a “stark indictment of the climate failure” of wealthy nations.

“Rich countries have twelve years to end their production of oil and gas but none has any plans to do so,” he said. “In fact, not only do they still account for more than a third of global production, but they also plan to produce five times as much oil and gas by 2030 as is compatible with the trajectory outlined in this report.” —AFP

## Elon Musk hands over first ‘made in Germany’ Teslas

**BERLIN:** US electric car pioneer Tesla on Tuesday inaugurated its new “gigafactory” near Berlin, with CEO Elon Musk flying in to present customers with the first Model Y vehicles made in Europe.

“Excited to hand over the first production cars made by Giga Berlin-Brandenburg tomorrow!” Musk tweeted on the eve of the red ribbon ceremony. The opening caps an arduous two-year approval and construction process that saw Tesla run into a series of administrative and legal hurdles, including complaints from locals about the site's environmental impact.

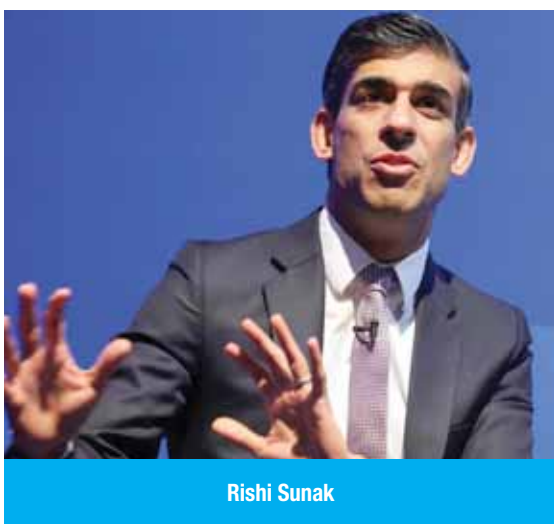
Having started construction at its own risk, Tesla finally won the formal go-ahead from regional authorities to begin production earlier this month. The “gigafactory” in Gruenheide, in Germany's



Elon Musk

lysts at investment firm Wedbush said.

But as with other carmakers, shortages of raw materials and supply chain disruptions linked in part to Russia's invasion of Ukraine are weighing on Tesla. Musk said last week that the company was facing “significant recent inflation pressure”. — AFP



Rishi Sunak

Sunak will deliver his budget statement before parliament around 1245 GMT on Wednesday. He has already hinted at cutting motor fuel duty, while media suggest he could also delay the looming increase in jobs tax. — AFP

## UK finances take inflation hit on eve of budget update

**LONDON:** UK state borrowing fell in February but debt interest ballooned on soaring inflation, data showed Tuesday on the eve of a budget update seeking to tackle surging living costs.

Public sector net borrowing dropped to £13.1 billion (\$17.2 billion, 15.6 billion euros) last month, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement. That marked an improvement from £15.5 billion in February one year ago, when the public purse was plagued by vast pandemic costs.

However, borrowing for last month massively overshot expectations of £8.3 billion, as interest repayments eclipsed rising tax receipts. Russia's Ukraine invasion has sent crude oil, domestic energy and food prices rocketing, exacerbating decades-high British inflation and sparking Bank of

England interest hikes that have hiked state borrowing costs.

At the same time, the data showed that inflation had ramped up tax revenue owing to higher consumer prices. Following the figures, finance minister Rishi Sunak's hands could be further tied regarding major giveaways in Wednesday's budget.

Sunak is facing widespread calls, even from fellow Tory MPs, to help ease surging living costs, with reports suggesting he could delay a jobs tax hike due next month. “The chancellor (of the exchequer) is clearly under huge pressure to fork out to help out with the cost of living crisis, but record levels of borrowing, combined with rising interest rates, will probably temper his generosity,” said AJ Bell analyst Laith Khalaf.

At the same time, Sunak will be comforted by recent news that Britain's unemployment rate has fallen to its pre-pandemic level. However, rising wages are being eroded at the fastest pace in eight years as inflation soars. “Even though the government is battling rising interest payments, it has support from a tightening labor market,” said Interactive Investor analyst Victoria Scholar.

## China's Russian traders smell profit as Ukraine sanctions bite

**BEIJING:** For Marat, a Russian businessman based in Shanghai, sanctions on his home country have heralded an unexpected opportunity in China as companies struggle to keep their supply chains open.

The 42-year-old has already been contacted by a components company hunting for partners in China after being cut off from its suppliers in Europe and North America. “Just be ready”, he said was the message from the firm based in Belarus, a Russian ally also under sanctions for supporting its invasion of Ukraine.

“It will be a bigger workload for me, and for sure, as a result, bigger rewards,” said Marat, who gave one name only due to the sensitivity of commenting on the war inside China. Since Russian President Vladimir Putin launched the bloody assault on Ukraine, Western capitals have frozen Moscow out of the global financial system, tipping its currency into freefall and pushing the country to the verge of default.

But China—a longtime Russian ally—has refused to follow suit, throwing Moscow a potential economic lifeline to match the diplomatic cover it has provided by refusing to condemn the invasion.

Beijing is already Moscow's largest trading partner, with trade volumes last year hitting \$147 billion, according to Chinese customs data, up more than 30 percent on 2019. There are early signs of a bounce in economic activity since the war erupted, with cross-border traders telling AFP they expect Russian demand to tilt eastwards. “This crisis is an opportunity for Russian companies in China,” another Russian entrepreneur based in Beijing told AFP, using the pseudonym Vladimir. “China is open. They're saying, ‘If you want to buy, we have [it],’” he said.

### Ruble trouble

But it has still been a rough few weeks for most Russia-facing businesses in China. Traders dealing in everything from pesticides to auto



BEIJING: This file photo taken on March 4, 2022 shows a man walking past a store advertising cargo shipping to Russia and other countries, along a street in Beijing. — AFP

parts said wild fluctuations in the value of the ruble have prodded many Russian clients to stop taking new orders.

Others were left racing to find ways to settle accounts in Chinese yuan after the exclusion of Russian banks from the SWIFT system left them unable to make dollar payments.

Meanwhile, shipments have been plagued by delays as major couriers refuse to accept Russia-bound consignments and some routes into the world's largest country are blocked. “Everyone is waiting for something more predictable,” said Beijing-based Vladimir, who specializes in importing Russian foodstuffs into China. —AFP

## EU eyes ‘trust fund’ for war-torn Ukraine

**BRUSSELS:** EU leaders intend to set up a “trust fund” for Ukraine as it battles Russia's invasion and to help it rebuild after the war, according to a draft document seen by AFP Tuesday.

Leaders from the 27-nation bloc meet in Brussels on Thursday for a two-day summit focused on dealing with the fallout from the Kremlin's assault on its pro-Western neighbor. “Bearing in mind the destruction and enormous losses brought upon Ukraine by Russia's military aggression, the European Union is committed to provide support to the Ukrainian Government for its immediate needs and, once the Russian onslaught has ceased, for the reconstruction of a democratic Ukraine,” the draft conclusions for the meeting said.

“To that end, the European Council agrees to set up a Ukraine Solidarity Trust Fund and calls for preparations to start without delay.” The draft, still under negotiation, gave no further details on the planned size or working of the fund.

It called for “an international conference to be organized in due time to raise funding under the Ukraine Solidarity Trust Fund”. EU chief Charles Michel first mooted the fund in a call with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky last Friday.

Michel said it would “help provide basic services and meet citizens' immediate needs” and would “give liquidity for continued support to authorities and in the longer term serve as backbone for reconstruction”. US President Joe Biden will also attend the EU summit on Thursday during a visit to Europe intended to underscore transatlantic unity in the face of Russia's aggression and bolster support for Ukraine. — AFP

## Stocks climb as investors track US rate stance

**LONDON:** Stock markets rose while oil prices steadied Tuesday as investors tracked developments in the war in Ukraine and digested the US Federal Reserve chief's warning of a possible sharp interest rate hike. Crude futures had soared more than seven percent Monday on supply worries as European leaders debated banning imports from Russia, but they were more or less flat in Tuesday trading.

Wall Street advanced around 0.8 percent in early deals, mirroring similar rises on main European markets. Some EU states want to ramp up pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin with energy sanctions, though others, including Germany—hugely reliant on Moscow's fuel—have been reluctant to target the key sector.

Adding to the price pressure, Saudi Arabia warned that Yemeni rebel attacks on its oil facilities pse a “direct threat” to global supplies, after Red Sea facilities belonging to giant Saudi Aramco were targeted. “Despite some optimism seen across markets resulting from the potential of peace talks between Russia and Ukraine, the oil market remains one of the most volatile,” noted Walid Koudmani, chief market analyst at XTB.

Soaring oil prices have been a driver of turmoil on world markets in recent weeks as demand surges also as economies reopen from pandemic lockdowns. That, along with a spike in the cost of other key commodities, such as metals and wheat on the Ukraine conflict, has sent global inflation rocketing and caused central banks to hike interest rates.

There is a growing fear that the global economy could endure a period of stagflation whereby prices soar but growth stalls. — AFP



## Business

# Biden tells US businesses to 'harden' defenses against Russia cyber threat

## Owners and operators asked to accelerate efforts to lock their digital doors

**WASHINGTON:** President Joe Biden on Monday warned of intelligence pointing to a growing Russian cyber threat and urged US businesses to "immediately" prepare defenses.

"If you have not already done so, I urge our private sector partners to harden your cyber defenses immediately," he said in a statement. Biden cited "evolving intelligence that the Russian government is exploring options for potential cyberattacks," including in response to Western sanctions over Moscow's launching of the war in Ukraine.

"It's part of Russia's playbook," he said. Biden said the US government would "continue to use every tool to deter, disrupt, and if necessary, respond to cyberattacks against critical infrastructure." However, he underlined that most critical infrastructure in the country is owned and operated by private entities, which cannot be compelled to take specific cyber security measures.

"Owners and operators must accelerate efforts to lock their digital doors," he said. "You have the power, the capacity, and the responsibility to strengthen the cybersecurity and resilience of the critical services and technologies on which Americans rely. We need everyone to do their part," Biden said.

Later, Biden told a meeting of US business leaders that Russia has "a very sophisticated cyber

capability" and an attack was one of the tactics President Vladimir Putin "is most likely to use."

Referring to a summit last year in Geneva, where he warned Putin against cyber attacks on US critical infrastructure, Biden said "we had a long conversation about if he uses it, what will be the consequence."

"But the point is, he has the capability. He hasn't used it yet," he added. US authorities have said that everything from fuel supply routes to water supplies are at risk from cyber attacks, and have identified Russian hackers as one of the main threats.

Deputy National Security Advisor for Cyber and Emerging Technology Anne Neuberger told reporters that despite Biden's warning, "there is no certainty that there will be a cyber incident on critical infrastructure." There has been "preparatory activity" detected, but no sign of a "specific" attack.

And, despite efforts by the government to bolster coordination and assistance in the cyber security sphere, "there's so much more we need to do to have the confidence that we've locked our digital doors," she said. In some areas the gaps are "deeply troubling," she said. Neuberger reiterated previous White House warnings that if Russia does target critical infrastructure, the US "will be prepared to respond." —AFP



**WASHINGTON:** US President Joe Biden delivers remarks at the Business Roundtable's CEO Quarterly Meeting in Washington, DC, on March 21. —AFP

## ABK customers can now open term deposit accounts online

**KUWAIT:** Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is pleased to announce that it now offers its customers the convenience of opening and managing a term deposit account digitally, either through eahli.com or through the ABK Mobile Banking app.

This new service reinforces ABK's 'Simpler Banking' promise to our customers who increasingly want to be able to access their accounts and Bank services online and via mobile apps. Now, through these platforms customers are able to create all types of Kuwaiti Dinar term deposits in various maturity durations. Other features include the ability to add an additional number of days if the maturity falls on a non-working day, choose renewal options, and view the value of the expected interest.

## Evergrande says lenders lay claim over \$2.1bn

**BEIJING:** Chinese developer Evergrande said Tuesday it is investigating how lenders have laid claim to deposits valued at more than 13.4 billion yuan (\$2.1 billion) for its subsidiary, the latest black mark against the debt-ridden property giant. Beijing's drive to curb excessive debt in the real estate sector has embroiled Evergrande, one of the country's largest developers, which has been struggling after racking up \$300 billion in liabilities.

It announced Tuesday that one of its key units Evergrande Property Services Group had about \$2.1 billion in cash that banks have laid claim to as security guarantees via a third party, a discovery made when the company was doing its annual report.

"In the review of its financial report for the year ended 31 December 2021, (the subsidiary) found that deposits of approximately RMB13.4 billion as security for third party pledge guarantees had been enforced by the relevant banks," the company said in an announcement on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. "(Evergrande) considers that this is a major incident and has established an independent investigation committee to assess the implication of the incident."

Another committee for the property subsidiary will "investigate the pledge guarantees" to its lenders. The statement does not provide details on which banks had

## Reality check: What the path to a 1.5C world looks like

**PARIS:** The world needs to rapidly purge fossil fuels from its energy mix if it is to have any hope of limiting global warming enough to avoid disastrous climate impacts, according to a prominent climate scientist. University of Manchester professor Kevin Anderson is lead author of Tuesday's report from the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research detailing how quickly countries must phase-out oil and gas to cap global temperatures at 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, the more ambitious goal of the Paris Agreement.

As the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) meets to approve a handbook for eliminating carbon pollution, Anderson talked to AFP about the deep social change needed to address the climate crisis, the tendency to sugar-coat the science, and the dangers of short-term politics.

**Q:** What is the main takeaway from your new research?  
"Delivering on the climate commitments that we've made internationally and nationally—staying under 1.5C or 2C of global warming—is far more challenging than we have been prepared to accept. If we are to stay within our carbon budget, the key is eliminating the use of fossil fuels. There

are other sources, but carbon emissions are absolutely dominated by fossil fuels."  
**Q:** If rich nation fossil fuel producers must phase out production by 2034, isn't that another way of saying that staying under 1.5C or even 2C is no longer possible?  
"As academics, that is not the question we asked. What we're saying is that this is what a 1.5C timeline would look like. Are these the sorts of changes society will choose to make? Is it achievable within the current political point of view? As of now, there's no evidence that's the case. No country—the EU, the UK, Sweden, the US—is anywhere near the commitments that we need to make."

**Q:** Is that a failure to understand the challenge, or something more disingenuous?  
"Aside from a few people in the oil majors, I don't think it's deliberate. It stems rather from a longstanding failure to face and understand the problem."  
"In the 1990s, we were optimistic about what we could do, but we didn't deliver. Arriving in the 2000s and now the 2020s, it's much harder because it's a cumulative problem. It's a bit like the story of the frog in the pan where you gradually increase the temperature, but the frog never jumps out."

**Q:** What is the role of climate science in all this?  
"Overall, academics have done a fantastic job on the natural climate science, despite oil companies spending a fortune to undermine that."  
"But on mitigation—reducing emissions—I think we've abdicated our responsibility to speak truthfully from our work to the policy realm, and to wider society as well."

enforced the pledges.

This revelation adds to the financial woes of Evergrande, which international ratings firms in December had labelled as being in default after it had failed to repay liabilities on time.

The company also said Tuesday it would not be able to publish its 2021 audited results by the end of March—as Hong Kong's listing rules require—blaming the delay on COVID-19. "Due to the drastic changes in the operational environment of the Company since the second half of last year... coupled with the effect caused by the COVID-19 outbreak... the Company will not be able to complete the audit procedures on time," it said in a separate announcement.

It added that the suspension in its share trading—which had halted Monday—will remain in force until further notice. It urged investors to exercise caution "in view of the operational and financial challenges the group is facing and in particular the debt pressure it is experiencing". Monday's suspension is the second one this year. The company has repeatedly said it will finish its projects and deliver them to buyers in a desperate bid to salvage its debts, and had asked its creditors to give them time. Earlier struggles to pay suppliers and contractors due to the crisis led to protests from home-buyers and investors at the group's Shenzhen headquarters in September.

Evergrande's woes have had knock-on effects throughout China's property sector, with some smaller firms also defaulting on loans and others struggling to find enough cash. The International Monetary Fund warned in late January that the property funding crisis could have spillover effects on the broader economy and global markets. —AFP

a branch."

ABK has been steadfast in ensuring its customers' online experience is efficient and secure. Recently, the Bank announced the launch of its virtual assistant "Ask Sanad", an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven chatbot to service clients. This advanced service provides relevant and contextual responses to customer queries, allowing them to make transactions in the chat window of the mobile application.

ABK's innovative chatbot offers customers yet another way to connect with the Bank in response to the health and safety measures prompted by COVID-19 as contactless transactions have accelerated the consumer shift towards using digital platforms to fulfil key banking requirements.



Johair Marafi

## Al-Tukhaim wins ABK's Alfouz draw prize of KD 10,000

**KUWAIT:** Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced Hebah Barrak Al-Tukhaim as the winner of KD 10,000 in the Alfouz weekly draw. The draw was held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on 21st March 2022.

The Alfouz draw account offers ABK customers the chance to win life-changing rewards. With Alfouz, ABK customers will get a chance to win KD 10,000 in Kuwait's highest single weekly draw and the ultimate grand prize of KD 5,000 monthly additional income for 10 years. Both new and existing ABK customers can benefit from this opportunity, with a minimum account balance of KD 100 only.

ABK encourages everyone to open Alfouz draw account and/or increase their balances to have more chances in winning in the upcoming draw which will happen on Monday, 28th March. The higher the deposits are, the higher the chances to win.

"We've been sweetening the pill for at least 20 years, if not 30 years. And we are now in a position where it's nigh-on impossible, which is why the modelers continue to put forward various techniques that do not exist at scale for removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere in the future. Otherwise you have to ask very difficult political questions about the choices we are making, and we dare not do that."

**Q:** Next month the UN's top scientific advisory body, the IPCC, will deliver a landmark report on options for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and removing carbon from the air. You have said this report is deeply flawed. Why?  
"How you reduce emissions is innately—and rightly—a political issue, not just a scientific one. I don't think this part of the report should even be part of the IPCC process."

"Also, the language of the report dealing with emissions reduction will not fairly reflect what the graphs and the numbers in the database actually show. Virtually all of the models projecting liveable futures assume very high levels of carbon dioxide removal. There is no convenient way to make the number add up otherwise."  
"We have to move beyond current short-term politics."

**Q:** So how can we actually achieve our temperature targets?  
"Carrying on with the same approach for another 10 years isn't going to be helpful. We've closed the dialogue down for so long, that's why we are where we are."

"Leaders have to wake up, smell the coffee, and realize what we need to be doing. Right now, we are likely to fail. But if we don't try, we are guaranteed to fail." —AFP

### 'Deep ties'

Tai and Trevelyan said they will address a series of challenges, such as sorting out bottlenecks in global supply chains, lowering carbon use, promoting digital trade and supporting labor rights, a favorite issue of current US President Joe Biden. "We want to seek to forge even closer bonds of trade and investment between us, because we do more business together than any other two countries in the world," Trevelyan said, noting the countries' "deep ties running through every level of society, culture, defense, intelligence and the economy."

The United States and United Kingdom do some \$263 billion (200 billion pounds) worth of trade every year. "One-and-a-half million Brits wake up and work in American firms every day, and over a million Americans work in British firms," Trevelyan said. The discussions are not expected to result in a major bilateral trade agreement, but another round of meetings is due to be held later this spring in Britain.

Asked whether this week's meeting marked a revival of negotiations that were interrupted last year, US officials insisted these talks are more about "deciding where to go together," but said they are confident the conversations would be productive. "The purpose of this dialogue is to work together to make our trade smarter, and to help our workers and businesses compete in a really tough global economy," a US trade official told reporters ahead of the meeting.

The talks come as the war in Ukraine continues to rage more than three weeks after the country was invaded by Russia, but the meeting in Baltimore is not expected to lead to any announcements of new sanctions against Moscow, the American officials said. The discussions will, however, "be broadly based on the many ways in which we can pursue our shared interests via a vis Russia, visa a vis China," they said. —AFP



## Business



KUWAIT: Gulf Bank Chairman Jassim Mustafa Boodai (second left) chairs the Ordinary Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Tuesday.



People attend the Annual General Meeting.

# Gulf Bank AGM approves distributing 7% in cash and 5% in bonus shares for 2021

## General Assembly agrees to amend Articles of Association to allow for semi-annual distributions

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank concluded its Ordinary Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Tuesday (March 22, 2022) with a 85.5 percent quorum. The Board of Directors recommended the distribution of 7 percent cash dividends and a 5 percent bonus for the financial year ending December 31, 2021, with the general assembly also approving to amend the bank's Articles of Association to allow it to distribute semi-annual profits in the future. In addition, the general assembly approved all of the AGM agenda items discussed.

In his speech to the General Assembly, Gulf Bank's Chairman, Jassim Mustafa Boodai, said, "Despite both global and local economic challenges wrought on by the pandemic, Gulf Bank was able to mark a new year of fantastic achievements. During 2021, we proved our ability to adapt to the challenges of the pandemic, and continued to excel in serving our clients, employees, and community."

Boodai pointed out that the Bank's net profits jumped by 46 percent to KD 42 million in 2021, as earnings per share rose by 40 percent to 14 fils, noting that the bank has also decided to distribute 5 percent bonus shares for the first time since 2014.

He noted that Gulf Bank was keen to comply with the decision enforced by the Central Bank of Kuwait, which allows banks with stable financial conditions to distribute semi-annual profits. Gulf Bank obtained the approval of the extraordinary general assembly to amend the Bank's Articles of Association to allow for semi-annual profit distributions in the future. These distributions require the Central Bank of Kuwait's approval, based on a technical study presented by the Bank on the impact of distributions on financial indicators, and requiring the Bank to pass the same procedures implemented for annual distributions - all with the recommendation of the Board of Directors and the approval of the General Assembly.

- We have proven our ability to adapt to the challenges of the pandemic and continue to excel
- Gulf Bank has returned to distributing 5% bonus shares to shareholders, for the first time since 2014
- Future semi-annual distributions are subject to the approval of the General Assembly and the Central Bank of Kuwait
- We have amended the Articles of Association and are awaiting the approval of the regulatory authorities to establish an investment arm
- We have succeeded in placing the Bank on the right track and are actively moving forward with Gulf Bank's 2025 Strategy
- The Bank enjoys prestigious ratings from international agencies, a tribute to its creditworthiness and financial strength



Jassim Mustafa Boodai

of Gulf Bank, added: "Gulf Bank has maintained its strength and steadfastness in the face of multiple challenges, a tribute to the Bank's endurance and commitment to support shareholders, clients and stakeholders during the past few years."

He added: "Earnings per share increased by 40 percent to 14 fils, and a recommendation to distribute cash dividends of 7 fils per share represents a distribution of at least 50 percent for the seventh consecutive year and bonus shares of 5 percent. In addition, total customer loans reached an all-time high in 2021, reaching KD 4.8 billion, an increase of KD 454 million, or 10 percent, compared to the end of 2020. This growth came from the personal banking and corporate banking sectors."

He pointed out that the quality of assets in the Bank has maintained its strength, as the non-performing loans ratio reached 0.9 percent in 2021, an improvement from its decrease of 1.1 percent during

companies with the tools needed to compete in a rapidly changing economy and keep pace with the latest technological developments."

### Digital transformation

Regarding Gulf Bank's ongoing digital transformation plan, Daher noted, "During 2021, we announced the launch of our new treasury system in partnership with Murex, an initiative we spearheaded with the aim of developing and automating our treasury platforms and catering to today's financial markets. Implementing this platform has been a transformative step for developing and automating treasury and financial market management systems at the Bank, and has paved the way for mutual interaction in addressing legal developments, leading capital markets, and better serving our customers. In the long run, the new system will contribute to enhancing efficiency and control of all aspects of

communication - all while maintaining the strictest standards of security and privacy.

Daher pointed out that the Bank announced a significant change to the Al-Danah account's draw framework at the beginning of 2021. In addition to offering a grand prize of KD 1.5 million dinars, Gulf Bank also increased its semi-annual draw prize to KD 1 million, rendering the Al-Danah account one of the most profitable savings accounts of the year.

He noted that the Bank's branch network is also among the largest in Kuwait, now spanning 53 branches after its latest opening in Kuwait International Airport. Daher continued, "We will continue to work to achieve our goal of widening the Bank's network of branches in parallel with our digital transformation strategy, and in line with the Bank's 2025 strategy and the national development plan, Kuwait Vision 2035 'New Kuwait.'"

### Prestigious ratings

Moody's maintained the Bank's long-term rating at "A3" with a "Stable" outlook. Capital Intelligence affirmed Gulf Bank's long-term foreign exchange rating at "A+" with a "Stable" outlook.

In early 2022, Fitch revised the Bank's long-term issuer rating to "A" with a "Stable" outlook.

Standard & Poor's global rating agency has revised the Bank's issuer rating from "A-" to "BBB+" and revised the outlook from "Negative" to "Stable."

Both Fitch and Standard & Poor's revised ratings came as a result of Kuwait's downgraded sovereign rating, and were unrelated to Gulf Bank's position and credit quality.

Gulf Bank's 2025 Strategy: 3 Keys to Success

Jassim Mustafa Boodai continued, "To ensure the continued success of the 2025 strategy, Gulf Bank has laid the foundations that contribute to developing a culture based on quality performance, providing innovative and technical solutions, and adopting global practices for risk management - all through our core values that are based on the following:

- The determination to provide the best services and simplest solutions to our clients
- The encouragement of our employees to pursue excellence in customer service
- The provision of an enjoyable banking experience through simple, effective and advanced solutions."

### Thanks and appreciation

Boodai concluded, "On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for their vision and wise leadership.

"I would also like to extend my thanks and appreciation to the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Capital Markets Authority for their efforts and continuous support of the Kuwaiti banking sector. I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to all our valued clients, partners and shareholders for their support throughout 2021, and to the members of the Board of Directors, senior management and employees for their valuable contributions as the Bank continues to pave its pathway to success."

- We have entered a new era of digital banking services, and our branch network is one of the largest in Kuwait
- Total customer loans at Gulf Bank reached an all-time high last year
- Non-performing loans decreased to 0.9% - one of the lowest rates in the banking sector
- We distributed cash dividends in 2021 for the seventh year in a row, with dividends representing 50% of profits
- Capital ratios have maintained their strength and exceeded the regulatory minimums required.



Tony Daher

### An investment company

According to Boodai, the extraordinary general assembly's approval to amend the Articles of Association will also allow the Bank to establish new companies, a necessary move for establishing an investment company to serve as the Bank's investment arm in managing clients' assets. The Bank is also awaiting approval from the regulatory authorities to launch the investment company.

He pointed out that the Board of Directors and the Executive Management succeeded in steering the Bank on the right track, achieving even more successes in implementing the Bank's strategy for the year 2025. Gulf Bank's successes have helped consolidate its leading position as the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future, strengthened by its continuous efforts to provide customers with modern, simple and innovative services.

Boodai continued, "In spite of the major changes taking place in the global and local economies, Gulf Bank still enjoys prestigious international ratings for its creditworthiness and financial strength, as it was ranked 'A' by all three major credit rating agencies."

### Strength & stability

Following the opening remarks, Tony Daher, CEO

the same time period last year. In addition, the Bank holds large provisions with a non-performing loan coverage ratio of 615 percent.

He noted that the minimum regulatory capital limits that were reduced in 2020 remained as they were as of December 31, 2021, which allowed the Bank to obtain additional buffers beyond those limits. Furthermore, the tier 1 capital ratio has a buffer of 5 percent and the capital adequacy ratio has a buffer of 5.2 percent, allowing the Bank to steadily grow its businesses in line with its strategy.

### Competitive capabilities

Daher added: "During the year 2021, the bank focused on attracting new customers, a goal that encouraged major asset development as we continued to enhance our digital platforms and increase the Bank's competitive capabilities. We also developed and enhanced our products and services with a primary focus on digital technology."

He continued: "We are proud to have implemented various technological enhancements to our account opening process, as our customers from small and medium-sized enterprises can now open accounts and apply for a range of services, cards and financing solutions all online. What's more - our digital transformation strategy has helped equip

the business."

He added, "During 2021, we also launched three unique credit cards in partnership with MasterCard and as part of our strategy to provide quality products and services tailored to targeted customer segments. To enhance the lives of our female customers, we launched the Rose Gold credit card with special benefits, exclusive discounts and the highest rewards for women in Kuwait. For our Youth Red account, we launched the 'red plus' card, a free prepaid card with multiple benefits that enable youth to enjoy the highest cashback and discounts at multiple restaurants and shops in the country. In addition, we also launched the MOJ credit card, the first prepaid card with a cashback feature in Kuwait."

### A new era

Gulf Bank continues to invest heavily in providing clients with an exceptional customer experience. Daher noted that customers can now open bank accounts in less than a minute, marking the fastest and simplest process to open bank accounts in Kuwait, and ushering in a new era of digital banking services. The Bank also continues to invest in its digital capabilities to create exceptional engagement with its customer base across all means of





## Yemen's pavilion at Expo Dubai embodies old civilization, Arab origins



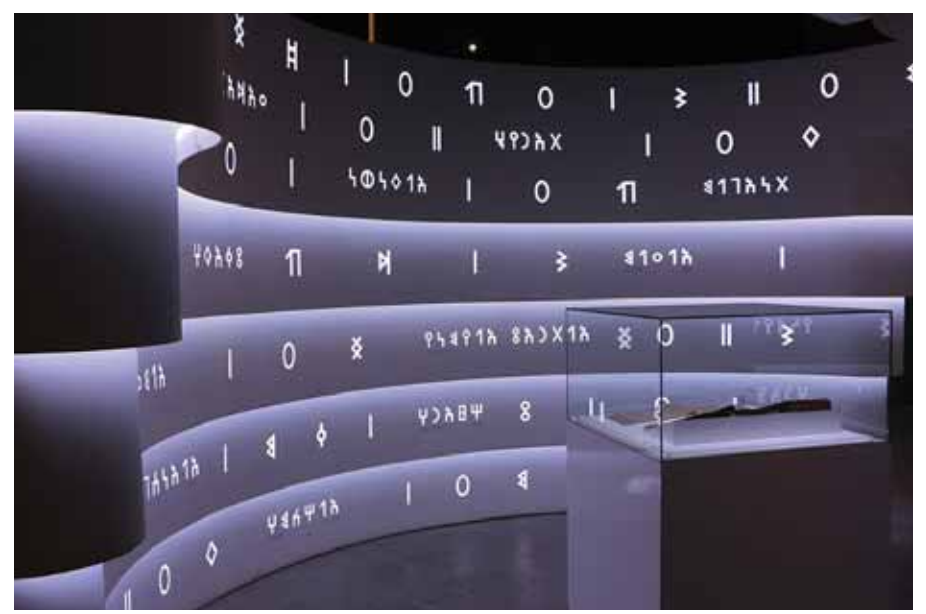
**T**hrough Expo 2020 Dubai, Yemen's pavilion showed one of the oldest civilizations and Arab originality. In the first sections of the pavilion, there were many books about Yemen's ancient

cultural heritage that highlighted the history and civilization of Yemen, in addition to books on mathematics, astronomy, Musnad script, and linguistics.

Yemen's pavilion also featured a group

of collectibles, jewelry, ancient coins dating back to the year between 350-320 BC, and daggers, some of which are 120 years old. Expo Dubai, with the motto "Connecting Minds and Creating the Future," aims to

introduce the world's civilizations and portray the culture of each of the participating countries worldwide. — KUNA



## Ai Weiwei makes operatic debut with 'Turandot' in Rome

**C**hinese dissident artist Ai Weiwei makes his directorial operatic debut in Rome on Tuesday with a new reading of Giacomo Puccini's final, unfinished opera, "Turandot". And with a storyline seeping with bloodshed and despotism, a new geopolitical focus and Ukrainian conductor Oksana Lyniv in the pit, the new production originally meant to have premiered in 2020, but delayed because of the coronavirus pandemic comes exactly on time.

From the ominous opening five notes, the audience is plunged into an uncertain, violent world and 64-year-old Ai never lets up the pressure. The production, which opens at the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, is a fitting project for an artist known for his installations, sculpture and photography that denounce authority and champion human rights and freedom of expression.

The presence of rising star Lyniv—who became the first woman ever to conduct at Germany's prestigious Bayreuth festival last year—further ramps up the immediacy of the production in face of the outbreak of war in Europe. "It's beyond the imagination that we are still in the middle of these (territorial) conflicts," Ai told reporters last week. "We're experiencing

the biggest human struggle in Europe. Over three million Ukrainian people have been pushed out because of war caused by Russia," he said, speaking in English. "We're in the middle of two crises."

### Pervading menace

Puccini's dark opera centres around cold, vengeful Princess Turandot who kills

futuristic city, Ai projects distressing images from recent news events, whether masked hospital workers in protective gear, refugees fording rivers, riot police confronting Hong Kong protesters or migrants encircled by chain link fences. "We are lost!" sings the chorus in the third act, as images of billy clubs, chokeholds and tear gas fill the screens.

Lyniv made history again in January when she was named chief conductor of Bologna's opera, the first time an opera house in Italy has been led by a woman.

### Use your voice

Hailing from Ukrainian city of Brody, about 100 kilometers (62 miles) east of Lviv, Lyniv said she conducted "Turandot"

connection with "Turandot"—he appeared as an executioner's apprentice in Franco Zeffirelli's production of the opera at Lincoln Center 35 years ago. His new version is performed without the ending added by Puccini's contemporary, Franco Alfano, increasing the opera's ambiguity.

Lyniv said the "open-ended" finale challenges the audience to decide, in



These photos show artists performing in Giacomo Puccini's "Turandot" staged by Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, at the Teatro dell'Opera in Rome. — AFP photos



her suitors if they fail to correctly answer three riddles for her hand. Refugees, a sacrificial victim and a morally compromised chorus round out the cast—all fodder for Ai, who uses unrelenting video images to intensify the sense of state-sponsored menace pervading the opera.

Behind a set resembling the ruins of a

Lyniv, 44, said Ai's strong visual symbolism perfectly fit the intentions of Puccini. "From the first bars, you feel this apocalyptic character in the air, of what will happen," said Lyniv of the opera which was left unfinished with Puccini's death in 1924. After wowing critics and audiences alike in Bayreuth last year,

for the first time eight years ago in Odessa. Many members of Odessa's orchestra, ballet corps and chorus were now defending Ukraine, she said. Ai said this particular moment was "a gift to the artists like us, still alive, who still have a voice" to defend peace.

The artist also has his own personal

observing the principal characters, "what role you have in this society"—implacable, cruel Turandot, risk-taking refugee Prince Calaf, or Liu who sacrifices herself for love. The chorus was particularly relevant today, she said, as it is seen obeying, never questioning, the decisions of the blood-thirsty Turandot. — AFP



This photo shows Ukrainian soprano Oksana Dyka performing in Giacomo Puccini's "Turandot" staged by Chinese artist Ai Weiwei.

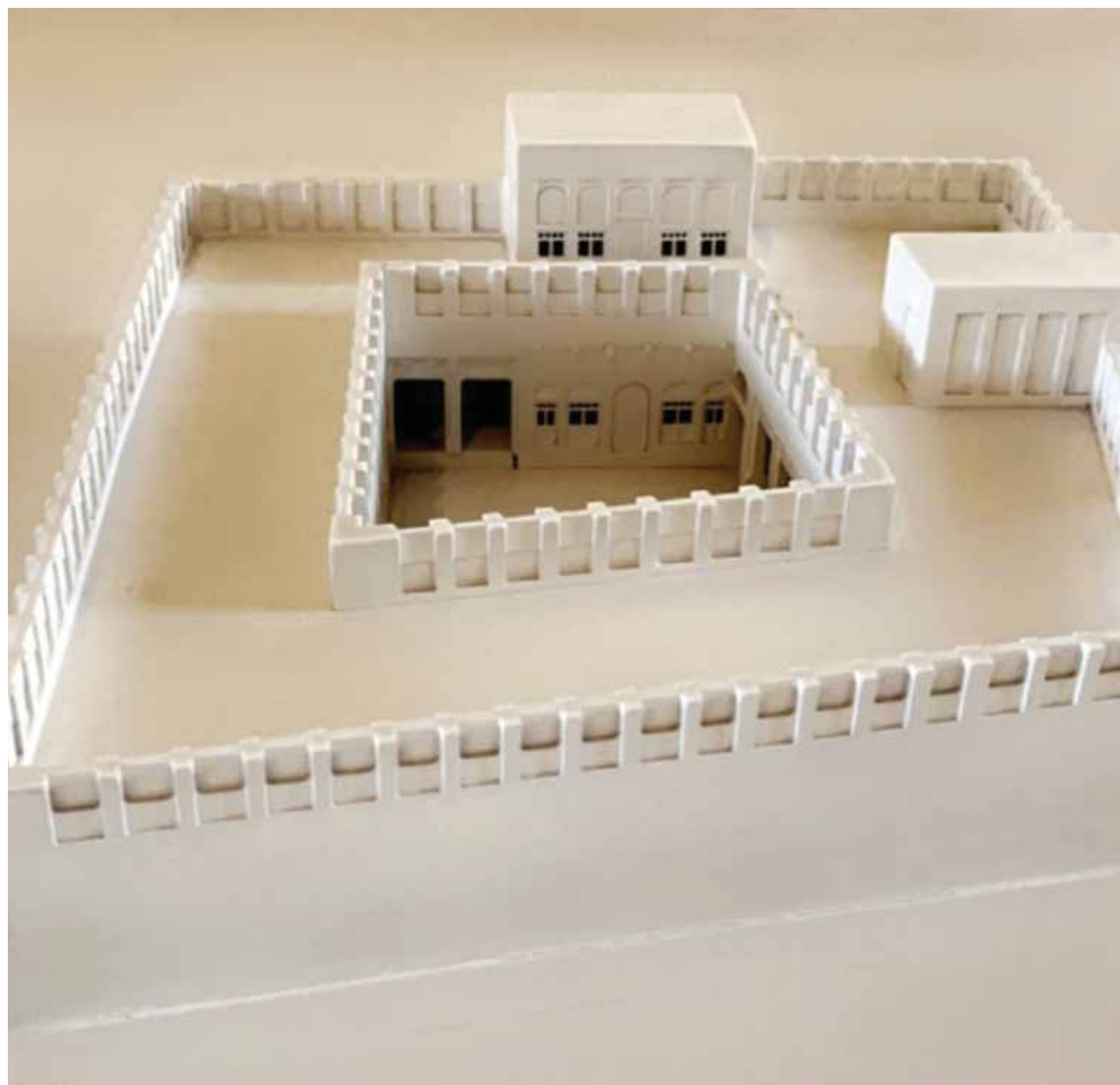


This photo shows Italian soprano Francesca Dotto (right) and US tenor Michael Fabiano performing in Giacomo Puccini's "Turandot" staged by Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, at the Teatro dell'Opera in Rome.



This photo shows Chinese opera singer Chao Hsin performing in Giacomo Puccini's "Turandot" staged by Chinese artist Ai Weiwei.





## Radwan House: Go-to venue for history of traditional Qatari family

The Radwan House, located in the Msheireb Museums in Doha, is the go-to venue for those eager to learn about the history and traditions of the Qatari family. The house, built in the 1920s,

focuses on the history of Qatar pre-oil discovery and has various rooms and facilities where a traditional Qatari family use to gather and live. — KUNA



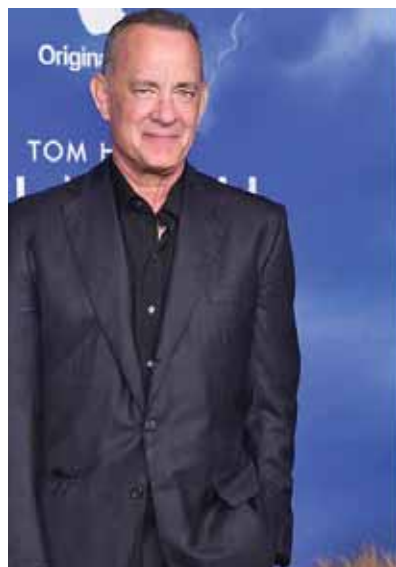
### Tom Hanks photobombs bride during pre-wedding photo shoot

Tom Hanks surprised a bride-to-be during a pre-wedding photo shoot. The 'Forest Gump' actor approached Grace Gwaltney and her bridal party as they finished snapping some pictures at the Fairmont Pittsburgh hotel before heading to her nuptials over the weekend, and her photography Rachel Rowland captured the amazing moment on camera. She wrote on Instagram: I'd like to say a photo bomb from Tom Hanks was the best part of yesterday but honestly I'd be lying. (No offense to the GOAT). "Yesterday was filled with joy, and laughter and fun and love and family and hugs and I just can't get enough of Grace and Luke. (sic)" Grace herself was amazed by the unexpected guest, and she admitted the bridal party "all started screaming" when he

introduced himself.

She told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette: "So we were all walking from the hotel to the limo, and out of nowhere, he pops up and just says, 'My name is Tom Hanks! Can I take a photo with the bride?' "We all started screaming and were pretty much in shock... He was just as wonderful and charming as you'd assume. "His wife, Rita [Wilson], was there and got in some photos, too." The 65-year-old star has been in the city shooting 'A Man Called Otto', which is the first time he's worked in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania since his 2019 Mr. Rogers biopic 'A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood'. Last week, he also surprised a local mum when he the production trucks turned up outside her house for an early morning shoot.

Mum-of-five Ashley Glass told the Post-Gazette how Hanks noticed her at the window with her two-year-old son Charles, and he wandered over to say hello. She added: "I was like, 'Oh, my God, he's walking over here!' "I hurried up and got my phone. He came over and was talking to us. I was starstruck. I didn't even know what to say." — Bang Showbiz



## Warhol's Marilyn Monroe portrait estimated to fetch \$200m at auction

Andy Warhol's iconic sage-blue background portrait of Marilyn Monroe is tipped to sell for a record-breaking \$200 million at auction in the spring, Christie's announced Monday. The auction house said it expects Warhol's 1964 "Shot Sage Blue Marilyn" to become the most expensive 20th century artwork when it goes under the hammer in New York in May. The silk-screen work is part of a group of Warhol portraits of Monroe that became known as the "Shot" series after a visitor to his Manhattan studio, known as "The Factory," apparently fired a gun at them.

In a statement, Christie's described the 40 inch (100 centimeter) by 40 inch portrait as "one of the rarest and most transcendent images in existence." Alex Rotter, head of 20th and 21st century art at Christie's, called the portrait "the most significant 20th century painting to come to auction in a generation."

"Andy Warhol's Marilyn is the absolute pinnacle of American Pop and the promise of the American Dream encapsulating optimism, fragility, celebrity and iconography all at once," he said in a statement. Warhol began creating silkscreens of Monroe following the actress's death from a drug overdose aged just 36 in August 1962.

The pop artist produced five portraits of Monroe, all equal in size with different colored backgrounds, in 1964. According to pop-art folklore, four of them gained notoriety after a female performance artist by the name of Dorothy Podber asked Warhol if she could shoot a stack of the portraits. Warhol said yes, thinking that she meant photograph the works. Instead, she took out a gun and fired a bullet through the forehead of Monroe's image.



A guest takes a photo during Christie's announcement that they will offer Andy Warhol's Shot Sage Blue Marilyn painting of Marilyn Monroe at Christie's in New York City. — AFP

The story goes that the bullet pierced four of the five canvasses, with Warhol barring Podber from The Factory and later repairing the paintings-the "Shot" series. The "Shot Sage Blue Marilyn" portrait portrays her with a pink face, red lips, yellow hair and blue eye shadow set against a sage-blue backdrop. It was based on a promotional photograph of her for the 1953 movie "Niagara" directed by Henry Hathaway.

#### Charity

At an unveiling at Christie's headquarters in Manhattan, Rotter said the portrait stood alongside Sandro Botticelli's "Birth of Venus", Leonardo Da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" and Pablo Picasso's "Les Femmes d'Alger" as "categorically one of the greatest paintings of all time." Only 14 paintings have sold for more than

\$100 million at auction, according to an AFP tally, although others are expected to have changed hands for as much during private sales.

The most expensive 20th century artwork sold at auction is Picasso's "Women of Algiers," which fetched \$179.4 million in 2015. The auction record for a Warhol is the \$104.5 million paid for "Silver Car Crash (Double Disaster)" in 2013. In 1998, Sotheby's sold the orange shot Marilyn for \$17 million. Christie's is selling the work, which will headline its spring sales week, on behalf of the Zurich-based Thomas and Doris Ammann Foundation. All proceeds of the sale will benefit the foundation, which works to improve the lives of children around the world. — AFP



## Sports

## Ukraine's 'chess capital' mulls Russia's next move

## Ukraine Chess Federation pushes for total ban on Russian players

LVIV: A rapt and raucous audience, a group of chess fanatics watch a cut-throat game play out on a park bench. Rook takes knight, a flurry of moves, then the game is over in an instant. The loser surrenders a note of Ukrainian currency and the pieces are reset for another game on the battered board. In the western city of Lviv, Ukraine's capital of chess, local players make a point of keeping up the local tradition of street games, despite the March chill and the war raging to the east.

"Chess is a very difficult game," sighs Andrei Volokitin, the reigning champion of Ukraine. "It needs memory, calculation, strategy, positional thinking," says the 35 year-old grandmaster. But he is smart enough to know that his foresight on the board does not extend to international affairs. He offers no predictions concerning the Russian invasion wreaking havoc in the east of his country.

"I'm afraid this can continue a few months, maybe more, I don't know," he says. "This is the new reality for all people in Ukraine." Lviv-just 70 kilometers from the Polish border-has so far been largely spared since Russia launched its invasion on February 24. The city considers itself the cultural epicenter of Ukraine. Its cobbled streets are lined with coffee shops, boutiques and neon-lit restaurants, even if its nightlife is curbed by the curfews imposed under martial law. But Lviv is also known as the chess capital of Ukraine.

## Chess wars

The old Soviet Union to which Ukraine belonged until 1991 invested heavily in developing chess talent, cherishing the USSR's longstanding dominance in the game. The city's continuing obsession with chess is a legacy of those times. All along the central prome-

nade, droves of mostly men gather to watch amateur players play out their games in the chilly March weather.

Volokitin reckons there are between 20 and 30 active grandmasters among Lviv's 700,000 residents. "It's a traditional chess city," he says. But the chess world has been divided by Russian President Vladimir Putin's order to invade Ukraine. FIDE-the International Chess Federation-has already cancelled tournaments in Russia, where the game is also wildly popular, and banned its flag from flying at events. But the Ukrainian Chess Federation wants more.

It is pushing for a total ban on Russian players "under any flag or without it". Volokitin himself has signed an open letter pledging not to play Russians. "During the killing of our civilians, our women and children, and destroying our cities I think it's logical," he said. Last week, FIDE banned the Russia and Belarus teams from its tournaments. On Monday, it banned top Russian grandmaster Sergey Karjakin from its tournaments for six months over his outspoken support for the invasion. But for the moment, other Russian players can still play.

So next week, Volokitin travels to the European Individual Chess Championship in Slovenia next week to put Ukraine's case for extending the ban. He has received a special dispensation on the government's order forbidding men aged between 18 and 60 from leaving the country, he says. His wife and daughter are already sheltering in Poland, and Volokitin spent two weeks sheltering "chess friends" as they made fled the conflict zone. "We should do all we can," he says.

## Putin's gambit

Military analysts suggest Putin's "special military



LVIV: Men play chess on a bench on the central promenade in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv on March 20, 2022. Lviv — just 70 kilometers from the Polish border — has been largely spared from violence since Russia launched its military invasion on February 24. — AFP

operation" is stalling after heavy losses and unexpected resistance from outmanned but highly motivated Ukrainian forces. However on Friday a Russian air strike hit a plane repair plant next to Lviv's airport. Although no one was killed, it was a clear sign that the war was drawing closer to the city, after three weeks of having escaped relatively unscathed.

Nevertheless, the city's chess fans still gather along

the promenade for their games, some offering their prognosis on the conflict as the one-month marker approaches. Oleh Chernobayev, 52, only lasted 10 minutes in his game with Volokitin-but he was more optimistic about Ukraine's chances in the war. "We will definitely win," he said. "We have good people, people without weapons are stopping tanks. They can't take Kyiv. Our guys are very brave." — AFP

## KSS organizes children's awareness marathon



By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The first children's awareness marathon was organized by Kuwait Surgeons Society (KSS) in the Green Island. 2,000 children and many NGOs participated in the event which focused on children's health. Head of KSS Sheikh Dr Salman Al-Sabah said the 3-day event featured motivational games, cultural activities and concluded with the children's marathon. The event is aimed at spreading health awareness among children and how to overcome obesity and its complications. Dr Salman Al-Sabah thanked all participants.



## Shooting Federation rewards Kuwait Paralympics shooters

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The finals of the Trap event of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Shooting Grand Prix will take place today for men and women at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex. Meanwhile, Kuwait Paralympics shooters Ali Farhan Al-Mutairi and Al-Anoud Hamid Al-Dhafiri were in third place of the friendship championship between Japan and Kuwait shooting federation in cooperation with the Kuwait Paralympics committee.

Kuwait Shooting Federation rewarded Kuwait Paralympics shooters Farhan Al-Mutairi and Al-Anoud Al-Dhafiri; Atif Al-Dousary and Yara Al-Khalaf; and Saud Al-SDubaie and Reem Al-Qahas. The president of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Engineer



Hazim Hosni

Duaj Al-Otaibi, Secretary General Obaid Al-Osaimi and Chairman of the Paralympic Shooting Committee presented the awards.

President of African and Egyptian Shooting Federations Hazim Hosni said the Arab shooting operates with a strong system led by Engineer Duaj Al-Otaibi and many around the world are talking about this system. He said despite the suspension of the championship because of the coron-

avirus pandemic, the system continues. cheers and hecklers at the event. A 64-player field based upon world rankings is divided into 16 groups of four players for round-robin matches today through Friday with group winners reaching weekend knockout rounds.

Defending champion Billy Horschel, seeded 12th, has a group with Australian Min Woo Lee, the reigning Scottish Open champion; Belgium's Tom Pieters, a January winner at Abu Dhabi, and American Tom Hoge, who won last month at Pebble Beach. World number two Collin Morikawa was grouped with fellow American Jason Kokrak, Scotsman Robert McIntyre and Spain's Sergio Garcia, the 2017 Masters champion.

Norway's third-ranked Viktor Hovland was drawn with Austrian Sepp Straka and Americans Will Zalatoris and Cameron Tringale. Fourth seed Patrick Cantlay will be joined by fellow American Keith Mitchell, South Korean Im Sung-jae and Ireland's Seamus Power. US fifth seed Scottie Scheffler was grouped three Englishmen: Tommy Fleetwood, Matt Fitzpatrick and



Abdelrahman Al-Faihan

avirous pandemic, the system continues.

Shooter, Abdelrahman Al-Faihan said the return of His Highness the Amir Grand Prix gives a special importance for the world of shooting and lauded Kuwait Shooting Federation for removing all obstacles in order to have this championship. Meanwhile, Moroccan women shooter Ibtisam Al-Marghi said she is trying to improve by participating in this International Grand Prix.

Ian Poulter, the 2010 Match Play winner.

Morikawa, Scheffler, Cantlay and Hovland all have a chance to topple Rahm from atop the rankings this week. World number seven Justin Thomas is grouped with 2019 match-play winner Kevin Kisner and another compatriot, 2022 Torrey Pines winner Luke List, plus Australian Marc Leishman, who is unbeaten in Presidents Cup singles. Reigning Olympic champion Xander Schauffele and fellow American Tony Finau are in group seven with Japan's Takumi Kanaya and Australian Lucas Herbert.

Four major champions are together in group 11: Americans Keegan Bradley and Jordan Spieth, Australian Adam Scott and England's Justin Rose. Dustin Johnson, a two-time major winner and 2017 match-play winner, is joined in group eight by fellow Americans Matthew Wolff and Max Homa and Canadian Mackenzie Hughes. Ninth-seeded Bryson DeChambeau is joined by fellow American Talor Gooch and England's Lee Westwood and Richard Bland.— AFP

## Medvedev, Sabalenka top seeds at ATP and WTA Miami Open

MIAMI: Daniil Medvedev will try to reclaim the world number one ranking and top seed Aryna Sabalenka chases her first final in 10 months at the ATP and WTA Miami Open. Men's play starts today and women's play began yesterday in the hardcourt tournament at Hard Rock Stadium, where highest seeds receive first-round byes.

Serbia's Novak Djokovic moved into the top spot of the rankings this week, bumping out reigning US Open champion Medvedev after a three-week stay following his third-round exit at Indian Wells. The 26-year-old Russian, runner-up at the past two Australian Opens, would return to the top spot with a semi-final run at Miami.

Medvedev only reached his first Miami quarter-final last year, when he lost to Roberto Bautista Agut, so a last-four spot would mark a best-ever run in Miami. And Medvedev has a potential second-round matchup with former world number one Andy Murray, provided the Briton gets past Argentina's Federico Delbonis. Murray, a 34-year-old Scotsman and three-time Grand Slam champion, won the Miami crown in 2009 and 2013 but lost his only meeting with Medvedev in Brisbane in 2019.

Also in Medvedev's quarter of the draw is defending champion Hubert Hurkacz of Poland. Germany's Alexander Zverev is the second seed with Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas third and Italy's Matteo Berrettini fourth. Sabalenka, of Belarus, fell to fifth in this week's rankings and has not reached a WTA final since last May on Madrid clay. Poland's Iga Swiatek is the second seed with Estonia's Anett Kontaveit third and Greece's Maria Sakkari fourth. — AFP

## Athletics chief warns over 'fragile' future of women's sport

LONDON: World Athletics chief Sebastian Coe says women's sport faces a "fragile" future unless sporting federations get the regulations right over the participation of transgender athletes. His warning comes after American swimmer Lia Thomas became the first transgender athlete to win a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) top tier title with victory in the 500-yard freestyle. Thomas has dominated US collegiate women's swimming recently as a student athlete at the University of Pennsylvania, where she previously competed as a man.

Her case has divided opinion, with some-including several teammates-arguing she has an unfair physiological advantage and should be barred from competing, while others say she should be allowed to compete freely as a woman. Coe, the president of track and field's governing body, acknowledged the issue was fraught but said it was vital to get the regulations right.

"The integrity of women's sport-if we don't get this right-and, actually, the future of women's sport, is very fragile," Coe told the Times. "These are sensitive issues, they are societal issues-they go way, way beyond sport. I don't have the luxury to get into endless discussions or the school of moral philosophy." Former British Olympic middle-distance gold medalist Coe said "gender cannot trump biology" when it comes to deciding whether trans athletes should be allowed to compete in women's events. — AFP

## Top-ranked Rahm faces Reed in WGC Match-Play group

WASHINGTON: World number one Jon Rahm was drawn on Monday into a first-round group with Masters winner Patrick Reed for the WGC Match Play Championship that begins today in Austin, Texas. Rahm, the reigning US Open champion from Spain, and Reed, the 2018 Masters champion, were paired with Colombian Sebastian Munoz and US rookie Cameron Young, a runner-up last month at Riviera, in the round robin stage of the event at Austin Country Club.

Reed is known for his match-play success in the Ryder Cup, earning the nickname "Captain America" for his flamboyant style in the wake of



## Sports

# LeBron makes triple double in triumphant homecoming

## Milton power Sixers over visiting Eastern Conference leader Miami

**NEW YORK:** LeBron James made a triumphant return home with 38 points, 11 rebounds and 12 assists on Monday to lead the Los Angeles Lakers over the Cleveland Cavaliers 131-120. Four-time NBA Most Valuable Player James sparked the Lakers team he led to the 2020 NBA crown over the Cavs hometown club he made into a 2016 NBA champion, spectators cheering and chanting the 37-year-old star's name as he walked out of the arena.

James, who played 41 minutes, played down any notion the victory was more meaningful because it came against his former team and hometown squad. "Just wanted to get a win," James said. "That's all that mattered to me." James was happy the Lakers ended a slump that saw them lose four of their prior five games.

"To be able to play how we played, I was able to contribute a little bit and we get a Dub (win), finished the trip off, that's all that mattered to me. "We needed that one." Russell Westbrook added 20 points and 11 assists and DJ Augustin came off the bench to score 20 points for the Lakers, who improved to 31-41, ninth in the Western Conference. Darius Garland had 29 points and 17 assists to lead the Cavs, 41-31 and sixth in the Eastern Conference by a game over Toronto.

### Depleted Sixers win

The Philadelphia 76ers, playing without resting superstars Joel Embiid and James Harden, got 28 points from Tyrese Maxey and 20 off the bench from Shake Milton to power the Sixers over visiting Eastern Conference leader Miami 113-106. Philadelphia rose to 44-27, level with defending NBA champion Milwaukee at second in the East, 2

1/2 games behind the Heat, who had 27 points from Jimmy Butler in a losing cause. The 76ers, playing their third game in four nights, benched Cameroonian big man Embiid due to a sore back and Harden with right hamstring recovery.

Sixers coach Doc Rivers said he wanted to rest his top players with an eye to next month's start of the playoffs. Embiid averages 29.8 points, 11.3 rebounds and 4.3 assists a game while Harden averages 22.4 points, 7.0 rebounds and 10.4 assists a game. At New York, Brooklyn's Kevin Durant scored 37 points, grabbed nine rebounds and passed off eight assists to lead the Nets over visiting Utah 114-106.

Donovan Mitchell scored 30 points to lead the Jazz, who fell to 45-27, 2 1/2 games behind third-place Golden State in the West. Brooklyn improved to 38-34, eighth in the East by a game over Charlotte. Nets coach Steve Kerr revealed that Brooklyn guard Ben Simmons, obtained in a deal with Philadelphia for Harden, has a herniated disc in his back. Kerr said surgery has not been discussed and he was "optimistic" the Australian would be ready this season.

DeMar DeRozan and Zach LaVine each scored 26 points while Montenegrin center Nikola Vucevic contributed 19 points and 13 rebounds to lead the Chicago Bulls over visiting Toronto 113-99. Dwight Powell scored 22 points and Spencer Dinwiddie added 20 off the Dallas bench to lead the host Mavericks over Minnesota 110-108. Karl-Anthony Towns led the Timberwolves with 22 points but couldn't make a tying shot after grabbing a rebound in the dying seconds as Minnesota fell to 42-31, one-half game behind sixth-place Denver and 2 1/2



CLEVELAND: LeBron James #6 of the Los Angeles Lakers shoots the ball during the game against the Cleveland Cavaliers on March 21, 2022 at Rocket Mortgage FieldHouse in Cleveland, Ohio. — AFP

behind fifth-place Dallas in the West.

Christian Wood scored a career-high 39 points to lead the Houston Rockets over visiting Washington 115-97 while Jayson Tatum had 36 to lead the Boston Celtics to a 132-123 victory at Oklahoma City. Brandon Williams scored 23 points

to lead the Portland Trail Blazers over host Detroit 119-115 while LaMelo Ball and Terry Rozier each had 17 points to lead host Charlotte over New Orleans 106-103. Sacramento Kings center Domantas Sabonis of Lithuania will miss at least the next 10 days with a left knee injury. — AFP

## Few days left for the launch of KFH Obstacles Challenge

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House (KFH) is launching the KFH Obstacles Challenge in collaboration with Suffix Event Management Co, to be held on Saturday 26/3/2022 at Marina Beach. The registration process for the competition witnessed a remarkable turnout from different age groups, and there is still an opportunity to register until the raceday, which will start Saturday at 8 am. Those wishing to participate can register through the KFH website [www.kfh.com](http://www.kfh.com) or through the Suffix Sports Events Organization website [www.suffix.events](http://www.suffix.events). All details of the event can be followed through KFH's social media accounts @KFHGroup.

KFH revealed that this race shall be 5 km long and obstacles shall be at different heights for participants. The competition shall be available for the youth category (men) +16 years and participants shall be divided into 4 different categories: First category: 16 - 24 years; Second Category: 25 - 34 years; Third Category: 35 - 44 years; Fourth category: 45 years and above.

KFH shall present valuable prizes to the winners in this challenge as part of its support to sports and youth. The first three winners "at all categories and participants level" shall receive prizes worth KD 6000 ie, KD 3000 for first position, KD 2000 for second position and KD 1000 for the third position. The first three winners in each category shall receive an amount of KD 300 for the first-place winner, KD 200 for the second-place winner and KD 100 for



the third-place winner. Additionally, all participants reaching the finish line will receive valuable medals.

Each participant in the race shall receive all equipment required for the race including a special bag which shall carry the participant No. and the race official shirt. As KFH is keen on conducting a perfect organization of the event each participant shall be given an electronic chip to authenticate the start and finish timings and register the results accurately. KFH indicated that this competition comes as part of the event series held by the bank during the year to support youth and sports and affirm the bank's role in social responsibility.

## Mancini gunning for WCup glory

**MILAN:** Italy are aiming for World Cup glory despite having to navigate a treacherous play-off path in order to get the 2022 tournament, with North Macedonia the first barrier standing in their way. The European champions begin a potential two-match mini campaign in Palermo on Thursday with missing a second straight World Cup a real possibility, as a trip to either Turkey or Portugal awaits should they get through their semi-final.

However coach Roberto Mancini says he is looking past the playoffs and at Qatar, where the tournament kicks off in November. "Our goal is to win the World Cup, and to win the World Cup we have to win these two matches. There's nothing else to say," Mancini told reporters on Monday.

After so-called 'Notte Magiche' ('Magical Nights') of Euro 2020, Italy looked certain to banish

the ghosts of the disastrous qualifying campaign for 2018 as Mancini's team not only won, but won playing an expansive style of football rarely associated with the Azzurri. Those balmy summer evenings soon gave way to a frosty autumn in which Italy drew four of their final five World Cup qualifiers and two missed Jorginho penalties in their two matches with Switzerland cost them an automatic spot.

Italy's displays in those matches did not live up to the swaggering style which characterized their play right up to their Euro quarter-final win over Belgium. "I'm confident. I have good players, professionals who from nothing built a victory that nobody believed in beforehand," added Mancini. "They managed to form themselves into an extraordinary team. We need to build our confidence from that, from what we have accomplished." Although the manner in which top spot in Group C was handed to the Swiss has caused alarm, Mancini is sticking with the blueprint which brought him triumph at Wembley. "We don't have much time to try out new things in training. The basis will be the same as in the Euro," he said. —AFP

## NFL's stars on the move: Ryan to Colts, Mariota to Atlanta

**NEW YORK:** NFL star quarterbacks finalized 2022 contracts on Monday, with Matt Ryan going from Atlanta to Indianapolis, Marcus Mariota replacing him with the Falcons and Jameis Winston re-signing with New Orleans. Indianapolis traded quarterback Carson Wentz to Washington earlier in the off-season, creating a need the Colts filled by sending Atlanta a third-round NFL Draft pick for Ryan. "Got him. Welcome to Indy, M\_Ryan02," the Colts tweeted to confirm reports of the move. The Colts, who had the most payroll room remaining under NFL salary cap rules, will pay \$451.8 million for the final two years on Ryan's contract.

In 14 NFL seasons, all with Atlanta, the 36-year-old passer completed 5,242 throws in 8,003 attempts for 59,735 yards and 367 touchdowns with 170 interceptions. Ryan, who went 120-102 with Atlanta, led the

Falcons to the playoffs six times and was named the NFL Most Valuable Player in the 2016 season, when Atlanta went to the Super Bowl and led 28-3 only to lose 34-28 to the New England Patriots. The Falcons will take a \$40 million salary cap hit this season but open significant payroll room for 2023 and beyond.

Atlanta then agreed to terms on a two-year deal with Mariota, who worked in Tennessee with Falcons' head coach Arthur Smith, a former Titans offensive coordinator coming off a 7-10 first season with the Falcons. Mariota, 28, was the second overall pick in the 2015 NFL Draft by Tennessee and spent five seasons with the Titans before joining Las Vegas for the past two campaigns as a run-pass threat and backup to Derek Carr. Mariota, of Samoan and German heritage, went 29-32 as a starter for Tennessee and has completed 62.8% of his passes for 13,437 yards with 77 touchdowns and 45 interceptions while rushing for 1,574 yards and 13 touchdowns. One signal caller who will not be changing uniforms is Winston, who signed a two-year free agent deal worth \$28 million, 75% of it guaranteed, to stay in New Orleans. The Saints were among the clubs who failed to land former Houston Texans quarterback Deshaun Watson, who was traded to the Cleveland Browns last Friday. —AFP

# Classifieds

## Hospitals & Clinics

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

## Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144

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

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WELLINGTON: Australia's captain Meg Lanning (left) collides with South Africa's captain Sune Luus during the Women's Cricket World Cup match between Australia and South Africa at the Basin Reserve in Wellington on March 22, 2022. —AFP

## India boost World Cup hopes

### Australia crush South Africa; Lanning smashes an unbeaten 135

**HAMILTON:** India boosted their Women's Cricket World Cup semi-final prospects with a crushing 110-run win over Bangladesh on Tuesday, as a century from Australia captain Meg Lanning powered the tournament favorites to a five-wicket victory over South Africa. India set Bangladesh a target of 230 in Hamilton and then skittled them for 119 in 40.3 overs to keep alive their playoff hopes.

In Tuesday's other match, in Wellington, Lanning smashed an unbeaten 135 as Australia cruised past South Africa's 271-5. It leaves previously unbeaten South Africa in a scrap for the three other semi-final berths with India, the West Indies and England. Australia were already into the last four. India chose to bat and appeared to be cruising at 74 without

loss in the 15th over when Smriti Mandhana was dismissed for 30.

It sparked a mini-collapse which saw India lose two wickets in successive balls without adding to the score as Shafali Verma was stumped on 42 and Mithali Raj caught for a first-ball duck. India entered the last 10 overs at 165-5 and their scoring momentum appeared to have stalled when Yastika Bhatia was dismissed for 50.

But Pooja Vastrakar and Sneha Rana came together for a useful 48-run stand that helped give India's bowlers a respectable total to defend. Bangladesh's run chase never ignited in the face of tight bowling from India highlighted by four wickets for 30 from Rana. There was some middle-order resistance from Salma

Khatun, who made 32, and Lata Mondal, 24, but they never looked like reeling in India's target.

The match between Australia and South Africa brought together the only two undefeated teams at this year's tournament. With Australia already through to the semi-finals, South Africa had more to play for as a win would have sealed a spot in the top four. They set a solid target of 272 off the back of 90 from Laura Woolvardt but Australia's formidable batting line-up easily overhauled the target with 28 balls to spare.

"We had a great first innings and 270 was par, on another day the bowling attack would have defended it," said South Africa captain Sune Luus. "We just lost it a bit on the field and probably lost a bit of focus... it won't happen again." Australia put South Africa in to

bat after winning the toss but struggled to make early inroads as Woolvardt and Lizelle Lee put on an 88-run opening partnership.

Woolvardt notched her fourth consecutive half-century at the tournament, supported by Luus's run-a-ball 52 and Marizanne Kapp's 30 off 21 balls. Australia's openers departed cheaply but skipper Lanning stepped up to guide the six-time champions to 146-3 after 25 overs. "It sort of became clear to me that I had to bat through after we lost a couple of early wickets," she said. It was Lanning's 15th ODI century and came off 92 balls, including 13 fours and one six. Tahlia McGrath was Australia's next best batter on 32, with Lanning's teammates content to play cameo roles. —AFP



KUWAIT: Noura Al-Mutairi practices with a punching bag. —KUNA photos



KUWAIT: Facing adversary with a smile, Noura Al-Mutairi competes during a boxing event.

## Boxing - the 'Sweet Science': Kuwait women boxers breaking the mould

**KUWAIT:** Boxing, often termed as the "Sweet Science", began in recent years to attract more women practitioners in Kuwait, empowering them with skills breaking social moulds and norms. As in the case of their male counterparts, female boxers honed their skills at gyms across the country and followed that with outstanding performances in regional and international competitions.

One shining example of Kuwaiti women's prowess

in boxing is Noura Al-Mutairi, a phenomenal boxer who has snatched several medals in regional and international competitions with gold in the Saudi boxing tournament in 2020 and bronze in the 64 kg category of the ASBC Asian Elite Boxing Championships held in Dubai in 2021. "Establishing an all-female boxing team is one of my ambitions," Al-Mutairi said.

Al-Mutairi said that since 2016, she journeyed

through various martial arts such as Kajukenbo, kickboxing and Muay Thai before settling on boxing. She indicated that the road she took was not easy; saying that other than the challenges presented in boxing itself, society was not too keen on women partaking in the sport. The goal now was to introduce boxing to more female practitioners and push the envelope of the sport further, Al-Mutairi affirmed, saying that she was looking forward as the head of the women's committee at the Kuwaiti Boxing Association to achieve such dream.

On his part, Assistant Secretary at the Association Hazza Al-Mutairi expressed pride of what Noura Al-Mutairi had achieved recently for Kuwaiti women boxing, hoping that it was a precursor for the estab-

lishment of a well-defined and official squad for women in Kuwait. Touting the benefits of boxing for women, technical director of boxing at Fahaheel SC Hamed Al-Enizi said that women had been involved in boxing since the 18th century, which indicated that their print in the sport was not something new.

As other sports, boxing helps both in physical and mental wellbeing if practiced correctly under experienced coaches and within rules that prioritized boxers' safety, he added. It is still unknown whether Kuwait would push further for the involvement of more women boxers in the sport; however, with skills displayed by Noura Al-Mutairi, one could rest assure that the future of the sweet science was in good hands, or fists to be more precise. —KUNA